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Chapter One: The new religion

Those who control the thoughts of the people control their lives.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

For the last twenty-five centuries

mankind has constantly been concerned with the problem of power. As a recognition of the obvious necessity political power not only to be exercised, but intellectually furnished as well, a number of theories have evolved, whose only goal has been to infiltrate order and theoretical clarity in the lives of societies. Although as far as order is concerned there is still much to do, when it comes to clarity, things look very hopeful.

A brief review of the most important theories about the state would convince us, that they are almost unexceptionally based on a simple trilateral scheme of power distribution. Regardless of whether it is the triangle “elite-guards-slaves” in the works of early totalitarian philosophers like Plato, or the three classes in the works of the Marxist philosophers, the model is clear and simple and the number of the participants in it remains mystically unaltered, although their opportunities may vary. Such a

division of society obviously represents a system of stable relations, which makes the behavior of the model easy to either describe or predict.

However, a more sophisticated approach toward the problem of how societies function would prove that this scheme is far too simplified and that it does not describe correctly the real control over power.¹ This trilateral model of the state functions only as long as it deals with the visible relationship between the different components of the state organism and it becomes completely useless when it comes to the spiritual power over society, or, in other words, to “the power of ideas”. It is empirically easy to prove that none of the participants in the model could have visible and strong intellectual influence upon the other two. On the other hand, the existence of such an influence is indubitable since the only tension between the three players in the game of politics is the aspiration of the top one to preserve its position and the appetites of the other two to improve their standing. In spite of the fact that this tension is quite dynamic and it often leads to disastrous social cataclysms, it can hardly be blamed for the qualitative changes in societies that we constantly witness. It is obvious that the spiritual power has a source, which stands outside the state model. Hence we are forced to admit the presence of a fourth, often neglected but actually extremely influential player in the political theater of modern times - the intellectual.

The modern intellectuals are a relatively new phenomenon and they undertake their pilgrimage toward the lands of their present importance as late as the 17th century. The first great actual proof of their potential to seize control over the ideas in society is the French revolution of 1789. For the last 300 years the power of intellectuals has been

¹ Here comes the moment of truth for those scientists, who build with patience and caution their careers on the belief that things are not the way they look like.

constantly increasing and it would not be exaggerated to say that they have played a substantial role in the construction of modern societies, as we know them. The spiritual intellectuals from the clerical era - priests, shamans, cardinals, theologians and prophets - also tried and often times managed to establish a monopoly over the spiritual power in smaller or larger societies. However, because of the nature of that power, restricted by religious dogmas and dead authorities and forced to sustain its influence by bizarre eschatological gibberish, the spiritual leaders never succeeded in creating an intellectual system different from the inherited one, or in generating social change. Neither the liberal state nor the socialist experiment could have been inspired by them simply because they were not able to act as free-spirited inventors. For them intellectual adventures were a forbidden territory.

For the secular intellectuals however, since the dawn of modern times adventures of the mind have always been a natural mode of existence. Unlike their predecessors, they are extrovert, aggressive and painfully ambitious. The modern intellectuals are convinced that they should not obey the rules of societies but rather change them in compliance with their own ideas. They know that a single person can have practically infinite power over people's minds and they try to achieve that power by all means. Of course, the methods for that are often political, yet the intellectuals usually prefer to stick to the role of ideologists and rarely allow to be involved in the crisis, arising from the broad dissemination of their ideas. If the intellectual is the "modern Prometheus"², we would say, that he is a very risk-averse one.

² Paul Johnson, *The Intellectuals*

The ambitions of the intellectuals to aspire for spiritual control over society look completely justified in the light of the enormous social, political and technical progress experienced by mankind during the last couple of centuries. In most cases intellectuals have reasonable right to insist on progress being partially affiliated to them. This fact is used as a basis for the evolution of organizations like the Scientology Church. Its founder, L. Ron Hubbard defends the right of the scientists to legally aspire for spiritual power, after it has been for centuries concentrated in the hands of religious obscurantists, who misused it to detain progress. The world, therefore, stepped on the right path only after scientists replaced the priests. Only since altars were destroyed and human ratio was enthroned, argues Hubbard, has it been possible for the intellectual potential of mankind to explode and this is when the world finally ceased to be a tomb of spirit and turned into a laboratory of bright ideas and noble intentions.

This passage clearly shows that scientists and intellectuals sometimes lay claims on the same thing, which is why the two groups are often confused. Even when we take for granted that the terms “intellectuals” and “scientists” denote different concepts, we still have to answer the question: Who are the modern intellectuals? A quite precise answer is provided by Von Hayek³, who argues: “The function of the intellectual has nothing to do with that of the scientist or the expert in a certain field of human knowledge. The typical intellectual need not possess substantial knowledge about anything specific, nor is he expected to be very intelligent in order to exercise his obligations as the middleman in the process of dissemination of ideas. His qualification is displayed in the broad spectrum of ideas that he readily discusses, as well as in his

³ F.A. von Hayek, *Intellectuals and Socialism*, Panorama/1995

position and instincts to spot new ideas more quickly than the audience he addresses.” In order to distinguish them from the “experts” and “scientists”, Hayek labels the intellectuals “professional traders of second-hand ideas” and blames them for most of the social dramas mankind experienced during the 20th century, attributing them to intellectuals’ ill-natured habit to succumb to the temptations of social experimenting.⁴

Hayek’s argument that the scientist is a specialist with substantial knowledge in a certain restricted area, whereas the intellectual is a social figure of broad but shallow competence, is very convincing. Most experts however point out a specific feature of the intellectuals, which is a sign of certain supremacy over scientists, namely, their having in disposition mechanisms for social influence, which make the general public dependant on their subjective judgement of what the public should or should not know. Coser speaks about the three main qualities of the intellectual – critical thinking, creative mind and reflection – and points out that “... not all academic persons are intellectuals. [...] The typical intellectual overcomes his immediate experience and the pragmatic tasks of the present, his goal is universal dedication”. In other words, the intellectual is fully engaged in the life of society, his world is the turmoil of ideas and words are his weapon. For that reason it is a small wonder that the list of the most important intellectuals since the dawn of the modern era consists primarily of writers, poets, philosophers and journalists – i.e., people, the nature of whose profession makes it easier for them to influence societies. In this sense, the figure of the lonely scientist or the intellectual-inventor like Henry Cavendish and Benjamin Franklin is almost extinct in the modern world where science is an expensive team-game. On the contrary, the

⁴ Ibid

accelerating globalization of the world and the totalization of information favor the humanitarian intellectual who is still able to contaminate the globe with his ideas without even leaving his cheaply furnished apartment.

It appears that Hayek is right to talk about the disasters, caused by the intellectuals during the 20th century. Although the father of the neo-liberalism means chiefly the socialist affiliations of the Western intellectuals and the catastrophes caused by the wide-spread application of the socialist idea in Eastern Europe and several other countries in the world, intellectuals can be blamed for a much broader spectrum of social calamities on almost all continents. It is obvious that the way in which humans have learned to prevail over the forces of nature over the last three hundred years has lead to the parallel belief that control over the forces in societies can lead to similar improvements in human lives. The sad product of this delusion is the most dreadful invention of this century, otherwise full of dreadful inventions – social engineering. Tens of millions of people died as a result form Hitler’s attempts to alter the racial distribution of supremacy, of Stalin’s industrial and military visions and of Mao’s “Cultural Revolution”. However, neither Nazism, nor Communism or Maoism was a sinister *deus ex machina*, on the contrary, they had intellectual origin and they were supported by some of the most influential and intellectually engaged people of the century. In 1975 a group of six people, who had received their academic degrees in the Sorbona and who were unconditionally loyal to the Marxist idea used the methods of social engineering to turn their country – Cambodia – into a great agrarian concentration camp and managed to massacre in four years 60% of the country’s population. South-African apartheid was introduced as an academic discipline at the

Department of Social Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. The totalitarian systems of several African states – Tanzanian udjaam, the conscientism in Ghana, the Senegali negrism, etc. – have academic origin and were invented by intellectuals who regarded themselves as liberals (?). The parameters of the modern totalitarian state were developed by Rousseau, whom many researches blame for inspiring the prolonged massacre, popularly known as the Great French Revolution. Finally, the bloody social-class experiment of the 20th century is obviously designed by Marx. I dare remind these all too well known facts only because it is amazing, that the easily deductible authorship of some of the most horrible crimes against mankind never shook the glamorous prestige of the intellectuals. Acquitting them by pointing out that they actually did not participate personally in the disastrous applications of their ideas would be cynical. The only solution is that the intellectuals be prohibited to write programs about positive changes in global order, which they consider a priori wrong only because it does not coincide with what they consider being right. This solution is of course hardly possible since it implies that the intellectuals voluntarily drop the ambition to rule people's minds the last being the only serious grounds for their existence.

We could summarize our observations in this short introduction in the following way:

1. As a result from certain qualitative changes in mankind's way of life, like book-printing, the evolution of mass-media, the development of education and the globalization of communications, as well as the decline of religion, humanitarian intellectuals play an increasingly influential role in today's life;

2. In means of ethics and moral image, the intellectuals are double-faced: they conceived and promoted modern democracy, but their ideas can at the same time be blamed for causing a number of striking genocides during 20th century;

3. The intellectual strives after spiritual and not political power. In these cases, when his ambitions are political, he prefers to stay behind stage, since openly drawing public attention could subsequently discredit him;

4. The behavior of the intellectual is close to that of the “angry young man”. In the presence of the general public he often acts scandalously, which is a consequence of the “great” cause to which he has dedicated his life – turmoil in the public order. The larger part of the most important intellectuals have caused through their activity irreversible social changes and just a few of them owe their popularity to collaboration with *l'ancien regime*.

5. Because of the nature of their profession the intellectuals are those to decide which ideas and whose opinion should reach the general public, which facts are as important as to be announced and in what form they should be presented. The intellectuals therefore possess enormous latent power. Solely on the qualities of their personality does it depend how they will take advantage of the favorable circumstances. The powerful ones usually utilize the opportunities with grace, ambition, extravagance and fake modesty, the result from all this being spectacular but often questionable intellectual adventures. In any case, it is exactly this adventurous journey through life and society that makes the intellectual – and not the dictator, the aristocrat or the movie-star – the interesting hero of modern times.

Chapter Two: Dissidents, outsiders, and lunatics.

It is always better to light a candle, than
complain at the darkness.

/The motto of the Czech dissident radio "Candle"/

The previous chapter tried to highlight some of the principle characteristics of the intellectuals. It underlined the important position, which the intellectual occupies in the ideological continuum of modern times. It was also pointed out that the reason intellectuals have power, whose size has until recently been hard to imagine is, on the one hand, the altered tissue of public communication and, on the other hand, their own greed for power. Paul Johnson's capital study describes exactly that conquest for the mechanisms of power, although its real goal is to unmask intellectuals' hypocritical morality in the light of their declared ambition to serve as mankind's ethical shepherds. Nevertheless, all intellectuals whom Johnson focuses on - like Marx, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Russell or Hemingway - lived, worked and exercised their manipulative power in more or less liberal-democratic societies, where no autocratic, totalitarian or military regime tried to set limits to their intellectual ambitions. In other words, Johnson's work focuses on the *free* intellectuals. As far as the topic of this work are the *freed* intellectuals it would be justified if we temporarily turn our attention to the *not free* intellectuals, or those whose public activity is exposed to everyday pressure in a world ruled by fear, sycophancy, slander, vulgarization of art and thought, etc. In other words, this chapter represents a brief look at the figure of the dissident, or the intellectual in the totalitarian state. Since this subject has been extremely popular and often exploited, the problem of

the world dissidency and the Czech dissident in particular will be approached only as a prelude to the general topic of the clash between the real world and the world of ideas in a post-communist society.

Modern democracy is the intellectual product of several minds, who at a certain point in time towered above the others and who succeeded in turning their intellectual supremacy into real power over the majority, eventually forcing it to accept the forthcoming conflict with the traditionally empowered minority. Whether good or bad, modern democracy is the best form of government we have in disposition and it is rarely attacked as inefficient.⁵ The theoretical basis of democracy however was laid by a couple of intellectuals who were not pleased with the model of society at a time when the foundations of *l'ancien regime* appeared to be unshakable. It is then completely relevant to argue that intellectuals are the natural allies of democracy and therefore intellectuals' most hated foe is dictatorship. As a matter of fact, the last two centuries witnessed a dozen of liberal dictatorships - like Luis Philip's decade, Franco's regime or Pinochet's military rule - all of which protected competition and the freedom of market, trade and economic development, with the only problem being the concentration of power in the hands of a constant political center. Under such rule merchants, entrepreneurs, producers and all other market-players have the same rights they would enjoy under a liberal-democratic system, but all who oppose the "insolence of office" - and especially intellectuals - are threatened by arrest and physical abuse. The former is so because dictators rarely want to establish total control over the economic activity, knowing that their incompetence would soon cause economic disasters and endanger

⁵ Noone had dared attack the concept of liberty until Lenin declared that "freedom is a bourgeois prejudice." Apparently, there is a first time for everything...

their own well being. We could dare say that although most dictatorships during 20th century represented communist economically centralized systems, they were more an exception to the rule. Yet, the life of the disagreeing intellectual under the rule of the Brazilian generals as well as under Husak's regime in Czechoslovakia was identically unenviable.

There is of course the not so small and in many aspects very interesting group of obedient intellectuals who play decisive role in the legitimization of any vicious rule including the one in post-war Czechoslovakia. By that I do not mean those intellectuals who were forced to collaborate out of despair, fear or financial necessity, but those influential ones who succumbed to the temptations of totalitarianism out of ideological reasons. One of the most famous supporters of the fascist rule and of Mussolini himself was the great Italian writer and theorist of futurism Filippo Marinetti. After Hitler seized power in Germany, Martin Heidegger, who was in many senses the archetype of a philosopher during 20th century, entered politics, became a president of the Freiburg University and started to consciously proclaim the national-socialist ideology. Many observers are willing to not label his behavior the tragic mistake of a great mind, but rather argue that it is possible that the seeds of Nazism can be looked for in Heidegger's own philosophy. In 1918 Alexander Blok, one of the greatest poets of the Russian Silver Age published the poem Twelve, in which a group of Bolshevik soldiers march along the streets and are lead into fight by Jesus Christ. Russian intelligentsia was abhorred by this religious justification of the Bolshevik madness and although Blok later apologized, his sin was never forgiven and he died tragically desolate. At the same time most of the Russian intellectuals were waiting in a row for the trains to Siberia and

in the new Soviet state the only ones who were favored by the authorities were pseudo decent servants like Maxim Gorki.

It is clear that in Aryan protestant Germany, Roman Catholic Italy and Slavic orthodox Russia part of the intellectuals collaborated in an identical way. It is hence small wonder that after the end of World War II the scenario was repeated in all newly baptized socialist states. In Czechoslovakia it was repeated with the voluntary and passionate servancy of famous intellectuals like Ivan Olbracht, Marie Pujmanova and especially the greatest Czech poet of the first half of 20th century, Vitezslav Nezval. The roots of this national betrayal however reach a little deeper and back into history, to one of the most interesting figures of the Czech vanguard, Stanislav K. Neuman. During the first two decades of the century Neuman was an insatiable rebel, the accredited leader of two literary generations and, of course, a socialist. In 1929, loyal to his independent temper, Neuman left the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, after expressing open disagreement with its increasing bolshevization under Gotwald's leadership. Seven years later however Neuman took everyone by surprise by publishing a remarkable text, entitled Anti-Gige. It represented a response to Andre Gide's Return from the USSR, in which the French writer described with ultimate objectivity his impressions from the absurd Stalinist state. Neuman, who had never been to the USSR devastated Gide's text with the arguments of faith. He repeatedly exploited the trite myth about USSR being paradise on Earth, passionately preached about the honorable and meaningful labor of the free workers, blamed Gide's style for being manipulative and called Gide himself "chatterbox", "liar" and "degenerated intellectual". That's how St.K.Neuman relatively early, but with great aplomb stood up in the battle phalanx of the supporters of

communism, which expanded rapidly after 1948; thus began the sad story of the socialist intelligentsia, a story about the monopoly of different unions of artists and intellectuals, about betrayal, hatred and striking stupidity.

The problem of why the intellectuals who should presumably overshadow the others because of their spiritual duty allowed to be deceived and discredited is an interesting one. The Polish philosopher Richard Legutko systemizes the following hypotheses⁶ in trying to explain the phenomenon:

1. The intellectual romance with communism is a manifestation of degenerated Renaissance mentality, expressed in a cult for sciences and social construction, in admiration for megalomaniac programs for social change and in undoubted belief in the ability of the humans to substitute the old world with a new, better one;

2. The romantic way of thinking which includes desire for belonging to a higher unity, search for group self-defining and feeling of a collective mission, irretrievably degrades;

3. The behavior of the intellectuals can be explained in the categories of nihilism, i.e. they make a fake and desperate choice of new ideologies that would replace their lost faith in traditional values and institutions. While not willing to acquit the "prostitution of the intellectuals" Legutko admits that the temptations of totalitarianism were hard to resist in the East, as well as in the West.

The problem is probably explained to some extent by the fact that those members of the socialist intelligentsia who stood close to the regime did not perceive

⁶ Sine ira et studio, 1989

themselves in the messianic way typical for the free intellectuals. /For example, in a letter to the Academy of Dijon which had awarded him a literary prize, Rousseau wrote: "Gentlemen, your contribution to my glory has made you immortal!" and the 25-years old Tolstoy once wrote in his diary: "Today I read an article on the literary characteristics of the genius and it convinced me that I am not an ordinary human."/ The market image of most intellectuals has been modeled mainly by their own delusions for how capable and ethical they are and by these delusions later being enthusiastically accepted by the public. The official socialist intellectuals however describe themselves with medieval humility. They usually reject the label "spiritual shepherds of mankind" and are more willing to spend their lives as ordinary government employees. A.Vesselovsky unequivocally argues that socialist intellectuals are nothing more than "state clerks", and Glezerman gives the following exciting description: "The intelligentsia consists of individuals who are professionally engaged in science, education, medicine, book-keeping, as well as other activities, which are deprived of immediate executive obligations. [...] *Many intellectuals are engaged in agriculture.* /Italics mine, A.P./"⁷ It turns out that in the socialist states being an intellectual was not a quality of one's mind, spirit and ambition, but a matter of professional vocation. Official Soviet sociology goes even further by claiming that intellectuals come primarily from families of workers and peasants, because only a self-reproducing social class is supposed to have lasting intellectual orientation.⁸ It is worth ending this discussion by quoting the opinion of the Marxist sociologist Gramsci who concludes

⁷ Ideologies and Intellectuals, 1980, 29

⁸ The sad news is that Marx himself in one of his moments of argumentative brilliance destroyed this sophistics by remarking that the Roman-Catholic church has managed to maintain for centuries an impressive unity of intellectual orientation, although its members do not reproduce.

that the socialist intellectual need possess the following qualities: appropriate origin and party discipline.⁹

It becomes clear that the dissidents can be the only true intellectuals in a totalitarian state, since the intellectual who collaborates with the regime does not meet the two important conditions that we already underscored, that is, he is not an "angry young man" and he does not stand in opposition to the system, waiting for its inevitable collapse to bring him glory. In this respect we might say that the Czech dissidents played their cards well and in post-communist Czech Republic they enjoy the aftermath of their past resistance. In one way or other, it was the dissidents who personified until 1989 the hopes of the Czechoslovak society for an end to the totalitarian rule and to the Soviet occupation. Logically, they were awarded the responsibility to change the rules of the social game on all levels during the years, which followed the so-called Velvet revolution of 1989. This however is exactly where we encounter the problem of the dissimilar attitude of the public toward the different types of dissidents and of their own dissimilar behavior in throughout the 1990s. Those intellectuals, who chose the side of the opposition or were forced to emigrate after 1947, preferred to stay aside after 1989; only few of them like the former minister of culture Pavel Tigrid became engaged in enthusiastic public activity. The architects of the 1968 Prague Spring, whose biographies were in most cases marked by past membership in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, soon sank into oblivion. There was no place for them in the new decommunized state and they stayed with their non-political enterprises - like literature or music. Practically, the image of post-totalitarian Czechoslovakia and later Czech

⁹ Ibid, 37

Republic was modeled by the "chartists", or those who conceived, organized or just signed the famous Charta-77 and during the 1970s and 1980s carried the burden of the political prosecutions and the anger of the official authorities. Some of them /like Topol, Ruml and Krchovsky/ struggled against the regime with the methods of the apocryphal literary system Samizdat. Others, like Havel, Pithart and Kanturkova were exercising open political pressure upon the government. Just a few of them remained unnoticed after the November revolution. Whether in politics, political journalism or literature, the chartists were the ones who had the duty to create the legitimate image of the new Czech state. How successful they were in achieving that goal will be the topic of the next chapters.

One way or other, in the years after 1989 the chartists managed to completely monopolize the dissident past of the Czechoslovak society. What is more important, the ones closest to Vaclav Havel and especially Havel himself were subject in Western Europe to aggressive mythologization to an extent at which every democrat with an average sense of self-esteem would start feeling uneasy. Since the eulogies concerning the "civil courage" and the "intellectual bravery" of the chartists are voluminous and they resemble the happy families according to Tolstoy - they are all alike - it is more in the spirit of the present work to mention the critiques, which are not that abundant, but are very original in return. T. Magstaat who speaks about the alarming weakness of the Czech institutions and about the despicable immorality, wide-spread corruption and high criminality in the Czech Republic nowadays, attributes the incessant shock-waves in the Czech social model to the ill approach chosen by the dissidents in reforming the totalitarian state. Magstaat argues that " ... the intellectuals who used to work at the

time of the communist rule [...] lack a lot but especially initiative, pragmatism, self-respect, optimism, enterprise and professional integrity."¹⁰ Though willing to admit that "... the chronic disrespect of the Czech people for the civil ideal is primarily due to the too short and too distant democracy that we had..."¹¹, Magstaat thinks that dissidents are chiefly to blame for the anemia of the modern Czech society, since they turned out to be completely unprepared for the great responsibility. With this indirectly agrees the former dissident Irina Siklova who admits that after boasting for a long time having inspired the political transformation, " ... most of us soon realized that the *annus mirabilis*, as put in by Timothy Ash, was mainly a result from the corrosion of the system itself, caused by the misuse of the means of production."¹² The only merit that intellectuals have according to Siklova is not allowing the November events to grow into bloodshed. Thus one of the influential dissidents of the 1980s rejects the idea of being an architect of post-communist Czechoslovakia and this position is important to have in mind. The most violent critique however is offered by Em. Mandler, who not only was a dissident before 1989, but is also regarded as the father of the Czech neo-liberalism. In his article *Dissidents, Myth and National Convention /Lidove noviny, 68/1998/* Mandler accuses the Czech dissidents of intentional automythologization and complains that the Czech society in the 1990s is ruled by a "vicious national convention", which dictates what may and what may not be discussed. Mandler reminds of how the dissidents had isolated themselves in an opposition ghetto before 1989 /Jacques Rupnik called it "a ghetto of honor", whereas Petr Pithart complained that he felt like suffocating in it/ and argues that after 1989 this ghetto has transformed into a

¹⁰ Chyby při zahájení demokracie v Čechách, *Stredoveka Evropa*, 81-82

¹¹ *Ibid*

kind of a restricted-access organization, whose members close the door to power for everyone who was not in it before 1989. In support for his idea Mandler cites President Havel's parliamentary address on the forthcoming general elections in 1990: "I will only vote for people whom I trust. I will vote for people who worked for years for the cause of Charta'77..." The notorious Charta'77 is called by Mandler "a miscalculated campaign" and "a fiasco with far-reaching effects" because it represented an attempt by the intellectuals to engage in political activity, hidden behind moral issues. Mandler calls this "dissidents' myth N 1" and argues that it would have hardly survived, had it not been for the powerful ideological justification, provided in Havel's essay *The Power of the Powerless*.

It is small wonder that the whole story can be traced back to Vaclav Havel, the public face of post-totalitarian Czechoslovakia, the archetype of modern Czech intellectual. Petr Prihoda admits that Havel is the only one who is able to repeat the absolute authority, which T.G.Masaryk had during the 1920s and the 1930s, and Jiri Hanak calls him "the only Czech commodity we can proudly export".¹³ The political essay *The Power of the Powerless* - an extremely valuable document in terms of language and rhetorics - was written during Havel's pre-presidential period and it constitutes an interest for us chiefly because in it a dissident gives an answer to the question, "What is a dissident?" In Chapter 13 of the essay Havel provides a list of the most important features of the average dissident, some of which are extremely boastful, since they apply mostly to Havel himself:

¹² Listy, 22.01.1996

¹³ This was all written long before Havel's illnesses, inadequate behavior and marriage to a controversial actress after the death of his wife put an end to his glamorous reputation among the citizens of the Czech Republic, although his reputation abroad is continuously increasing.

- The dissidents broadcast their disagreement publicly and in detail and as a result from that they are well known in Western Europe.
- Thanks to this approach, although they are not allowed to publish, dissidents play a very important role in society according to the members of the executive power. They are therefore guaranteed silent immunity from being physically persecuted since the West might feel obliged to react negatively.
- The scope of their critique exceeds the narrow boundaries of their subject, it covers all problems society faces and is political by nature.
- Dissidents are typically writers, because in a situation of total media control written words are the only weapon dissidents have in disposition.
- The dissident himself seldom realizes that he has crossed the border, surrounding anonymity, and has transformed from a writer into a dissident.

Hence, the conduct of the dissidents according to Havel is subject to purely ethical goals - enlightenment, education, cultivation of manners, morality and humanity. Havel declares that the Czech dissent is not an alternative to, but a logical extension of Masaryk's program for "everyday conscious work, dedicated to the people" and that the dissidents in totalitarian Czechoslovakia cautiously followed the main elements of this program - working hard, keeping their word and never losing temper.

It turns out from Havel's argumentation that the Czech dissident is something between a monk, a missionary, an underground activist and a Hollywood star. Em. Mandler is apparently right when speaking about the dissidents' inclination to overmythologize their past. On the other hand, J. Kotja is also right in saying that the dissidents were eventually forced to leave the political stage not because they were

incompetent, but because the conscience of the general public which until 1989 stood silently aside was tortured by memories of collaboration. It is clear that the dissidents can be very easily blamed for the late collapse of the system and the choice of a too difficult road to democracy, as can they be praised for the successful collapse of the regime and the bloodless transition to democracy. However, the Czech dissidents themselves with their shy courage, childish delusions, complicated moral code and comic self-confidence have represented an interesting object of observation before as well as after the Velvet revolution. The social and political transformation from the late 1980s placed the great majority of the dissidents in a situation they were hardly prepared for. Under the new market circumstances they had to reveal to the maximum their intellectual and moral potential. The dissidents accepted and carried the challenge in a way which deserves careful examination and such will be the goal of the following chapters.