



NEWS RELEASE

**MICHAEL ŽANTOVSKÝ TO HEAD VÁCLAV
HAVEL LIBRARY FROM SEPTEMBER**

19 May 2015, Prague

The Board of Trustees of the Václav Havel Library today took cognisance of the resignation of director Marta Smolíková as of 31 August this year. On 1 September the post of director will be assumed by Michael Žantovský.

Michael Žantovský was President Vaclav Havel's first spokesman, press secretary and political coordinator. He served as a senator of the Parliament of the Czech Republic for six years, chairing the Senate's Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security. As an ambassador of the Czech Republic, he has spent several years abroad, serving in the United States, Israel and most recently Great Britain. He is chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Aspen Institute Prague and is a member of the Program Council of Forum 2000. Mr. Žantovský has taught American Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University and European-American relations at the Prague branch of New York University. He is one of the leading Czech lyricists, publicists and translators of English-language literature. Last year he published the biography *Havel* in English. The book has been translated into several languages, including Czech, and has been warmly received; it was named a biography of the year by The Guardian and took the title of Czech Bestseller 2014 in its category.

"Michael Žantovský has been one of the most distinctive figures in public life in the Czech Republic since the Velvet Revolution. Whether in politics, diplomacy or literature, he has always promoted the values and ideas that he shared with Václav Havel. I am immensely glad that such a figure will lead the Václav Havel Library and build on the work of Marta Smolíková. I would like to thank her for the dedication with which she has promoted the good name of the Library and anchored its management in the last three years," said Michaela Bakala, deputy chairwoman of the Board of Trustees of the VHL. Under Marta Smolíková the institution's programme and archival, research and publishing activities were expanded. Last year the Library moved to the street Ostrovní in Prague's Old Town, where the interactive exhibition Václav Havel in a Nutshell and a research center are accessible to the public and events for the public are held.

Prior to the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, Marta Smolíková worked for the George Soros-financed Open Society Fund, heading its programme for arts and culture. She later established the ProCulture Centre for cultural policy and was involved in advocating for arts and culture and culture management. She was proposed for the post of minister of culture in the interim government of Jan Fischer by the Green Party. She teaches cultural policy at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts and at Masaryk University.

The Václav Havel Library was established as a non-state, non-profit organisation by Dagmar Havlová, Karel Schwarzenberg and Miroslav Petrusek. It has been financed for several years by the Bakala Foundation, as well as via grants, donations and revenues from its own activities.

The VHL's most important international projects include the *Václav Havel Human Rights Prize*, presented in conjunction with the Council of Europe and the Charter 77 Foundation since 2013, and *Václav Havel European Dialogues*, which attempt to foster debate on subjects shaping the direction of contemporary Europe with reference to Václav Havel's European spiritual legacy. Another long-term activity involves cooperation with designer Bořek Šípek, who has authored places of remembrance known as *Havel's Places*.

In the last three years, the VHL has put on dozens of debates on topical political and social issues, readings, theatre performances, concerts and lectures on a wide variety of areas of modern history, as well as welcoming many important figures: Natalya Gorbanevskaya, Madeleine Albright, Joachim Gauck, Anne Applebaum, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and dissidents from Belarus, Ukraine, Burma and North Korea.

In the 2012–2015 period the VHL published around two dozen new titles relating to the life and work of Václav Havel (themed anthologies of his texts on theatre and political persecution,

collections of essays and presidential speeches), his family (Miloš Havel) and colleagues (Zdeněk Neubauer, Zdeněk Urbánek, Pavel Juráček). The publication in electronic form of *The Collected Works of Václav Havel* is planned for summer 2015.

At present the Václav Havel Library's digital archive contains more than 45,000 entries. In addition, under the leadership of Marta Smolíková the VHL acquired the literary archive of Pavel Juráček, the extensive photography archive of Oldřich Škácha and other smaller collections documenting modern Czech history with an emphasis on disseminating the ideas and works of Václav Havel, playwright, fighter against totalitarianism, leader of 1989's Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovak and Czech president and a symbol of vigilance against any form of arbitrariness of power. Thanks to its archive, the VHL became co-producer of the documentary films *Olga* by Miroslav Janek and *Life According to Václav Havel*, made last year by Andrea Sedláčková.

Václav Havel Library
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