Interview between Madeleine Albright and Lenka Kabrhelová:

Biography: Madeleine Albright was born Marie Korbelová in Prague in 1937. She emigrated to the United States with her family in 1948. Maintaining an active interest in her country of birth, Albright wrote first an honors thesis, and then a doctoral dissertation, on Czechoslovak historical topics (which she discusses in this interview). Albright served as American ambassador to the United Nations under Bill Clinton from 1993 and became Secretary of State in 1997, which made her then the highest-ranking women in the history of American government.

Madeleine Albright first met Václav Havel on a visit to Prague in 1990. She was previously familiar with his writing, which she calls "monumental," and his activities as a dissident, which had made her proud of "this incredible man [who] personified… everything I thought about the country I came from." The pair struck up an enduring friendship, which Albright refers to here as an honor "beyond my imagination." In this interview with *Havel Conversations*, Secretary Albright discusses Václav Havel's foreign policy, his respect for other people's views, and the development of the pair's friendship in the Czech Republic, Bermuda, and the United States.

Keywords: Audience, Aung San Suu Kyi, Bush, Charter 77, Congress (American), Dalai Lama, Dienstbier (Jiří), Dissent, Fierlinger (Zdeněk), Foreign Policy, Forum 2000, Helsinki Agreement, Human Rights, Korbel (Josef), Leaving, Legacy (Havel), Media, Morality, National Democratic Institute, NATO, Power of the Powerless, Redford (Robert), Responsibility, Russia, United Nations, United States Information Agency, Workers.

Chapter I: Context – I don't have any time codes…

Lenka Kabrhelova (LK): Secretary Albright, thank you very much for joining us for *Havel Conversations.* My first question to you is: how do you remember Václav Havel?

Madeleine Albright (MA): Well, first of all, I'm delighted to do this, because I remember Václav Havel as the most interesting, and responsible, and fine person I ever met. And I never expected that we would become friends. So, I remember him with love, and honor, and sadness, because he is no longer with us.

LK: Can you still remember the circumstances in which you became friends?

MA: Well, it's a little bit of a long story. What happened was I went to Prague in January 1990 as vice-chair of the National Democratic Institute, and I was already friends with Jiří Dienstbier, because he had helped me on my dissertation, which was about the Czechoslovak press in 1968. So, in the evening we went to see a Havel play, *Audience*, and then the next day I went to see Foreign Minister Dienstbier in his office at the Foreign Ministry, in the same office that my father had taken me to when he worked for Jan Masaryk. And there Dienstbier said 'Would you like to meet Václav Havel?' And I said 'Of course! I would be honored to meet Václav Havel!' So, we go to the Castle, and I had a copy of my father's book with me, and we're at the Castle and I'm handing the book to President Havel, and he says 'I know who you are – you're Mrs. Fulbright!' And I said 'No, I'm Mrs. Albright.' And that is how our friendship began. And it was an amazing time, because he was there still kind of in blue jeans and a black t-shirt and his advisors were with him, and we were talking about all the things that were going on in Czechoslovakia. And he said to me 'Would you mind going with my advisors to Vikárka [Restaurant] and explaining to them how a presidential office needs to look?' So that's where we went, and I talked to them about how the president's office needed to be set up, and that's how we met.

LK: Do you still remember the first impression he left on you?

MA: The first impression was that he was somebody that cared a great deal about what was happening in Czechoslovakia. And, of course, my issue was that I had seen him, I had obviously read about him, but all I could think of was him standing there on Václavské náměstí on that balcony with [Alexander] Dubček, and all those people ringing their bells and being so glad that he was there and so, for me, when I saw him I thought [he was] the incarnation of what Czechoslovakia needed to be! And so I was just kind of overwhelmed, if I might say so. And then to see what a modest person he was, and it's that modesty that I think of as being characteristic of him, no matter what, he was always a modest, humble man.

LK: So as his friend, what would you say were his main traits, main characteristics?

MA: I think his main characteristic was his humanism, his respect for the individual, his understanding of our relationship to each other. But it was mostly this kind of… The morality, of the importance of the individual in society.

LK: His message is very universal, as you just said. But at the same time he was a person coming from Central Europe, from this closed-off state, from behind the Iron Curtain. How much do you think it influenced his work and his personality as such?

MA: I think it influenced his personality a lot. And I don't mean to be disrespectful, but we are about the same age, and I was raised in the West. And we used to talk about what made us different in terms of what he had learned by living under communism, and what I had learned by living in a democracy. And I think that he had obviously a much deeper understanding of what one loses if you live under an authoritarian regime, and how you need to appreciate every moment of freedom. And his dedication to the Czechoslovak people in terms of helping them to be, you know, the power of the powerless - of the powerless all of a sudden really having power.

And so I was very influenced by what I had read about him, and by what I knew about Czechoslovakia, because I had spent a lot of time studying communist Czechoslovakia, and somehow, to put those people together for me… There's no way to describe to you what an unbelievable honor it was to know him at all, and then to become friends with him was beyond my imagination.

LK: We mentioned the conversations you had together. How much did it help you understand life in a totalitarian state?

MA: Well, totally. Because I had read about it and studied it, and I obviously had met a lot of other people who had lived under communist states; I had written my dissertation on the Czechoslovak press in 1968, I then wrote a book about the Polish situation, and I had met a lot of Hungarians and East Europeans, and I knew what a tragedy it was that people who wanted to have control over their own lives had been dictated to by outsiders and a genuinely evil system, so… But I'd never had anybody that I could have such an honest discussion about what had happened, and what about how the Czechoslovaks reacted to all of that? What did they have to do to get themselves out of this? What were the steps that he could take as president to change the situation? So, we had many, many discussions – some political, some kind of philosophical. One I will never forget – he had come to the United States, and then he went to Bermuda, and he invited me to come to Bermuda, and we were walking on the beach at dusk. We were right on the ocean and he kept looking up at the sky and he said, as a Czech, 'We have to look to the heavens, because we don't have an ocean.' And he really was… We talked philosophically about what it was like to be of a country in the middle of Europe that had to find its inspiration from other places.

LK: Is there something about the Czech Republic, or then Czechoslovakia, which, in your eyes, was much different to Poland, to Hungary, to all the other countries of Central Europe that you studied?

MA: Yes, but I have to tell you, I wrote, as I said, my dissertation, and when I was defending my dissertation, the other professors there were all from some other Central European country, and they said 'You all are all the same! You think you had such a special country!' And I said 'We did, it was the only democracy in the interwar period, and even before that there had always been a real tradition of the press – Havlíček and people that really spoke to the fact that people wanted to be told the truth.' Truth was a very important part; it was certainly something that President Masaryk (with 'pravda zvítězí' ['truth will prevail']) and President Havel always talked about: truth. But I do think it was a special country, I was brought up to think that, that the First Republic was something that was a dream of having a democracy in the middle of Central Europe, and that Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was a remarkable philosopher president. I was very proud to have been born in the country.

Chapter II – Havel as Playwright/Writer:

LK: When we look at Václav Havel's works, his plays, his essays, which one (and I know it is hard to name one) would be the one you would name as the most profound, that left the most profound impact on you?

MA: Well it's hard, frankly. Obviously, *The Power of the Powerless* which I just reread, because it is truly remarkable in terms of its understanding of the power of the state degrading people and having control over their lives, and yet by simple tasks of whether the greengrocer puts the sign out, you can fight the regime. But I also… I think the ones that had a huge effect on me were the *Letters to Olga*, because that was all that Havel was permitted while he was in prison, and he was

able to write about really difficult things in a kind of circumspect way so that the censors wouldn't get at it. But his plays I loved, you know I went to see *Audience*, which I really loved, but then *Leaving* – so it's very hard to choose! Very hard to choose.

LK: How much of a household name do you think Havel's plays are here in the US?

MA: Well I think that it depends on the audience, literally. What was very interesting was that in 2011, I think, he came to the United States, and they had done a whole retrospective in New York of all his plays, and I think people were not just charmed but fascinated by the variety of his plays. I'm not sure everybody understood them, but they were in New York and in Brooklyn, and it was interesting to go and actually to watch the audience as much as the… And then, by the way, we actually went to see *Temptation* together, and it was on the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. And, of course, they were in English, and sitting next to Havel while they were performing his plays in English was a special treat also.

LK: How do you think he felt when he was sitting there and watching all of that?

MA: I think he was… I think, because I asked him, I think he was very proud. But he was also slightly critical in terms of 'I might have done it this way…' Or something like that. What was interesting about him was that he was self-critical, and so something he'd say [was] 'Well, I could have written that a little bit differently,' or something like that. But among the other fun things we did was to go to jazz clubs, and that was always fun, because he loved jazz and Lou Reed…

I hope you can see what an incredible honor it was for somebody like me to get to know Václav Havel. And I have to tell you one of the things that happened – as I told you, I was raised to think that the First Republic was a perfect place. And then when we were in the United States, and the Hungarians had 1956, and the Poles revolted every ten years, and I was very proud of 1968, but

then people would come and say to me ‘What’s the matter with your Czechs? They’re just sitting there, they’re not doing anything! The others are doing all these things!’ So, when Václav Havel appeared, it just made me so proud that this incredible man was somebody that personified not just everything I had thought about the country I came from, but way beyond that in terms of somebody who understood human nature, that thought very deeply, and at the same time was so modest and self-critical. So, it never, never occurred to me that I would have the honor of knowing him.

LK: Did it surprise you that he is such a modest, humble guy after reading all his works, and sort of meeting him through his work?

MA: Yes and no, frankly. Because I think that his works are monumental, and really are of a great philosopher. And, when you are sitting and talking to him, he doesn’t, didn’t, kind of do philosophy, but he also didn’t take himself very seriously, and was very self-critical. And so one had to tell him that he was a great man, and that what he was doing for Czechoslovakia at the time was so important in terms of his restoring the reputation of a country. I think one had to keep telling him he was important.

Chapter III – Havel as Politician:

LK: When you mentioned those conversations and how much it opened your eyes in terms of life under a totalitarian regime, you must have been a bridge and an eye-opening moment in terms of his relationship towards Western society, because he had never been there before. So how do you reflect on this? Do you remember him telling you some thoughts about how his thoughts had changed over time?

MA: A little bit. I mean one of the things we talked about a little bit was what was the role of the press. He, like every political figure, didn’t love being criticized in the press. And we talked

about this [being] what happens in a democratic society. And we talked a lot, because the media was one of the things that I was interested in. And so, a little bit in terms of how things developed, and then really [about] how politics in a free society work. We had a disagreement which was about the role of political parties. And when I went to Prague that first time in January 1990 to meet him – I'd been to Prague many times before – that time after the Velvet Revolution I was there representing the National Democratic Institute, which believes in political parties. And for him political parties were the Communist Party. And so he thought that civil society was more important, that movements, Charter 77, and various other ways of operating [were preferable]. So we'd have discussions about the role of political parties and the importance of a loyal opposition, and how political systems worked. And I think I added that to the conversation, I'm not sure that I ever persuaded him. But he really did have a different view of politics.

LK: When you look back at 1990 and the beginning of the change in then Czechoslovakia, do you see any mistakes he made?

MA: I think that it's hard to say that, frankly, because he was so unique and had come from such a different experience. And he was a playwright and philosopher and a humanist. And I think that he… And if he'd been more of a self-centered person, and really kind of adopted the role of president, he probably would not have been the person that he is. But the mistake, I think, was probably not being political enough, which is kind of a strange thing to say. And what I am really sorry about now is that people don't understand in the Czech Republic, frankly, what an incredible figure he really was, coming out of the background that he had come out of, and the things he had learned in terms of the morality of being a leader. So, I think that those of us who gave him advice were wrong and he was the one that was right, because he understood what had

to be done for his country, so it makes me sad that people don't understand what a monumental figure he was, how people – when he came to the United States – people were just bowled over by him. I was with him when he gave the speech to the members of Congress, or when he made public appearances, and he kept being the modest man, but he made an incredible imprint on how one person who has a moral fiber and a sense of humanity and the importance of the individual could deliver such a message to countries that were democracies. And he knew what it was like to have lost it, and then to bring it back. And so he cast a very, very large… He was a very large figure in the United States.

LK: …And also almost a rock star, right, over here? How do you understand personally the difference between how he was perceived here and how nowadays he is perceived in his home country?

MA: I honestly don't know. I find it shocking, frankly. And it makes me very sad, because he is somebody that any country would be very proud of having as a leader. And I think that some of it is that people… There are those people that deliberately didn't like him or were jealous of him. And so I think that slowly, I hope, slowly that people are beginning to recognize what an incredible figure he really was, and how all he cared about, all he cared about, were the people. And that's the part that is so interesting, because I do know an awful lot of leaders; he was the most modest political leader I have ever met.

LK: When you mention the roles he took on upon himself, he was a dissident, he was a playwright, he was a president and sort of, as you say, not so adept a politician. Which one of the roles do you think he enjoyed the best?

MA: I think he enjoyed being a playwright the best. I really do. I think that it allowed him to use his imagination, to write (because he liked to write) and to… What he was really, and this is true

in his plays; he was an observer. He was somehow always in his plays, and was the narrator or the observer, and I think that that's what gave him the most pleasure. And by the way, one of the things that I did while he was president was I brought Robert Redford to the Czech Republic and so one of the things that was so much fun for me to do was we went around Prague and President Havel would show Robert Redford all the theaters in which his plays had been produced, and he would talk about what it was like to be at the Balustrade [Theater – *Na zábradlí*] and various places. And you could tell, he really did enjoy talking about his plays and what they brought. He obviously did enjoy showing him around St. Vitus Cathedral and the whole Castle Square, but I really do think – it was so wonderful to hear him talk about his plays to another person who was interested in theater.

LK: How much do you think his career as a playwright influenced his political career and the way he behaved as a president?

MA: I do think – I'm not sure I'm competent to discuss this, but I really do think that the Vaněk plays, in terms of what it was like to have had a career and then end up in a brewery and try to figure out how to explain to the people in the brewery what had to be done. So, he used that as kind of a tool to try to explain things. But I really, I also think a play that we actually talked about a lot – I understood he started writing this before he became president but – *Leaving* was really a play that we talked about a lot. And I think that he used that in ways to explain what it is like to have a high position, and then to leave it. We actually had that in common, and we kind of talked about that, and what he was trying to say in that play, and then weave it in with a lot of other things from King Lear or Chekov or being able to use his background. But a real understanding of what it is like to have a high-level position which is not yours permanently, it

belongs to either those who elect you or come into office. So in many ways, that's a play that I had more of an opportunity to kind of talk with him about.

LK: How hard do you think it was for him to leave?

MA: I think it wasn't hard for him to leave. We never talked about this, believe me, I think it must have been hard for him not to be, although he was modest, not to have people understand how much he loved his country, and how much the things that he did were for them and not for himself.

LK: When we look back at Václav Havel's works and those one that you met here in the US, when was it, and how did you for the first time get to know about Havel?

MA: Well I had studied what had gone on during the period in Czechoslovakia, I spent my whole life in many ways learning from my father, who had written a book – several books, but one – called *The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia*. And then he wrote another book called *Twentieth Century Czechoslovakia*. I was always the perfect daughter, and so I wrote my honors thesis at Wellesley about Fierlinger, who had been head of the Social Democratic Party, and who had been what we used to call a fellow-traveler, helping the Communists take over. And so I had studied a lot. I then went and, the first time I went to Czechoslovakia after having left in 1948 was in 1967. I didn't see people then, because I saw some friends of my parents, and even though it was the summer when the authors – and Havel was one of the major protagonists of what [newspaper] *Literární noviny* did and various aspects. But I didn't feel safe being there, because all of a sudden people were telling me that my father had been tried in absentia and sentenced to death. It turns out he wasn't sentenced to death, but he was tried in absentia. So I went back many times in the '80s, under the auspices of the US Information Agency and would stay at the deputy chief of mission's house when… And also it was a time – I always liked to be

there on July 4, when the dissidents would come to the Embassy. And I began to hear more about Havel then; Dienstbier was the one that I spent most of my time with. But I really spent a lot of time in the '80s studying things. So, it was later, and I read about Havel. And I recognized – I mean, we obviously knew when he was in prison – but I really did not, as I say, have a chance to meet him until that January in 1990. And then what happened was that he came to the United States, and I was the one that helped to organize his trip to the United States. Spending time with him at that point was very meaningful. We were in Washington and I went with him up to Congress, and he said to me 'Why don't you come with me to the White House?' and I thought 'I don't think that President Bush would be that interested to meet with me!' We're a different party and… Anyway, so I didn't do that, but I went up to Congress with him, and we went to New York together and were at St. John the Divine, and then went to the jazz clubs and everything.

And then he invited me to come back to Prague at the time and I stayed in the Castle. And when I was a little girl, we actually had an apartment on Hradčanské náměstí, so looking out the castle windows onto Hradčanské náměstí where I had been as a little girl… But it was, you know, it was like a dream to all of a sudden be there, and Karel Schwarzenberg was in the same place, and to spend time around the Castle with him! We spent quite a lot of time getting to know each other in different ways.

LK: You mentioned in one interview for the American press that you were even preparing Havel for interviews while he was here. Do you still remember that?

MA: Well I do very much, because the thing that was happening was that he was… A mistake he made; he was not real good on television, I have to say. And I have since, or at some point I saw this speech that he gave for New Year's Day in Prague: he did not want to sound like a

communist, but the thing that was really hard was – I could tell that he never wanted to look at the journalist. And so what we were trying to do was to tell him that when he was on television, he had to actually look at the person that was interviewing him. And he mumbled, actually. He was not a great speaker. He mumbled. And I was talking, actually to Michael Žantovský, and I said ‘You’ve got to get him to look!’ And he said ‘He doesn’t want to look into the eyes of the people that are interviewing him, because that is what happened in jail.’ That is the way that those interrogating would get inside you, by making you look into their eyes, so he would kind of look down.

Chapter IV – Human Rights:

LK: When you look back at the significance of Charter 77, how big an impact do you think it made in the Western world?

MA: I think it made a very large impact. And let me just say partially what had happened was there were lots of questions about the Helsinki Agreement, some criticism in the West of why that agreement had taken place since, among other things it did was to recognize the borders in Central and Eastern Europe, and there were people who wondered why that agreement had been made, and they kind of forgot about the third basket which had to do with human rights. So, Charter 77 was the sign that people such as Havel were able to use that to say: 'You signed this agreement' to the government, and 'You need to live up to it.' All of a sudden there was kind of 'Oh my goodness! The Helsinki Agreement is a double-edged sword,' as far as the communists are concerned. And it really became symbolic of that whole third basket of the Helsinki Agreement, really using it; so people were very conscious of Charter 77.

LK: Human rights were a very important part of Havel's foreign policy, and policy as such. Do you think the concept, as we understand human rights, has changed since Havel named it as this very important [concept]?

MA: Well, it's a very important question. I think that it was viewed in many ways under Helsinki and Charter 77 not just as political rights, but also the rights to think, and to be able to be recognized as an individual, and to have power vis à vis the government that was running your life. I think that what has happened now… There is a – I don't know how much emphasis there is on that, that continues to be a part – but the other part that has now become part of human rights; there is a lot of the economic aspects, in terms of poverty. And more the evolution in terms of being ethnically cleansed is a crime against humanity. And so, I think in many ways

the political part continues to exist, but it has been enlarged into some other areas, and there really is – even though the United Nations Charter speaks about human rights – there is more and more of an attempt to make it an international issue, which in some ways is good, and in some ways bad, because every country has a somewhat different definition. But there really was something about the democratic (small 'd-') part about human rights that came out with Charter 77, and the desire of people to be able to speak their minds and not to be run by a regime and the power of a regime mostly on political freedom of speech.

LK: How much, or what, do you think Havel would think about this change of perception of human rights? I know that it is difficult to know what he would think, but still, you were his friend…

MA: I think he would be accepting it, because he was somebody who was always open to… He had an open mind I think in terms of – he was very interested in what was going on in the Balkans and also, frankly, what was going on in Burma, and understanding that it wasn't just a European concept, that it was something that people had a desire to speak out. I think that he did understand that there was this ethnic connection with it in other places in terms of governments, but it's hard. I can only speculate in the following thing: he was somebody who really pushed himself to think about other things and to see the larger common humanity, and I think he would have seen it as an evolutionary aspect, I think that he would always see the political part of it. But one of the things I have – there are so many stories – but one of the things I have: he's the one who nominated Aung San Suu Kyi for a Nobel Prize. What happened was Aung San Suu Kyi's husband called me up and said that she was writing a book and would it be possible for President Havel to write the introduction? And I said 'Well let me see if I can work that out,' and I did. And so she to this day talks about Václav Havel, and she just – I just had her sign

something that went to Prague to show that, in fact, that link continues, that she admired everything that he did.

LK: Do you think he was especially adept at transcending borders and uniting dissidents from different backgrounds?

MA: I think so. I do think so. He was very… He spoke a lot about what was going on in China. He clearly developed a relationship with the Dalai Lama that was part of this larger aspect of the common humanity. And when he did Forum 2000, he kind of [brought] people in from other places. I think he had a limitless ability to empathize with people, in terms of what he could do somewhere, so he used his own experience, but I think he had the capability of thinking larger than that. And from everything that I saw over the years that I knew him, his thinking evolved, and he was curious, and respectful, of other people's views.

LK: Was there anything you did not agree on, in terms of his policy?

MA: No, I really can't think of anything. I think that he surprised everybody when he spoke at Congress and said that we should help the Russians. I think it turns out that he was probably right. But no. We did. And I have to tell you, moments of great pride were when we were able to bring the Czech Republic into NATO, and I was there at the Obecní dům [Prague Municipal House] and we were able to do that. And he was sitting in the front row, and we agreed on that. And so no, I think we… But I learned from him. I really did. I don't know what he learned from me, but I certainly learned from him.

LK: What do you think was his approach to NATO? We all know the historical events, of course, that led to the Czech Republic becoming a member of NATO. But when you mention this first row in Obecní dům, how do you think that he felt?

MA: I think he was very pleased. Because I think he understood the importance of that alliance, and that it was political as well as military, and that it was something that would be helpful. I think that was very much his sense. At least he… But I'll tell you what was very interesting: the first time, this was actually in 1994, what happened – I was ambassador at the United Nations – and the United States began to think about whether NATO expansion could come, but countries were not ready yet for that. And so General Shalikashvili, who was chairman of the joint chiefs, and I went around to all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe explaining that the Partnership for Peace was a way to begin that. And so… And then President Clinton came to Prague and they were talking about that, and my sense always was that Havel wanted to be part of the West, in a way, of trying to show, because he believed in democracy and political support for each other in that regard. That didn't go against what he said, 'You have to help the Russians,' he didn't see it, as we didn't, he never saw it as an anti-Russian thing. It was a way countries, Europe that had been artificially divided at the end of World War II - this was a way to come together. The other part is I had done a lot of work in the early '90s as part of a project doing surveys throughout Europe. And I'll never forget, the Czechs wanted to be Europeans. That's what people said 'We want to be part of Europe,' and I think that was part of it.

LK: Václav Havel had definitely a really deep insight into Russia and the structure of the society, it seems, because he was warning – even in 2011, shortly before he died – and that was in connection to the protests in Russia after the parliamentary elections, I think, in 2011. Why do you think that was the case? How was it possible that he out of all people, who wasn't really living in Russia or the former Soviet Union, had such a comprehension of how the society and the regime is influencing every single person and how dangerous it could be?

MA: Well, I think that is something that comes out of his own experience of living under communism, and in his writing. I mean, I think he saw the greengrocers in Moscow also, in terms of people who were not able to express themselves. The thing that I always found interesting about the Czechs especially was that they had not been anti-Russian particularly, until after 1968 in many ways. And so I think that it took an understanding in terms of what the Russian people wanted. That was, I think, kind of Havel's specialty, in terms of understanding the ordinary person. I think that was what was so remarkable, and in his plays I think that was something that really comes out.

LK: Because many people in 2011 a) didn't see Russia as a threat and b) the internal dynamics in the society and the impact on people, which he did really understand.

MA: He did. Anyway, that's my sense. Yeah.

LK: What do you think, and this is speculation of course, that he would think about today's world and how things are going, and the Russians – Ukraine, and what happened in Ukraine?

MA: Well, it's hard to attribute something that is so… A big surprise, I have to say. And I speak for myself, not for him. But I think he would be appalled. I think that particularly in terms of what is happening in other countries – in Hungary, in terms of lack of toleration of any kind of anybody who is different, a kind of closing-down of society. Again, regimes that were imposing their will on people. And, you know, he writes a lot about his relationship with the Poles, with Wałęsa and Michnik and people; I think he would be… I don't want to – that's what I think, but I don't want… My sense from talking to him is he would have been 'What? Are you crazy? Are we going back to something like this? When what we talked about was what we all had in common with each other!' How, in fact, being a part of small 'd-' democratic systems that responded to the people instead of making the people live by laws that they hadn't put into

place… I think he'd be depressed. I think he'd also, I think the things that one reads about in terms of the corruption and being dominated by economic interests, that was never his… Economic interests were never his thing particularly. And I think he'd be disappointed. Not for himself, because that is not what he was about, but saying 'How did this happen, after everything that we all talked about and what we wanted?'

LK: When we talk about Central Europe and the post-communist states, do you think that it could be a result of not so successful transformations? That after all, maybe the countries didn't succeed?

MA: Well, it's something that I think about all the time. And I'm trying to figure out what the issue really was, because I think that in all countries – and this is true in the United States also – we have not thought enough about what the workers wanted, or ordinary people. And that there had been a certain sense that people actually could eat and have a free education, and there were parts that the government in all those countries, including ours, has not responded enough to the needs of the people. And I think that democracy is much harder than people think. I wish he were alive so we could talk about this, because I do think democracy is hard, and there is a certain sense that people do want to be free and think freely, but the question is how much – what happens to their daily lives? What happens if people feel there are a bunch of rich people running their country that do not respond to what their needs are, so the corruption part of it? And a lack of respect for laws, which is true everywhere, frankly.

So, I think we're all trying to figure out what happened, and there really was euphoria, there's no question, when the wall came down and a lot of the changes happened. I think that we all underestimated how difficult it all was going to be. And I have to say that, because I've always… I've been the rah-rah person about the fact that Czechoslovakia was this golden place

in the interwar period and it wouldn't be that hard for the Czechoslovaks to pick themselves up, especially with a leader like Václav Havel. And so I have to say that it is disappointing, in many ways, that this happened.

LK: Do you think that even Havel underestimated how much effort it takes to teach people that democracy is not something that is here for you?

MA: I think maybe, but I think that he, you know, he didn't expect to be president. And he stepped into the role, in many ways, without… Well, I have my 'Havel na hrad' [poster]. I think all of a sudden, going from a dissident, he was supposed to be the one that was going to deal with all these issues, and then his advisers were some young people, and, you know I think it was much harder. I think, and the question was generally how much one can learn, and how a lot of it takes time, and what happens when there are those who are not helping. And there were people in the Czech and Slovak Republic who were not helpful; it is certainly true in the neighbors. And I think that we have to kind of go back and think about what happened and make sure that people can actually live the lives that they want to, and not be told by the regimes what to do. But this is a particularly complicated time, there's no question.

The part that I always remember about Havel, and I was talking about the workers, and I just had this discussion here. I don't think we took into consideration enough about automation, and that people lose their jobs. But what was happening was Havel, I remember him talking about this; we have taken away something that was important for people's identity, which is the idea that they have created something with their hands, that they are separated from their work. And therefore they are separated from some way of identifying themselves, and he spoke about that a lot, in terms of 'How do you give people the dignity of work?' And I think that's one of the things.

LK: He could have foreseen the situation which is now being described?

MA: Yeah, here. Yes.

Chapter v – Legacy:

LK: What do you think is his main legacy, and has it changed since 2011?

MA: Well I think his main legacy is the importance of moral leadership, of people taking responsibility for themselves, of understanding people's humanity, and respect. And he really was a kind of philosopher president. But his main legacy, as far as I am concerned, is the dignity of leadership, and not… And a leader, what is expected instead of self-promotion, but kind of the sense that you're an accidental leader, but that it's the moral responsibility, I think. And I think that those of us who knew him, and also could see the change, from what happened before 1989 and then now, have a responsibility ourselves to talk about what it is to have an enlightened leader who understands that we have a responsibility towards each other, the importance of the individual, and that the governments are actually the servants of the people, and not the other way around.

LK: If you were to talk to American students, what would you like them, except for this, to know about Václav Havel?

MA: Well, I think that, many things, frankly. I think that he understood that he was in this world in order to give people a sense about what they could do, and this great sense of responsibility without being self-important. I keep repeating this: the humility, I mean, the stunningly smart and interesting person who was thrust into the job of being president, and yet not being self-important. We used to have some of the conversations, you know, as I said, we were about the same age and he said 'How come you've got so much energy and I don't?' And I said 'Because I wasn't in jail.' And I think somebody who was really put, for what he believed in, he ended up in

jail. And he lived under circumstances where he was dignified and, you know, and he wrote, and he thought about things, and he tried to make a better world. And I think he is worth studying in so many ways. And at the same time he was this playwright of absurd plays, which meant that there were all kinds of things going on in his head, where he saw things entirely differently. One of the things I have to tell you is when we were in Bermuda, we went to the NASA tracking station. And I was the translator, and he said 'Ask them, if they've ever seen aliens.' And I thought 'I can't possibly ask them that question! They'll think the president of Czechoslovakia is crazy!' So I never translated that!

LK: And he never asked?

MA: No! [Laughs]

LK: Back to today's situation. What do you think he would make of what happened in America during the presidential election, because the topic of responsibility and personal responsibility and civic society is very much a topic right now? What do you think he would add to it?

MA: I think he would be modest about it, I think he would not be criticizing the United States, but I think that he would want to talk to his friends. And he really admired President Bush, both President Bushes, frankly. And I think that he would want to talk not just to Democrats like me, but to those people he had met here to try to figure out what had happened, and to see whether just having rational discussions about what was going on… Which is why, for instance, the global Forum 2000 and things, he always – I think he enjoyed doing those kind of things, and listening to others, and really getting their views, and then mixing them with the Dalai Lama, and kind of bringing people with different views together. And then, when I was there, I was a guest at the time when NATO was meeting in Prague and President Bush was in office, and then he'd put on some crazy performance for all of them and they would wonder what were they doing

there watching these people, trying to figure out what they were saying. Because his humor ultimately was the thing that got him through a lot of tough times.

LK: What was the reaction which you got from all of these…?

MA: Well, literally, I could hear them saying 'Okay, what is this about? Why are these people saying…?' Because they didn't understand what they were saying, but they were all jumping around, or they were in bed, or whatever, and it was a little nutsy. And they were surprised, but they liked Havel.

LK: How did it feel for you? Was it funny, or was it awkward?

MA: No, I thought it was funny. I didn't have to represent his humor. But I think Americans really liked him a lot, and I know that even people I disagreed with, we could agree on what a remarkable person Václav Havel was.

LK: Thank you so much!