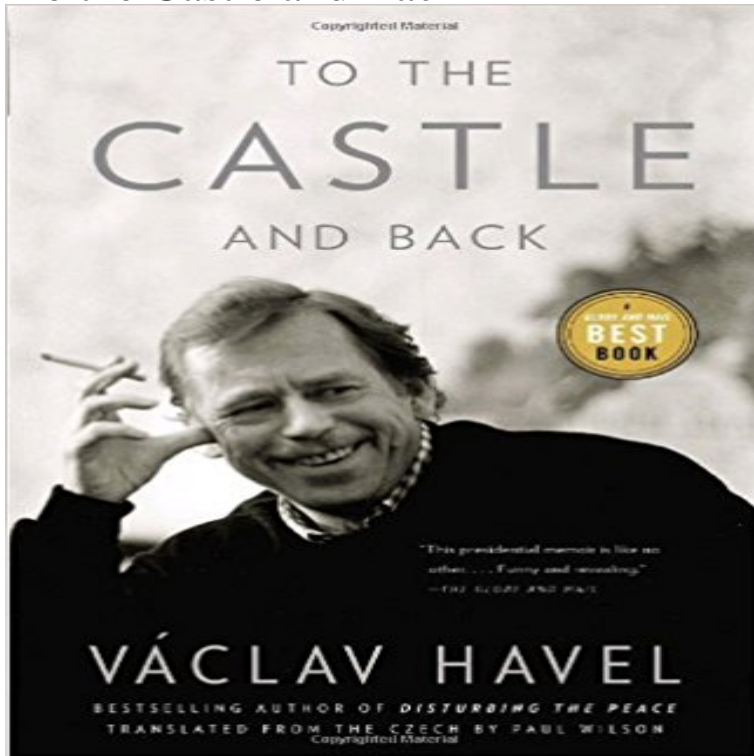


## To the Castle and Back



An astonishingly candid memoir from the acclaimed, dissident playwright elected President after the dramatic Czechoslovakian Velvet Revolution one of the most respected political figures of our time. As writer and statesman, Vaclav Havel played an essential part in the profound changes that occurred in Central Europe in the last decades of the twentieth century. In this most intimate memoir, he writes about his transition from outspoken dissident and political prisoner to a player on the international stage in 1989 as newly elected president of Czechoslovakia after the ousting of the Soviet Union, and, in 1993, as president of the newly formed Czech Republic. Havel gives full rein to his impassioned stance against the devastation wrought by communism, but the scope of his concern in this engrossing memoir extends far beyond the circumstances he faced in his own country. The book is full of anecdotes of his interactions with world figures: offering a peace pipe to Mikhail Gorbachev, meditating with the Dali Lama, confessing to Pope John Paul II and partying with Bill and Hilary Clinton. Havel shares his thoughts on the future of the European Union and the role of national identity in today's world. He explains why he has come to change his mind about the war in Iraq, and he discusses the political and personal reverberations he faces because of his initial support of the invasion. He writes with equal intelligence and candour about subjects as diverse as the arrogance of western power politics, the death of his first wife and his own battle with lung cancer. Woven through are internal memos he wrote during his presidency that take us behind the scenes of the Prague Castle the government's seat of power showing the internal workings of the office and revealing Havel's mission to act as his country's conscience, and even, at times, its chief social convenor. Written with

characteristic eloquence, wit and well-honed irony combined with an unfailing sense of wonder at the course his life has taken, *To the Castle and Back* is a revelation of one of the most important political figures of our time. From the Hardcover edition.

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