

News Release

Secretary of
State for
External Affairs



Communiqué

Secrétaire
d'État aux
Affaires
extérieures

No. 323

December 29, 1989.

DISSIDENT PLAYWRIGHT ELECTED PRESIDENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today welcomed the election of the dissident playwright, Vaclav Havel, as Czechoslovakia's new president.

"Basic freedoms are being restored to the people of Czechoslovakia. The conditions for far-reaching political and economic change are being created, including the holding of genuinely free elections next spring," stated Mr. Clark.

Many factors have contributed to this historic accomplishment, not least the dignified determination of the Czech and Slovak peoples to seize the opportunity to create a society in harmony with their traditions and beliefs, noted Mr. Clark. Special mention should be made of the long-standing contributions and sacrifices of those individuals associated with Charter 77 and the other independent groups, whose moral leadership made the recent events possible.

"Canada has for many years actively supported the fight for greater freedoms in Czechoslovakia, and views the recent events with great encouragement and satisfaction," said Mr. Clark.

The election of Vaclav Havel as President of Czechoslovakia is the beginning of a new period, with its own difficulties and challenges, as the country moves towards its first free elections in over forty years. Mr. Clark expressed the hope that these changes would come quickly and peacefully, and would be assisted by expanded relations between our two countries.