**Michael Žantovský**

Czech diplomat, politician, author, journalist, lyricist, psychologist and currently ambassador of the Czech Republic in London. Born in Prague (1949) in a literary family. He studied psychology at the Charles University in Prague and at Mc Gill University in Montreal, Canada. After he worked in the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague. But he left in 1980 and worked as a free-lance translator, lyricist and publicist. He has translated into Czech more than fifty works of contemporary English and American fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction. He was a contributor to the samizdat press. From 1988, he was the Prague correspondent of Reuters, the international news agency.

During the Velvet Revolution in 1989 he was among the founding members of the Civic Forum, the umbrella organization coordinating the overthrow of the communist régime. In January 1990, he became the press secretary and spokesman for President Václav Havel. He was also the political director of the President´s office.

In July 1992, he was appointed the Czechoslovak Ambassador to the United States, and in January 1993 reappointed as the Czech Ambassador to the United States where he served until February 1997.

In November 1996, he was elected to the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic from a Prague district. In 1997 and in 2001 he was elected the President of the Civic Democratic Alliance, a parliamentary political party. He completed his term in the Senate in 2002 and returned to Foreign Service.

In 2003-2009 he served as the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Israel. In July 2009 he was appointed by the President and on 5 October 2009 he took over his office in London as the Ambassador of the Czech Republic in the United Kingdom.

As one of Václav Havel’s closest friends and as his political ally, press secretary, and advisor, Michael Žantovský was a rare witness to this extraordinary life. With unprecedented access to private correspondence, documents, and interviews, Žantovský presents in his book *Havel: A Life* a powerful, engaging, and revelatory account of a giant among men.