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After Václav Havel's passing, Czechs struggle to find a political moral compass.

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Having gone from the centre of the Holy Roman empire to a Habsburg backwater, Prague is now back on top.

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Czechs cope with an influx of foreign workers while remaining true to their first love: ice hockey.

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Prague counts as one of Europe's great musical capitals and has a rich tradition in photography.

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Prague was home to authors Franz Kafka and Milan Kundera, and film director Miloš Forman.

A NATION OF BEER LOVERS 292

Czech beer is the world's best and Czechs lead the league in per-capita beer consumption.

Prague & the Czech Republic Today

Prague has emerged as one of Europe's leading tourist destinations. The capital heaves with more than five million foreign tourists a year, and most locals are accustomed to the throng. The crowds can make crossing the Charles Bridge trying on summer's day, but they bring vitality to the city and invigorate an already-booming culinary and cultural scene. The pace slows down markedly in the countryside, where unique aspects of Czech culture still flourish.

Best on Film

Amadeus (1985) Mozart's love affair with Prague gets brilliant treatment.

Kolya (1996) Velvet Revolution-era Prague never looked lovelier.

Loves of a Blonde (1965) Miloš Forman's 'New Wave' classic.

Burning Bush (2013) HBO miniseries on Jan Palach, the student who immolated himself in 1969.

Divided We Fall (2000) Director Jan Hřebejk's hard look at the Nazi occupation and Czechs who collaborated.

Best in Print

The Unbearable Lightness of Being (Milan Kundera; 1984) Prague before the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion.

I Served the King of England (Bohumil Hrabal; 1990) The Hotel Paříž is the backdrop to this humorous classic.

The Castle (Franz Kafka; 1926) We wonder which castle Kafka was thinking about?

The Good Soldier Švejk (Jaroslav Hašek; 1923) Hašek's absurdist novel is set throughout the Czech Republic.

My Merry Mornings (Ivan Klima; 1986) The sweeter side of life in communist Prague.

Getting that 'Velvet' Mojo Back

It's been some years now since the death in 2011 of Václav Havel, the country's first post-communist president and undisputed moral authority of the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Havel's death at 75 wasn't unexpected, but seemed to catch the country by surprise. The outpouring of grief was uncharacteristically intense for normally stoic Czechs. News of the death brought tens of thousands onto Wenceslas Square to lay candles at the statue of St Wenceslas. Thousands more lined up days later to file past his coffin and pay their final respects.

Havel's passing left a moral vacuum at the heart of the country that in many ways has yet to be filled. The election in 2013 of a frankly embarrassing president, with a fondness for a drink, and a parliamentary vote that same year that's now mired in allegations that the winner was a former communist agent, have done little to convince Czechs the country is on the right path. To be sure, Havel wasn't always an effective president, but at least one knew where his conscience was. To many, especially younger Czechs, this moral component to public life appears to be missing. Indeed, for the time being at least, there appear to be no new Havels on the horizon.

How 'Not' to Govern a Country

In the 25 years since the Velvet Revolution there have been many strange elections and election years in the Czech Republic. Long-term observers still remember 2009, when the Czech government fell in a no-confidence vote, but new elections weren't held for more than a year. That escapade gave rise to the running joke at the time: 'What's the world's biggest nongovernmental organisation? Answer: the Czech Republic.'

But even by Czech standards, 2013 may go down as the weirdest yet. First, outgoing President Václav Klaus