

My friend Václav Havel

Sparta vs. Slavia, Gambrinus vs. Staropramen, Bursík vs. Zubová, Paroubek vs. Topolánek, Klaus vs. Havel. Czech society is increasingly divided, and people are being forced to take sides. Any fan of Sparta's is an enemy of Slavia's. If you're not with them, you're against them. You don't like what the other guy says? Cut him down to size with, "Well, you would say that, wouldn't you? You drink that dishwater." There's little room for anyone who refuses to take sides, drinks bourbon and cheers for an also-ran like Dukla. So, when Vice Chancellor Petr Hájek writes in his book that your humble publisher is a "friend of Havel's," he's pigeonholing. Achtung!, he's declaring, anything this crackpot says must first be dehavelized. It doesn't matter that your friendly publisher has never even spoken to Havel (unless an exchange at a reception over identical ties counts). It's the media image that matters, not the reality, right? So, thank you, Mr. Hájek, for elevating me in the world's eyes. Now, when do I get Vašek's cell number? Erik Best

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