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The birthday boy and the myth

Every people needs its mythic figures, and Václav Havel has played the role for post-revolutionary Czechs. He was never as interested in truth as his proclamations suggested, and his love was sometimes freer than what becomes a moral leader. As even some of his biggest supporters will admit, he served in the 1990s to legitimize some of the building blocks of a criminal state. He was nevertheless the country's No. 1 export article, and his persona attracted global acclaim and, less directly, foreign investment too. It's probably fair to say that without Havel, the global crises would have hit the CR sooner and harder. He's still alive and kicking, but his myth is being appropriated by a new generation. There are signs that figures like Andrej Babiš, Zdeněk Bakala, Zdeněk Tůma and Karel Janeček might be preparing to join forces to pick up the baton. If the resulting initiative is even more Havelian than Havel, it could be a good thing for the country. If it's a cheap imitation, it might be better to allow the myth to slowly fade away.



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