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Havel and Kellner

The names Václav Havel and Petr Kellner aren't often used in the same sentence. It's usually the other Václav, ex-Pres. Klaus, who is linked to Kellner and to his business successes. It was Klaus who said yesterday that Kellner, who died over the weekend in a helicopter crash in Alaska, was the most prominent symbol of successful Czech capitalism after 1989. Some admirers of Havel and critics of the post-Communist universe dominated on the local level by Klaus and Kellner for much of the past 30 years used the occasion of Kellner's death to criticize what they perceive as the perverted Klaus-Kellner value system: Money over morality, winner take all, East before West. If there were fewer people like Kellner, it was often repeated, the country and the world would be a much better place. Yet Kellner was the product of a system that Havel played a crucial role in bringing to the country. Kellner didn't invent the system; he merely excelled at exploiting it. We can probably safely say that without Klaus there would have been no Kellner, but also that there probably would have been no Kellner without Havel.

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