

With a special emphasis on civil society as a different conception from state, the first part of the thesis outlines the theoretical basis of different conceptions of civil society, giving a summary of the theories of such thinkers as Hobbes, Lock, Montesquie, Rousseau and Hegel as well as their followers, in particular Tocquevill, Hayek, Popper, Habermas. In order to provide the theoretical framework for the second part of the thesis, it gives an overview of the conceptions of civil society defined by the central European thinkers after the WW2, in particular Michnik, Otáhal, Benda, Havel. The second part of the thesis aims both to introduce and to provide a critical analysis of the approach of Václav Havel and Václav Klaus to the civil society in the Czech Republic after 1989, in particular as represented by different civil initiatives and movements. The thesis attempts to provide a deeper understanding of the differences in these two approaches rather than their assessment.