



PAVEL BLÁHA
President of the Organising Committee

WELCOME SPEECH

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to welcome you together with the Czech Anthropological Community and in the name of town Humpolec in this historical hall of Carolinum – one of the oldest universities in the world. The international congresses of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička have been held since 1969 once every ten years.

The last time we met here was in 1999 at the 4th International Anthropological Congress called "World Anthropology at the Turn of the Century". The honourable president of the meeting was – like this year – Prof. Phillip V. Tobias. In his last speech, Prof. Tobias described his personal wish to organize Hrdlička's meeting earlier than in 10 years to be able to join it one more time in his life at least.

The Czech Anthropological Society and our Department of Anthropology and Human Genetics were asked by the Council of European Anthropological Association in May one year ago to organize the meeting of the Council of this Association in Prague in May 2003. The final decision about the place of the Council meeting has been arranged in Zagreb last year in September. Prague was chosen as the right place not only because of the Council members' opinions, but also because of the wish of the famous Prof. Tobias that we all deeply respect and it is the honour for us to meet him again. And there is a third reason for choosing Prague, of course, the 60th anniversary of the death of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička which we celebrate this year.

The 50th anniversary of the death of Dr. Aleš Hrdlička was also celebrated. It was the 19th congress of mainly Czech and Slovak anthropologists, which had about 100 participants. There are about 250 participants here today.

There was an official uncovering of memorial plaques to commemorate Prof. Matiegka and Prof. Malý in the town Mělník last evening. Prof. Matiegka, Prof. Malý and Dr. Hrdlička are the three biggest celebrities, founders and patrons of the Czech anthropology, which originated at the beginning and the first part of the past century. Except their relationship there was a big ambition to contribute to the knowledge about the origin and development of Man as a representative of mankind – *Homo sapiens sapiens*. We, anthropologists at the beginning of the twenty first century, are forced to spread and cultivate their thoughts. Present anthropology becomes integral science, science about all aspects of Man like the most perfect known being in the world. The wide spectrum of our actions shows that the significance of anthropological science for each of us is evident. It is more obvious in the era of globalisation when *Homo sapiens sapiens* is in danger as a consequence of their own activities, and that is why the role and responsibility of anthropology constantly grows. I warned four years ago that our epoch has unfortunately brought ever more reactions and decisions which have nothing in common with science and any scientific analytic approach. Man makes trips to the

space and discovers the base of human genome on one side, but on the other the thinking of human beings has not done any big progress. Calculated escalation of religion directions, covering terrorism, power politics leading to the benefit of fortune, which gives us the Earth and the situation when the truth is in the hands of the more powerful. According to our experience charlatanism in the sphere of human physical and spiritual health, in economics and last but not least even in politics, prevails so much that scientific findings about Man seem to be irrelevant. The low social prestige of science, anthropology included, perhaps also explains entirely insufficient financial backing of scientific programmes and the very schooling of scientists themselves.

We have not had much time to organize everything for our present Prague meeting – just eight months. But we tried our best. Before passing the word to other speakers, I would like to thank all of those who with great enthusiasm worked on the preparation of the Congress. I cordially welcome Prof. Phillip Valentine Tobias and all other participants and guests from many countries. I hope that this meeting will bring outstanding results and help to move anthropology one or more steps forward. I welcome you all and wish a lot of success to our proceedings. Have a pleasant stay in Prague. Herewith I consider the Congress open.