

Speech at the Fourth Congress of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union

Prague, June 1967

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Comrades!

I am taking this opportunity to tell you what you know without me, because I have a few practical remarks to make about it.

The draft Statement of the Central Committee of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers on certain questions of Czechoslovak literature says that the purpose of the socialist order is to bring about the reintegration of man, to whom the status of citizen is guaranteed. Citizen: that was once a glorious, revolutionary word. It denoted a person over whom no one could rule without control, a person who could only be governed skilfully enough to give him the impression that he governed himself almost on his own. To achieve such an impression among the governed used to be the aim of that demanding professional specialization called politics. In reality, the citizen who governs himself was and will remain a myth.

The Marxist critique of power brought to light the hitherto unexplored relations between the ruling power and the ownership of the means of production. This discovery, together with the understanding of human history as the history of class struggles, prepared the social revolution, from which a new solution to the age-old problem of power was also expected. The social revolution in our country succeeded, and the problem of power persists. Although we have “taken the bull by the horns” and are holding on to him, somebody keeps kicking us in the backside and will not stop.

It seems that power has its own indelible laws of development and behaviour, whoever exercises it. Power is a peculiarly human phenomenon, arising from the fact that even in a forest horde somebody has to give orders, and that even in a society of nothing but noble spirits somebody has to sum up the findings of the discussion and formulate what is necessary. Power is a specifically human situation. It afflicts rulers and ruled alike, and endangers the health of both. Millennia of experience with power led humanity to try to lay down certain operating rules: they are that system of formal democracy with its feedback loops, its control switches and its time limits. But into the clearly drawn mechanisms of government intrude the interests of people endowed with brute force, founded on the ownership of capital, on the possession of arms, on advantageous kinship, on the monopoly of production and so on. The rules, then, do not prevent evil, and a slight distortion of this statement, passed on at second hand, can already sound like the vulgar assertion that the rules of formal democracy cause evil. Yet those rules in themselves are neither capitalist nor socialist; they do not determine what is to be done, but how a decision about what is to be done is to be reached. They are a

humane invention, one which in essence makes governing harder. They favour the governed, but they also save a government from being shot when it falls. Observing such a formal system of democracy does not produce very firm governments; it produces only the conviction that the next government may be better. The government falls, then, but the citizen is restored. Where, on the contrary, a government stands firm for a long time, it is the citizen who falls. Where does he fall? I shall not oblige our enemies by saying that the citizen falls on the scaffold. That happens only to a few dozen or a few hundred citizens.

But our friends, too, know that this is enough, because what follows is the fall of a whole nation, perhaps, into fear, political apathy and civic resignation, into trivial daily worries and small wishes, into dependence on ever smaller masters, in short into a subjection of so new and unprecedented a kind that you cannot even explain it to a visitor from abroad. I think that there are no citizens in our country any more. I have grounds for this, collected over years of work in newspapers and radio. For one fresh piece of evidence I need not go far. This congress did not meet when the members of this organization decided it should, but when the master, having considered his cares, graciously gave his consent. In return he expects, being accustomed to it from past millennia, that we will pay homage to his dynasty. I propose that we do not. I propose that we go through the text of the Statement and strike out everything that reeks of the soul of a serf. In nations that have cultivated their culture in criticism of the ruling power, writers of all people need not throw away their good popular upbringing.

I propose that everyone who still speaks here should always put forward a proposal for how he imagines the matter that troubles him should be handled. For let us accept this game of citizens, now that we have been given permission for it and this playing field, and let us go on acting here, for the rest of the time, as if we were of age and in possession of our rights.

I speak here as a citizen of a state which I never wish to give up, but in which I cannot live contentedly. I have civic matters in mind, but I find myself in a delicate situation. I am at the same time a member of the Communist Party, and so I am not supposed to, and do not wish to, speak about party matters. It has happened, however, that in our country there is almost nothing left that would not, at some stage of the debate, become a party matter. What am I to do, when the two of them, my party and my government, have done everything to make their agendas merge? Personally I think this is disadvantageous for both of them. It also creates a difficult situation for us, the citizens assembled here. Party members are bound not to speak about the crucial points of most important questions in front of non-members, who in turn have no access to the meetings where alone such things can be discussed to any purpose; so that both live under a restriction of their basic personal freedom: to talk to each other as equals. It may even be contrary to Article 20 of the Constitution. But I shall discipline myself, withdraw to the civic field and speak only of the government, and only where that word is not apt shall I use the term "ruling circles." It is a tried and tested older term, and for all its apparent vagueness more precise than many another. From time immemorial it has denoted the people who actually ruled, regardless of what nominal office they held in the democratic stage set, people whose power flowed from elsewhere: from wealth, from influential favour, from a

monopoly of production or services, from the possession of arms and so on. It also covers government from closed lodges, sudden messages at night by special courier; one hears behind it a few significant sentences in the antechamber and the lobbies, agreements made before entering the place of agreement, and laws voted on before entering parliament.

Both our nations were prepared for socialism by the whole of their history. And after the last war this state was restored as a political organism whose only remaining task was to organize that socialism. I shall pass over important partial moments, but after 1945 there really was no other programme on the table. One of the postulated attributes of the new power was the unity of rulers and ruled, indeed their identity. The people and the government go together.

And I want to return to what I think about the character of every power: that its development and behaviour are governed by its own internal laws, which neither the person in power nor the class in power can alter in the least, because it is simply a law of human behaviour in a certain situation: in power. The first law of every power is that it wants to continue to be. It reproduces itself in an ever more precise form. Secondly, it constantly homogenizes itself, purges itself of whatever is heterogeneous, until each of its parts is an image of the whole, until all its parts are interchangeable, so that a peripheral cell of power can practically replace the centre, and you can also swap the individual peripheral cells among themselves and nothing happens; the apparatus of power works unswervingly, because in essence it is not supposed to react to changes of environment, altitude, composition of the population or anything else, or rather it is supposed to react always in the same way: to adapt these different environments to itself, to make them uniform, so that one supremely simple model will suffice. Power thus makes itself independent, which is another of its lawful forms of behaviour; it no longer seeks anyone's support, it leans on itself alone, the centre on the periphery and vice versa; they can rely on each other one hundred per cent, and indeed they must, because they form a circle. Nobody can be knocked out of it, and it, in turn, gives nobody up. Internal discords and offences are also liquidated internally.

And then comes the next phase, which I call dynastization. At a favourable moment, power convenes a legislative assembly and has its independent position embodied in a constitutional law. Whatever it does from then on, it does according to the constitution. And since for ten, twenty, fifty years it never again puts this point on the agenda, and nobody else can constitutionally put it on the agenda, and nobody can constitutionally convene another legislative assembly either, a dynasty is founded by constitutional means. It is a dynasty of a historically new type, for it preserves one important democratic principle: anyone who wishes to may join it. The dynasty can therefore die out neither in the male line nor in the female.

From our point of view the most interesting thing is one internal law of power, a quite definite one: a way of working with people that has been described a thousand times in the literature of mankind and is always the same. Power naturally prefers people who are, in their inner make-up, like itself. But since there is a shortage of these, it must also use other people, whom it adjusts for its needs. Naturally suited to the service of power are people who crave power, then people who are obedient by nature, people with a bad conscience, people whose longing for

comfort, advantage and gain sets itself no moral conditions. Those who can be adjusted are people who are afraid and have many children, people who were once humiliated and trustingly accept the offer of a new pride, and then people who are stupid by nature. For a certain time, in certain circumstances and for certain tasks, various moral absolutists and disinterested but badly informed enthusiasts, such as myself, are also temporarily usable. The adjustment of people knows, in essence, a few old devices: bodily and spiritual temptation, the threat of suffering, placing people in compromising situations, the use of informers, casting a person under unjustified suspicion, against which he defends himself by demonstrating his loyalty, casting a person into the hands of bad people and hypocritically rescuing him from there. The sowing of general distrust. Trust is categorized into first-class trust, second-class trust, third-class trust, and a mass of people without trust is presupposed. Information, too, comes in grades of quality: on pink paper, on green paper, on yellow paper and on newsprint.

What I have said about the character of power I mean in the most general sense; I do not even have in mind the government in a socialist state, because I associate the concept of socialism with scientific management. And a scientific theory of socialism would surely be unthinkable without a psychology of power: just as philosophy, political economy and sociology cannot be absent from it, so we cannot do without a psychology of power, drawing on the findings of individual and social psychology, of psychoanalysis and psychopathology.

I have left aside the question of the class character of power, because from this point of view I subsume it under the problem of power in general.

In our country too, the selection of people described above has taken place, according to the criterion of their usefulness to power. Trust was given to obedient people, people who caused no difficulties, who asked no questions that had not been put on the agenda. From every selection the most average person emerged best, and the more complex people disappeared from the scene, people of personal charm and above all people who, by their qualities and their work, used to be the quiet and unmarked measure of common decency, the measure of the public conscience. From political life in particular there vanished personalities gifted with humour and coming forward with ideas of their own. The phrase "politician-thinker" lost its meaning, as did the words "representative" and "champion"; the word "movement" rings hollow when nothing moves. The tissues were torn on which rest the immaterial structure and the personal culture of such human communities as villages, factories, workshops. Nothing could bear the stamp of someone's personal work; only rarely did the notion of the workshop survive; headmasters who worked at their own pedagogy were thrown out, managers of brickworks with a critical view of the surroundings of their brickworks were dismissed, well-established cultural and sports clubs and associations were dissolved which, for a certain kind of people, represented in all their range the continuity of their community, their region and their state.

Benjamin Klička wrote in his book *Divoška Jaja*: "Remember, man, that ability is an insolence by which you offend your superior, and be therefore, if you can, dumber than a fence post, that you may live long and prosper on the earth." I would not even need to read this; I could recite

it from memory, because I have reminded myself of it many times. These words are forty years old and were aimed at the society before the social revolution. But I think that only after it did they acquire their full validity in our country, and that everyone could savour their truth. If you have noticed, all of us, Czechs and Slovaks, incline to the feeling that at our various workplaces we are always managed by someone less able than ourselves. And all of us, wherever we meet, do nothing but grumble. It has become disgusting, because together with those who may have reason to complain, the incompetent idlers, the utter slackers and the poor in spirit also curse, and they too say that they cannot, that they are not allowed to. So a false and harmful unity has arisen among people who do not belong together at all. We are all joined by the most wretched bond anyone could invent: a shared aversion, for different motives.

The practical elements have found a substitute field of activity; the impractical nurse the halo of martyrs; on the literary market there is a fashion for depression, mental breakdown and nihilism. An orgy of snobs. Even a clever man grows stupid. Now and then an instinctive need for self-preservation shows itself in him: he feels like slapping faces right and left. But when he looks up at what hangs over him, and down at what is still capable of trampling him, he says to himself: for God's sake, for whom?

And now let us consider that for twenty years the people who have been most successful in getting ahead have been those with the least resistance to all the demoralizing influences that power produces. Let us consider further that people of fragile conscience find no support in the ruling power, nor any recourse to the laws which, by their letter, ought to protect them. By the letter, it would indeed seem that a body of rights and duties is in force in our country which "thus serves the free, all-round development and realization of the personality of citizens and at the same time the consolidation and development of socialist society" (Constitution, Article 19). I have found in my work in newspapers and radio that in reality citizens all too often cannot obtain their constitutional rights, because practically any functionary, even of merely peripheral power, can make their right conditional on circumstances and terms which are not in the constitution and, in decency, could not be.

I have often been reading the constitution lately, and I have come to the view that it is a badly composed work, which is perhaps why it has lost its authority with citizens and offices alike. Stylistically it is verbose, and yet in many important cases it expresses itself vaguely. I shall give an example relating to the sphere of work and thought that concerns our union most. Article 16 reads: "All cultural policy in Czechoslovakia, the development of education, upbringing and instruction are conducted in the spirit of the scientific world view, Marxism-Leninism, and in close connection with the life and work of the people." Leaving aside that every good teacher will of course understand the notion of upbringing to include a connection with work and life, it is not clear to me which organ and what court, if any, is to decide on the scientific character of a given view, when the very concept of science includes the movement and change of views in step with advancing knowledge, and when this mobility contradicts the immutability and unambiguity of concepts that every legal form requires. Unless the scientific world view were understood as a fixed set of theses; but then the question would be whether our state would

not be a doctrinaire state rather than a scientifically managed one, as the legislator surely intended. Another example, concerning my own subject: Article 28 says: "In accordance with the interests of the working people, all citizens are guaranteed freedom of expression in all fields of the life of society, and in particular freedom of speech and of the press." I believe that the freedoms mentioned are in themselves in the interest of the working people, and so I regard this turn of phrase as superfluous, indeed downright confusing, because the interpretation of what is in the interest of the working people is thus left to anyone at all. I think that an expert, if he had reason to use such an expression, would consider it necessary to enumerate what is or is not in the interest of the working people, and a far-sighted legislator would avoid even an illustrative enumeration and would insist on an exhaustive one. I myself would prefer a laconic formulation whose validity would be beyond dispute. Only a laconically clean formulation gives laws the ring of a well-known saying, so that in the end they pass into the wisdom of our grandfathers, and the general sense of justice then works so well that courts are hardly needed to find the law. The linguistic mushiness and intellectual lack of refinement of the constitution mean that its observance cannot be ensured. The highest legal norm thus becomes a good intention and a programme rather than a legal guarantee of the citizen's rights. For that matter, I believe the constitution should function like any other legal norm, with the addition that no other norm subordinate to it, no regulation, statute, resolution or implementing decree, may limit or obscure its binding force.

I have set out my view of the nature, evolution and behaviour of every power, and I have tried to show that the control mechanisms which are supposed to stand against it are failing, so that the citizen loses his self-respect and objectively forfeits the status of citizen. If this state of affairs lasts as long as it has already lasted in our country, it is understandable that it inscribes itself in the thinking of many people, in the philosophy of life of the youngest generation especially, which has learned neither from study nor from practical activity that there exists a certain continuity in mankind's toiling towards a perfect democracy. If this state of affairs were to continue (and if the natural defensive reactions of people were not at the same time working against it), the very character of our nations would change in the next generation. In place of a resistant cultural community there would arise a kind of easily manageable population which it would be a real pleasure, even for a foreigner, to govern. To let that happen, I think, we need not have dug in our heels for a thousand years.

Proceeding from the view that none of us was born in order to be easily governed, I propose that the Writers' Union take the initiative and, possibly in cooperation with the Union of Journalists and other unions whose professional problems are similar, ask the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences for an expert opinion on the constitution and, if it proves necessary, come forward with a proposal to amend it, for instance by recommending to its members that in the next election campaign they attend pre-election meetings, raise these problems there and work to ensure that the elected deputies are aware of them; but it is also possible to consider that each of us might, even sooner, visit his deputy and ask him to speak on this subject in parliament.

As I stand here speaking, I do not at all have the free feeling a person ought to have when he freely says what he wants. I have rather the feeling that I am, quite cravenly, taking advantage of a kind of truce between citizen and power, that I am trading on the fact that this happens to be a kind of closed season for writers and artists. How long it will last, I do not know: until winter, or perhaps only until tomorrow. Just as I do not believe that citizen and power can become identical, that the ruled and the rulers can meet for a sing-song, so I do not believe that art and power will ever delight in how well they get on together. They will not, they cannot, ever; they are different, they do not suit each other. What is possible, and what also gives our effort hope, is this: that the two will understand each other's situation and work out decent rules of contact. Writers are people too, and the ruling circles also consist of people. If any of us were, by the play of chance, to find himself in an organ of political power, its internal polarization would be induced in him too, and he would have trouble with himself. A freedom-loving man, also of course a little egoistic and thinking of his own purity one decisive millimetre more than of the filth of the world, a man who sees the complexity of things but madly longs for them to be simple, a poet, say, or a musician, will not enter state power. The poet-minister is only a small graceful bow made by power in a good mood. I am speaking here of incompatibility, and I am not reckoning with enmity.

[The following passage was omitted from the Literární listy printing, which marked the cut with an ellipsis. It is restored here from the published proceedings of the congress.]

I will tell you about an experience of mine, to which I have had to return in my mind several times over the last two days. In March of last year I was present, as a member of the editorial staff of Literární noviny, at a meeting at the Ideological Department of the Party's Central Committee. The meeting did not turn out well for us. I sat at the table directly opposite the Secretary of the Central Committee, Comrade Jiří Hendrych, so that instead of the usual impression of an outline I suddenly had a close-up of the face of a man older than myself (at home I was taught to greet people that much older), the face of a man who, from an institution, changed before my eyes into somebody who, like me, has his worries, personal, professional and possibly others, certainly greater than mine, and has been living with them longer. I did not speak very skilfully there that day; I wanted to speak completely openly and sincerely, but I kept taking fright, I kept backing down, it seemed to me that they were attributing other motives to it, they were whispering something to each other, I gave in to a feeling of helplessness, which humiliated me, so that a moment later I lost my temper. Then I went home, and besides confused thoughts about the whole scene, an entirely new thought forced itself on me, or rather a disquieting intimation that confused my division of things into two clear fields, that "WE and THEY"; I felt that a gust from the unknown had struck me, that I had an intimation of the human predicament in a certain situation, one which the concepts hidden under such frequently used terms of ours as "class viewpoint," "opposition" and so on evidently make no allowance for. They are wartime terms. I naturally had to help myself to some firm position, at least a provisional one, so that I could go on acting at all. And I told myself that the predicament of the situation is part of the job. It belongs to us, because he wants to do it, although he need not, and I want to be on that newspaper too. But I received a

new impulse then to think about power as a human situation. I will end this digression and pick up where I left off.

Writers are people too. The ruling circles also consist of people. Writers do not want anarchy either, because they wish to live in pleasant towns, they wish to have nice flats and wish them for others too, they wish industry to prosper and trade to make a profit. And that is surely not possible without the organizing activity of a government.

Art cannot give up the theme of government, because to govern means constantly to decide, directly or indirectly, by administrative act, about the lives of people, about their happiness and disappointment in life, about what they merely think and what is undecidable; and the activity of power meets the activity of art precisely on that undecidable ground which is nevertheless somehow decided. Art therefore cannot give up the criticism of governments, because governments as they are, with the manners they have, are a product of the culture of nations. Our government, let us say, will please artists by praising them for having made, for example, a fine pavilion at the world exhibition. It will surely say so gladly; saying so is also a political element, and it may even say so sincerely. But that does not mean that the artists must be pleased with what the government is like. Such a pavilion, which in a certain sense enjoys the right of cultural extraterritoriality, only shows what the same creators could do at home if they could, if they carried that weight on their own territory. So I confess to something I have thought many times: are we not all serving a deception when we build fine representative pavilions of culture? When we know that our best work is not wanted, that we do everything only by God's sufferance, that the clock is running and we do not even know the date. Everything that culture has achieved, like everything good that people in our country have done at all, all the good products, all the buildings, all the good ideas realized from laboratories, studios and institutes, all of it is here in spite of the way our ruling circles have behaved for years. It was quite literally wrung out of them by defiance. But I do not want to be unjust. I am convinced that every better movement within these ruling circles, too, every attempt to improve the style, is paid for dearly, brings sacrifices, and if it yields a visible result, that too is dearly wrung out. So what management, what leadership? I see braking. In ten years it has never happened to me that, at one of their reports, I felt: look, here is a splendid idea that nobody has had before! On the contrary, sometimes I said gloomily to myself: big deal, everybody has known that for ages! And most often: how am I going to save my own idea in all this, how am I going to outwit them, since I cannot persuade them, because I never see them? I see and hear power giving way only where it sees and hears too strong a resistance. Not arguments; those do not convince it. Only failure, repeated failure, when it wants to do something in the old way. Failure that costs us all money and nerves. I see a constant will, and also a constant danger, that the older, worse times will return. For what do those words mean, that we have been given a union, a literary fund, a publishing house and newspapers? A threat that they will take them away from us if we are not good. If I accepted that these things were theirs, I would say what my sister says: he giveth and he taketh away... But are they really the masters of everything? And what, then, do they leave in hands other than their own? Nothing? Then we need not be here! Let them say so! Let it be perfectly visible that, in essence, a handful

of people want to decide the being or non-being of everything, what is to be done, thought and felt. That is what speaks of the position of culture in the state, that is the picture of a nation's level of culture. Not, then, the individual cultural works that are honoured and proclaimed.

Last season we often had occasion to hear that the ruling circles recognize a certain autonomy of culture in its own field. But culture, we were told, should not be offended if it gets reproached when it crosses over into the field of politics. The argument used against us is that we are violating our own slogan, that every job should be done by experts. It is true that politics, too, should be done by experts, but where does the certainty come from that they are the ones? I doubt it, and I would rather show the reason for my doubt only figuratively: a doctor is certainly an expert. He can diagnose our illness better than we can, and he can also treat us expertly. But he surely cannot claim to know better than we do how we feel under his treatment. And only a crude quack of a doctor can operate on us when we have not signed him any consent form.

The autonomy of art and culture? That is a slogan and a temporary tactic. Today this applies and tomorrow that; it looks different, but one need not be a great expert to recognize that it all comes from the same barrel, only the barrel has two taps.

Just as I do not feel very safe in the cultural-political situation, which the ruling power can evidently drive to the point of rupture, so I do not feel secure as a citizen outside the walls of this hall either, that is, outside this playing field. Nothing is happening to me and nothing has happened to me. That is simply not done any more these days. Am I to be grateful? I do not feel like it. I am afraid. I see, in fact, no solid guarantees. I see the prosecutor's office working better, but those prosecutors: do they have guarantees, do they feel safe? If you liked, I could interview a few of them for the newspapers. Do you think it would be printed? I would not be afraid to interview even the Prosecutor General about why innocently convicted and rehabilitated people do not, as a matter of course, regain their original rights, how it is that the national committees refuse to give them back their flats or houses; but that will not be printed. Why has nobody decently apologized to those people, why do they not have the benefits granted to the politically persecuted, why is there haggling with them over money? Why can we not live where we like, why does the tailor not go to Vienna for three years and the painter to Paris for thirty, with the possibility of coming back other than as criminals? Our parliament evidently knows one legal principle well: *Nullum crimen sine lege*, no crime without a law. It applies it by manufacturing for the state as many criminals as it wants. Why can people who definitely do not like it here not go to the devil, and why do people who do not want to see the democratic measures that have been begun brought to completion not go away themselves?

It is true that several new and better laws have been passed. It is true that others are being prepared; it is also true that the new press law, like a new broom, sweeps clean. An amendment of the law on the other civil liberties, freedom of assembly and association, is also being prepared. The draft is being prepared by the Ministry of the Interior; the typeset article about it in *Literární noviny* was confiscated. I see no guarantees. What guarantees? I do not know. Here I stop, because I have come to the last thing, to one great doubt: whether the ruling

circles themselves, the government and its individual members, themselves have guarantees of their civil liberties, without which no creative work can develop, not even the making of policy. At this point my characterization of the internal laws of every power closes, and I can only refer to a formulation uttered by others: about the mill that sometimes grinds even those who set it turning.

The cultivated execution of what is surely indispensable for the organized running of a state, that is the measure of the level of culture actually attained. That is why, more than cultural policy, what matters is the culture of politics. Where the politics of politicians is cultured, the writer, the artist, the scientist and the engineer need not exhaust themselves haggling over their rights as a profession, an estate, a sector, a club or a union, need not stress the specific nature of their work, need not provoke the aversion of other citizens, workers, farmers and clerks, who have a right to the same things as they do but find no means of pushing their ideas through the sieve of censorship, who cannot translate their sorrow or their moral pathos and present it in artistic form, in construction and colour, in aphorism or poem or musical composition. It is uncultured politics, not bad cultural policy, that creates the flashpoints of struggles for freedom, and then takes offence that people keep talking about it; it does not understand that freedom truly exists only where it does not need to be talked about. It is offended that people testify to what they see, but instead of changing what people see, it keeps wanting to change their eyes. And meanwhile the one thing that alone is worthy of all the pathos of all of us is slipping away into time: the dream of a government that will be identical with the citizen, and of a citizen who governs himself almost on his own. Is that dream realizable?

On the road towards this dream, at which our nations aimed from the depths of their history, we have passed through points of partial success. One of them was the founding of an independent Czechoslovakia through the efforts of progressive popular forces and progressive politicians, which is not yet expressed in the draft Statement, and I therefore propose that it be expressed. For it created a state which, for all its imperfection, brought a high degree of democracy by the historical standards of the regimes then in existence, and which accumulated in the feelings and thinking of its citizens no significant aversion to the ideals of socialism, realizable in the second stage of the state's development. After the war, the continuity of the idea of a social state turned directly into a programme of socialism. The special conditions under which its fulfilment was undertaken, above all the state of socialism in the country where it had existed before, and the level of knowledge about socialism at that time, meant that in our country deformations occurred in its realization, and events which cannot be explained by the local climate alone and do not follow from the character of the people or from its history. When this period is discussed, when an explanation is sought for why we lost so much moral and material strength, why we fell behind economically, the ruling circles say that it was necessary. I think that from the point of view of all of us it was not necessary; that it was perhaps necessary for the mental development of the organs of power, which in essence forced all the supporters of socialism to go through this development with them. It must be seen that in twenty years not a single human problem has been solved in our country, from primary needs such as housing, schools and a prosperous economy, to the subtler needs which the

undemocratic systems of the world cannot solve, such as the feeling of full worth in society, the subordination of political decisions to the criteria of ethics, faith in the meaningfulness of even small work, the need for trust between people, the rise in the education of whole masses. And I fear that we have not risen onto the world stage either; I feel that the name of our republic has lost its good sound. I see that we have contributed no original ideas or good notions to mankind, that we have, for instance, no proposal of our own for how to produce without drowning in the by-products of production, that so far we dully follow the dehumanized civilization of the American type, repeat the mistakes of East and West alike, that our society has no organ that would look for a way of forestalling, by some economical short cut, the rattling, smoke-filled development of our way of life.

I am not saying by this that we have lived in vain, that all of it has no value at all: it has value, but the question is whether it is not the value of a warning. Even so, the overall knowledge of mankind would have advanced; but the instrument of that lesson need not have been a country whose culture knew of the danger. I propose that the Statement express what progressive Czechoslovak culture knew in the nineteen-thirties, or at least what it felt.

Lately I have met many remarkably fresh people. A few individuals, but also a few collectives, at work and in leisure. Remarkable was the resistance they had shown: they had withstood the influence of power and were guided by the natural principles of better people: to do one's work properly, to keep one's word, not to betray oneself, not to let oneself be poisoned. Beside these fairly classic qualities of better people, one new quality had grown onto their character: a lack of any sense of distance between subordinate and superior, between the lower-placed and the higher-placed. Strangely, this repellent quality of every present-day slacker, only when added to those classic good qualities, really did act as a new trait of a person who does not have to humble himself for his bread.

In conclusion I should like to state explicitly, perhaps unnecessarily, what surely follows from my whole speech: my criticism of power in this state I do not lay at the door of socialism, because I am not convinced that such a development of it in our country was necessary, and because I do not identify this power with the concept of socialism, as it wishes to identify itself with it. Nor need their fates be identical. And if the people who exercise this power (for this moment I conjure them away from power and appeal to them as individuals with private feelings and thoughts), if they came here and put one question to us all, whether that dream is realizable, they would have to regard it as an expression of our good will, and at the same time of the highest civic loyalty, if the answer were: I do not know.

Translated from the Czech text as published in *Literární listy*, no. 5 (28 March 1968), under the heading "From the contribution to the Fourth Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Writers," with the one passage that printing omitted supplied from the congress proceedings (*IV. sjezd Svazu československých spisovatelů: Protokol*, Prague, 1968, pp. 146–147). Vaculík spoke in an afternoon session of the congress; parenthetical notes of applause and laughter in the stenographic record are omitted here. For the speech Vaculík was expelled from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in September 1967. Translated for ceciliejilkova.com, 2026.