

You for coffee?: customs and hospitality in Czech culture

5HD280 From Kafka to Havel

lecture 9



EVROPSKÁ UNIE
Evropské strukturální a investiční fondy
Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání

MŠMT
MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY

How were Czechs perceived

In the past

- Closed, distrustful
- Religious
- Musical
- Basing on their language
- Bad diet and hostile services



How were Czechs perceived

Today

- Hyper tolerant
- Friendly but closed
- Adventurous
- Weed smokers and beer drinkers
- Can do fun of themselves
- Still complaining about everything
- Bad services (hostile behavior)



Sense of humour



- Many Czechs like incorrect jokes that are sometimes spiteful
 - So they make jokes about women, wives and husbands, about minorities etc.
- Czech are able to do fun of almost everything even of situations that go bad for them

Going to a public place

- Czech people don't care what you are doing publically as far it doesn't cost them anything or endangering their families/property.
- Old fashioned people won't criticize you openly, but people love to talk as much as anywhere else.
- A very deep problem in the society is prejudice against Germans, Slovaks, Poles, Russians, but most of all **Romas**.

Making and meeting friends

How it happened in the past?

- In school
- In their neighborhood
- During the military service and student brigades
- During stable whole-life jobs
- They were mostly life long friendships

Making and meeting friends in the past



Making and meeting friends

How it happens today

- New ways of communication via social networks
- In a pub
- In a school
- At the parties
- Teambuilding



Going to a pub together

- Casual Friday: if there are two of you, one pays, the next time it will be your friend's turn
- A big group of friends: everybody for himself
- Birthday: you pay it all

Attention: You can make good friends in a pub, but you can get dangerously drunk. By rejecting to have a snifter with somebody, you can offend a friend (only a woman can effort to say no – after expressing it loudly enough for several times)

Team building



- Mostly connected with sports
 - Going on a river, skiing
 - Sport activities are mixed with drinking
 - Can be organized by work or your sport team etc.
- Remark from the past
 - Going to your summer house with friends is now only sporadic but it had huge tradition in the past

Visiting a friend

- Take off your shoes before entering apartment
- If you come for lunch, expect a lunch
- During talking after lunch you can be served by a cake and coffee.
 - Obligatory question you will be asked:
 - You for coffee or wanna some coffee?
 - Traditionally two types of coffee
 - Instant one
 - Turek/s logrem (Turk coffee/ with coffee grounds)



Having an affair



- Among Czech population It is still more tolerable when men have an affair than women
- Czech politicians have affairs all the time, nobody cares about their private life. Well, people care, but only in the sense of the Blesk newspaper (Czech variant of the Sun, Bild):

How they spend holiday

- Going to sea
 - Mostly Croatia and Tunis
- Making adventurous trips to high mountains or exotic destinations
- In Czech republic
 - Cottages
 - mushrooming



Czech year – traditional habits

A black and white photograph of a large crowd of people, likely at a wedding or a public event. In the center, a bride and groom are visible, surrounded by guests. The scene is outdoors, with a building in the background. The image is slightly faded and serves as a background for the text.

Wedding

- Parting with freedom
- A day before wedding bride or bridegroom goes to a pub with friends to drink and talk

Czech year – traditional habits



Wedding

- Friends of newlyweds make lane and throw rice on them while leaving the church or place where the wedding ceremony is held
 - Rice is a symbol of wealth and fertility
- Bridegroom sometimes is put horse-collar on his neck or has iron ball tied to his leg from his friends as a symbol he is not free anymore

Czech year – traditional habits



Wedding

- During the lunch newlyweds eat a soup from one plate and they are tied with table cloth
- Similarly they cut the wedding cake together with one knife and the cake must be handed out to the wedding guests
- After the lunch waiter drops the plate and newlyweds have to clean the floor together
 - Symbol of happiness and cooperation
- Before they get home bridegroom has to carry the bride forward the threshold

Czech year – traditional habits



Easter

- Green Thursday
- Small cakes called Judas are baked
- Since Big Friday when the bells flew to Rome men use ratchets instead of it
- On Easter Sunday baked lamb cake and easter cake are eaten and women colour eggs
 - Eggs as a symbol of fertility

Easter food



Czech year – traditional habits



Easter:

- On Easter Monday men of all age go from house to house and hit women with whip made from young wicker for they are healthy and fresh all the year
- In some regions women pour the water on men for the same purpose

Easter – wicker whip



Czech year – traditional habits

Walpurgis night (witches)

- April 30th
- Some nights power of witches is stronger so bonfires are burned against them
- This is also connected with drinking
- 1st day of May
 - Men kiss women under blooming cherry tree



Czech year – traditional habits



All Saints day:

- One of the oldest holiday – since 998
- People go to the cemeteries, putting flowers and burning candlesticks on the graves of their dead relatives
- People baked special cakes for beggars and hobos in the past

Czech year – traditional habits

St. Nicolas

- St. Nicolas descends together with the Angel from heaven to the Earth where the devil joints them and walk about and together they ask children whether they behaved well all the year
- Children have to recite the poem and then they get some sweets or oranges



Czech year – traditional habits

Christmas:

- On Christmas Eve people decorate tree
 - Originally German tradition form 16th century
 - In Czech lands since 1812
 - Tree was originally hanged upside down
- Trees in public places
 - 1920 Tree of the Republic in Brno
 - Celebration of the happy event when small girl was found alive in the forest during the winter of 1919



Czech year – traditional habits



Christmas:

- To eat meat during the day is forbidden for to see golden pig a symbol of affluence and the beginning of winter's departure
- Lead pouring – guessing about future form the resulting shape of the lead
- Throwing the shoe
- If it falls by toe-cap toward the door, the girl will marry within a year

Czech year – traditional habits



- Christmas dinner
 - Fried carp with potato salad
 - In Czech lands since 19th century but widespread consumption of it after WWI
- After the dinner Christmas presents are unwrapped under the tree
- For Czech the most important is Christmas Eve (dec 24th)



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