

## Zahradníček's blog for English speaking students

### Part thirty: Czechs, or Europeans?

This is the last part of my blog, and so I want to speak about something more important than *slivovice* or *mandlovice*, although also topics like that may be sometimes symptomatic and speaking about the “soul of the nation”.

Who are the Czechs surrounding you as a group of international people? Are they nationalists, xenophobes, Moravians, Czechs, Central-Europeans, Europeans, or even cosmopolitans? Of course, they may be all of this. Well, it is the same as in many other countries: younger, more educated people in the cities (but also some traditional villages) tend to be friendly to foreigners; usually they speak at least English, so they can help you if you need something. They are open to the progress of science; they are also open to changes in the society. Sometimes they are so open that they forget to be a little bit conservative and to keep local traditions. Some of them are caught by consumerism and their world is the world of super- and hypermarkets, shopping centres and multiplex cinemas, that look exactly the same in Brno, Paris, Singapore or Johannesburg. Maybe they underestimate the fact that if you mix all colours together, you obtain just an ugly brown, but if you have a patchwork that keeps the colours of original pieces, it is usually better.

On the other hand, there exist also different Czechia: that of people in some industrial areas with people still feel to have no future. There exist people living in the peripheral parts of Czechia, a countryside that lost its (German) roots in 1945. Even now, 75 years later, it is evident that people living there are descendant of those coming there from all corners of Czechoslovakia and replacing the original German people. It is a paradox that these people (and also older and less educated people) tend to prefer the nation (although vaguely defined) to the common European idea. They are sceptic to everything, and they are easy victims of conspirative websites, hoaxes and Mr. Putin's trolls. Unfortunately, the media and social networks have a big power now, and it is quite common to see senior re-sending hoaxes to other seniors. They believe them, because they got them from their friends; and the friends got them from other friends; and so on.

Some of these people also believe that “it was better under communists”, although there exist many fact-checks making sure that this is not true. In fact, this effect is seen in all post-totalitarian regimes, even quite long after collapse of the totality: people do not know how to live in a democratic society, they are sometimes like animals released from a cage and unable to exist in freedom.

On the other hand, even such people may be quite friendly. Majority of xenophobes are only xenophobic on Facebook, but not in real contact with real people, although exceptions exist. If they are worried about something, it is also because they do not know it and they do not understand it. Those that use Euro like it; those that do not are afraid of it. The highest fear about migration wave is in countries where there are nearly no migrants; even in Germany, the fear is higher in the Eastern part (the former “DDR”) than in the West, although the concentration of the migrants in the Western part is much higher than that in the Eastern part.

Maybe sometimes you might find Czech people to be “cold”, not so friendly as people in some other countries. But this is often sign of the fact that Czechs usually do not like friendships that keep being just on the surface. They do not smile to anyone saying that they are happy. But if you find real friends, they would open and their friendship would be probably quite deep.

Dear students, I am glad that at least some of you followed these blogs. As I have written in the first blog, I would appreciate and feedback that can help me. And thanks to all of you for such an inspiring, international cooperating environment that helped me very much at writing these blogs.

I hope that I will keep having contact at least with some of you. All the best in 2020 to everybody!

Ondřej Zahradníček, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019