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## CHAPTER 1: PROFILE

### Introduction

The roots of the Czech Republic go back to the arrival of Slavic tribes in Central Europe in the 5th century C.E. The history of Czech lands includes the rise and fall of the Holy Roman Empire and the Austrian Empire, 2 world wars, and 40 years of Communism as part of the Soviet Bloc.

The Czechs, who have tackled the challenge of converting to a free-market economy and democratic government with enthusiasm, have one of the most robust post-Communist economies and a stable democracy.



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Czech Republic Coat of Arms

### Geography

#### *Area and Climate*

The Czech Republic lies in central Europe. With a total area of about 79,000 sq km (30,400 sq mi), it is slightly smaller than the state of South Carolina.<sup>1</sup> The country has historically been split into Moravia in the east and Bohemia in the west. At an average elevation of 500 m (1,640 ft), Bohemia sits higher than Moravia. Several mountain ranges surround Bohemia.<sup>2</sup> Moravia is a low-lying area between the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands to the west and the Carpathian Mountains to the east.<sup>3</sup>



© TingTing Huang / flickr.com  
Czech in the summer

The climate of the Czech Republic is mild, with warm summers and cold but humid winters. The warmest months are June–August with temperatures reaching as high as 32°C (90°F) at lower elevations. In winter, temperatures drop below freezing and many parts of the country receive snow.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Mountains*

Four major sets of mountains ring the diamond-shaped Bohemian highland.<sup>5</sup> To the west and northwest are the Krušné Hory (Ore Mountains), running along the Czech-German border.<sup>6</sup> To

<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Czech Republic,” in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>2</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 50.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Fedor and Mark W. Gould, “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>4</sup> Helen Fedor and Mark W. Gould, “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>5</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Bohemian Massif,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/71591/Bohemian-Massif](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/71591/Bohemian-Massif)

the south, along the Czech border with Germany and Austria, are the Český Les (Bohemian Forest) and the Šumava Mountains. The source of the Vltava River lies in the center of this range.<sup>7</sup> To the north, along the Czech-Poland border are the Sudety Range, including the Jizerské Hory (Jizera Mountains) and the Krkonoše Hory (Giant Mountains). This range contains the country's highest peak, Mount Sněžka, which rises 1,602 m (5,256 ft).<sup>8</sup>

Separating Bohemia and Moravia are the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, an elevated area with limestone hills that measures 11,750 sq km (4,536 sq mi) and stretches from the Austrian border into the center of the country.<sup>9</sup> The westernmost mountains of the Carpathian chain run along Moravia's border with Slovakia. The Javorníky and Jeseník Mountains in northern Moravia near the Polish border are separated by a low-lying channel known as the Moravská Brána (Moravian Gate).<sup>10, 11</sup>



© Marcin Szala  
Moravská Brána

### *Bodies of Water*

Three of Europe's major waterways—the Elbe, the Oder, and the Danube—have sources in the Czech Republic, making water pollution a serious concern not only for the Czech Republic, but also for Germany, Poland, and Austria.

The Vltava, the country's longest river, runs through central Bohemia before feeding into the Elbe River 29 km (18 mi) downstream from Prague.<sup>12</sup> The Elbe is one of Europe's major waterways, and it links the landlocked Czech Republic to the ocean. Its source is in the Krkonoše Hory. After looping through Bohemia, it crosses into Germany and eventually flows to the North Sea.<sup>13</sup>



© Matthias17 / flickr.com  
Elbe river valley

The Morava River runs south through central Moravia and drains into the Danube River in Austria. Its southern course forms part of the Slovakian border.<sup>14</sup> The Oder River starts in northern Moravia near the town of Ostrava; it flows north across the

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Ore Mountains," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/192171/Ore-Mountains](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/192171/Ore-Mountains)

<sup>7</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Bohemian Forest," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/71579/Bohemian-Forest](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/71579/Bohemian-Forest)

<sup>8</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 277.

<sup>9</sup> South Bohemia and Bohemian Forest, "Českomoravská Vrchovina," n.d., <http://www.jiznicechy.org/en/index.php?path=priir/ceskomor.htm>

<sup>10</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Beskid Mountains," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/63005/Beskid-Mountains](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/63005/Beskid-Mountains)

<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Carpathian Mountains," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/96681/Carpathian-Mountains](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/96681/Carpathian-Mountains)

<sup>12</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Vltava River," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/631625/Vltava-River](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/631625/Vltava-River)

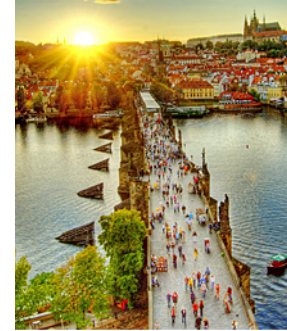
<sup>13</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Elbe River," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/182121/Elbe-River](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/182121/Elbe-River)

<sup>14</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Morava River," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/391869/Morava-River](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/391869/Morava-River)

border and through Poland into the Baltic Sea. Because of the development of heavy industry in the area around Olomouc, pollution in the Oder River has been a continuous problem.<sup>15</sup>

## Major Cities

Prague is the capital of the Czech Republic and its largest city, with a population of more than 1.2 million.<sup>16</sup> The city, founded in the 9th century, has been one of the major centers of politics and culture in Europe since the time of the Holy Roman Empire. Today, the “city of 100 spires” boasts an impressive collection of historic buildings and churches that attract thousands of tourists every year.<sup>17</sup>



© Edgar Barany  
Prague

Brno is the second-largest city in the Czech Republic and the traditional capital of Moravia.<sup>18</sup> The city has a population of 371,400. It is known for its university and the International Trade Fair.<sup>19, 20</sup>

Ostrava (population 303,600), one of the main industrial centers of the Czech Republic, lies to the northeast near the source of the Oder River.<sup>21, 22</sup> Nearby coalfields have fueled its heavy manufacturing industry since the early 19th century, although today the town is the center of a developing high-tech industry.<sup>23</sup>

Plzeň, or Pilsen, in western Bohemia is best known for its beer, which has been made locally for more than 700 years. Beer has been a major export of the city since the technique of mass production was perfected in the 19th century.<sup>24</sup> The city is home to Škoda, one of the oldest and largest car manufacturers in Europe.<sup>25</sup>

Karlovy Vary, or Carlsbad, a spa town that for centuries was popular with Europe’s elite, lies in western Bohemia.<sup>26</sup> Today the town is known for its fine glass, textiles, mineral salts, and an international film festival.<sup>27, 28</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Oder River,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/42502/Oder-River](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/42502/Oder-River)

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Brinkhoff, “Czech Republic: Major Cities,” City Population, 23 December 2011, [http://www.citypopulation.de/CzechRep-Cities.html#Stadt\\_gross](http://www.citypopulation.de/CzechRep-Cities.html#Stadt_gross)

<sup>17</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 82.

<sup>18</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 289.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Brinkhoff, “Czech Republic: Major Cities,” City Population, 23 December 2011, [http://www.citypopulation.de/CzechRep-Cities.html#Stadt\\_gross](http://www.citypopulation.de/CzechRep-Cities.html#Stadt_gross)

<sup>20</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 23.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Brinkhoff, “Czech Republic: Major Cities,” City Population, 23 December 2011, [http://www.citypopulation.de/CzechRep-Cities.html#Stadt\\_gross](http://www.citypopulation.de/CzechRep-Cities.html#Stadt_gross)

<sup>22</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Ostrava,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/434433/Ostrava](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/434433/Ostrava)

<sup>23</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 278.

<sup>24</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 200.

<sup>25</sup> Global Security, “Skoda Works,” n.d., <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/at-kuk-skoda.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 200.

## History

### *Early Slavic Nations*

Slavic tribes arrived in Central Europe sometime in the 5th century. They eventually found themselves caught between the Avars pushing into Europe from the east and Germanic tribes to the west. In the 8th century the Moravians pushed the Avars back, and for 70 years ruled a small empire in Central Europe. A Moravian king invited Orthodox monks Cyril and Methodius to preach the Christian gospel to the Western Slavs.<sup>29</sup> The rise of the Přemyslid chiefs of Bohemia eclipsed the Moravians. The Bohemians aligned themselves with the Germanic tribes and adopted Catholicism.<sup>30</sup>



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Charles IV

### *Holy Roman Empire*

In 800, the pope crowned Charlemagne Roman Emperor. Following the emperor's death, kingdoms that had been part of his empire began electing a Holy Roman Emperor to serve as their leader. The Holy Roman Empire was a major driving political force of European politics until it was dissolved in the 19th century.<sup>31</sup>

The Přemyslids initially resisted German domination. But Bohemia became a kingdom in the Holy Roman Empire in the 12th century. Many Bohemian kings were granted the privilege of serving as electors of the emperor.<sup>32</sup>

The last Přemyslid king died in 1306. After a brief period of conflict over succession, the kingdom was conferred on John of Luxembourg, the son of the reigning Holy Roman Emperor. When John's son, Charles IV, was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1356, he made Prague his capital. His rule ushered in the golden age of Bohemia. Charles expanded and rebuilt sections of Prague and founded Charles University, the first university in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Karlovy Vary," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/312441/Karlovy-Vary](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/312441/Karlovy-Vary)

<sup>28</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Lonely Planet: Czech and Slovak Republics* (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 197.

<sup>29</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>30</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>31</sup> François Velde, "The Holy Roman Empire: Introduction," *Heraldica*, 13 February 2008, <http://www.heraldica.org/topics/national/hre.htm>

<sup>32</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>33</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)



## Religious Strife

Jan Hus, a popular faculty member at the university in Prague, was forced to leave the city in 1412, when he incurred the displeasure of the king for preaching against the sale of indulgences, a Catholic practice involving the forgiveness of sins for money. In 1414 he was called to the Council of Constance, where he was convicted of heresy and burned at the stake.<sup>34</sup> His death sparked a series of armed conflicts between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Hussites. Hussite troops beat back repeated attacks by imperial troops, and eventually forced the Holy Roman Emperor to accept a compromise. The Hussites were allowed to practice a modified form of Catholicism.<sup>35</sup>



© Ugo Pozzali  
Hussite shield

In 1526, the throne of Bohemia passed to the Habsburg family of Austria.<sup>36</sup> The Habsburgs were a major political force in Europe for 600 years, ruling many of the kingdoms in Europe by the 17th century. After 1486, the Habsburg family held the title of Holy Roman Emperor exclusively.<sup>37</sup>

The Habsburgs were loyal Catholics who made repeated attempts to discourage the spread of Protestantism in the Holy Roman Empire. This was especially true in Bohemia and Moravia, where, by 1620, nearly three-quarters of the people were Protestant.<sup>38, 39</sup> The Habsburgs eventually signed a Letter of Majesty granting the Czechs religious freedom. But in 1618, the Czechs rebelled against the Habsburgs, suspecting that the Letter of Majesty had been violated. Habsburg forces invaded Bohemia in 1620 and defeated the Czechs at the Battle of White Mountain. Religious freedom was revoked; the Czechs were told to embrace Catholicism or leave.<sup>40</sup> Bohemia was reduced to a crown possession, which the Habsburgs ruled over from Vienna for the next 300 years.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012,

[www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>35</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 26–27.

<sup>36</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012,

[www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>37</sup> Jennifer Meagher, “The Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburgs, 1400–1600,” Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, 2011, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/habs/hd\\_habs.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/habs/hd_habs.htm)

<sup>38</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012,

[www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>39</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, “Catholicism,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 61.

<sup>40</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012,

[www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>41</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 27.

## Nationalism

The French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Europe at the end of the 18th century prompted Emperor Franz II to dissolve the Holy Roman Empire in 1806.<sup>42</sup> In 1815, the German Confederation, an association of 39 German-speaking states and principalities headed by the Austrians, replaced the empire.<sup>43</sup>



© Ludwig Streitenfeld  
Emperor Franz II

The Napoleonic Wars engendered a hatred of the French throughout the German Confederation, and a new appreciation of all things German. Patriotism soon turned to nationalism and spread across Europe.<sup>44</sup> Nationalism was the idea that people united by a language and culture formed a nation with the right of self-determination.<sup>45</sup> In Bohemia and Moravia, nationalism manifested itself through a revival of the Czech language. For centuries, German had been the administrative language of the area and virtually the only written language used in public life. In the 1830s, a Czech-German dictionary was published, and Czech writers began producing novels, plays, and poetry in their native tongue.<sup>46, 47</sup>

Czech nationalists eventually began pressing Austria for greater autonomy and recognition of the Czech language. Czech Germans favored a break with Austria, but they preferred maintaining an alliance with the German Confederation, an option that most Czechs opposed.<sup>48</sup> After defeating Austria in a series of skirmishes, Prussia reorganized the Confederation to the exclusion of Austria, and in 1871, the Confederation became the German Empire.<sup>49</sup>

Austria, devastated by the blow, redoubled its efforts to satisfy the nationalist leanings of its minorities, but met with violent opposition to Czech autonomy from Austrian Germans and Hungarians. Hence, the Czechs were able to gain few concessions.<sup>50</sup> They turned for support to

<sup>42</sup> Steven R. Harper, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Austria: A Country Study*, ed. Eric Solsten (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/attoc.html>

<sup>43</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "German Confederation," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230682/German-Confederation](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230682/German-Confederation)

<sup>44</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>45</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "Chapter 4: Nationalism and Cultural Identity," in *National Identity* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 74.

<sup>46</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czech Republic," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149085/Czech-Republic](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149085/Czech-Republic)

<sup>47</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czech Literature," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149059/Czech-literature/284423/The-18th-and-19th-centuries?anchor=ref91587](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149059/Czech-literature/284423/The-18th-and-19th-centuries?anchor=ref91587)

<sup>48</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>49</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "German Confederation," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230682/German-Confederation](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230682/German-Confederation)

<sup>50</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

Slavs in the east, who were struggling to break away from Hungarian rule. As World War I approached, the nationalist movements of the Czechs and Slovaks began to merge.<sup>51</sup>

### *The First Republic*

During the war, Tomáš Masaryk and his protégé Edvard Beneš traveled to England, the United States, and Russia, seeking support for a joint Czech-Slovak state. In 1918, the United States recognized the Czechoslovak National Council, headed by Masaryk, as the official body representing the Czech and Slovak peoples. The council, acting as a provisional government, declared the independence of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia from Austria on 28 October 1918.<sup>52</sup>



© Josef Jindřich Šechtli  
Tomáš Masaryk

Masaryk, officially elected president of Czechoslovakia in November 1918, worked to unify the five national political parties (the Pětka), draft a constitution, and create a working democracy for the Czech and Slovak peoples.<sup>53, 54</sup> Beneš, who served as the foreign minister until he was elected president in 1935, worked to protect Czechoslovakia from the threat of foreign domination. German nationalism and the ascent of the Nazi party in neighboring Germany posed particular threats to Czechoslovakia's independence.<sup>55</sup> Beneš signed defense treaties with France and the Soviet Union. Both countries promised to come to Czechoslovakia's aid in the event of a German invasion.<sup>56</sup>

By 1938, the Sudeten German Party (SdP) was working from within to undermine the Czechoslovakian government. Konrad Henlein, the party's leader, was in direct communication with Hitler. When the national police were called in to break up violent protests orchestrated by the SdP, Henlein demanded that all areas with a German majority be given to Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Hitler began demanding that the Sudetenland be handed over to Germany. Eager to avoid a war, the French turned to the British to help convince the Czechoslovakians to give in to Hitler's demands. In September 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler and the leaders of France and Italy to discuss the situation. The four countries reached an agreement, without any representatives from Czechoslovakia present. Germany would occupy the Sudetenland. The Czechoslovakians were forced to accept the agreement when it became clear

<sup>51</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>52</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>53</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tomas Masaryk," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/367736/Tomas-Masaryk](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/367736/Tomas-Masaryk)

<sup>54</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>55</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>56</sup> Quincy Wright, "The Munich Settlement and International Law," *American Society of International Law* 33, no. 1 (January 1939): 12–32.

<sup>57</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>



that neither France nor England would offer assistance if they chose to resist. In October 1938, German troops moved into the Sudetenland.<sup>58</sup>

## *World War II*

Because of the loss of the Sudetenland to the Germans, Czechoslovakia lost most of its border defenses and a large portion of its industry. Poland and Hungary followed Berlin's lead and seized land from Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, Germans met with no resistance when they invaded the remainder of Czechoslovakia.<sup>59</sup> Hitler declared Bohemia and Moravia protectorates of Germany, while Slovakia, having negotiated its own agreement with Germany, retained some autonomy.<sup>60</sup> The Czechs suffered brutally at the hands of the German occupiers. As resources were redirected to the German Army, strict rationing was imposed on the Czechs and as many as 30,000 were deported to work in Germany.<sup>61</sup>



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Reinhard Heydrich

In 1942, Czech militants assassinated Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi governor of Czechoslovakia. In response, the Germans leveled the village of Lidice, killing all the men and sending the women and children to concentration camps. The Germans worked to flush out and destroy resistance groups. In all, more than a thousand people believed to have a connection with Heydrich's assassination were executed.<sup>62</sup>

Before his death, Heydrich had turned the medieval fortress of Terezin into Theresienstadt, hailed by the Nazis as a model concentration camp. Between 1941–1945, 140,000 Jews passed through the camp on the way to Auschwitz, where the majority of them perished.<sup>63</sup> Thousands of Roma (Romani or gypsy) were also rounded up and sent to camps.<sup>64</sup>

The Czech resistance movement revived in 1943 and launched coordinated guerilla attacks against German troops. On 5 May 1945, a popular uprising in Prague forced the Germans to retreat from the city. A day later, Soviet troops arrived to officially liberate the Czechs.<sup>65</sup> Following liberation, Sudeten Germans found themselves on the receiving end of pent-up

<sup>58</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Munich Agreement," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/397522/Munich-Agreement>

<sup>59</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>60</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>61</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>62</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 14.

<sup>63</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 14.

<sup>64</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Roma in the Czech Republic," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 217–20.

<sup>65</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

frustrations and anger toward the Germans. It is estimated that thousands of Germans died from mistreatment during what the Czechoslovakian government described as the “humane and orderly transfer” of nearly 3 million Germans from Czech territory in 1946. About 160,000 Hungarians were also expelled from the country.<sup>66</sup>

### *Communist Takeover*

Although Communism had been present in Czechoslovakia before the war, its popularity grew rapidly during the war. Many Czechoslovakians, viewing the Munich Agreement as a betrayal by their Western allies, turned to the Soviet Union for support in rebuilding after the war.<sup>67</sup> The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia received nearly 40% of the vote in 1946. The party did not constitute a majority, but it was large enough to gain control over several key ministries, including the Ministry of the Interior, giving Communists control over the police force.<sup>68</sup>



© Mutter Erde  
Bust of Klement Gottwald

In 1948, most of President Beneš' cabinet resigned in protest over the appointment of Communists to senior posts in the national police force. Before Beneš could reform the cabinet, Communists seized the vacant ministry positions, seizing control of the government. The Communists drafted a new constitution calling for the nationalization of all property and industry. Beneš resigned, refusing to sign the new constitution into law. The new National Assembly elected Klement Gottwald, the leader of the Communist Party, president.<sup>69</sup>

The period between the 1948 Communist takeover and 1955, when Czechoslovakia joined the Warsaw Pact, is marked by the Stalinization of Czechoslovakia. Non-Communist politicians were forced out of office, and in some cases arrested and executed. As the country was drawn further under the influence of the Soviet Union, the purges eventually extended to the Communist Party itself, with thousands arrested and hundreds executed for failing to adhere to the party line.<sup>70</sup>

### *Communist Reforms*

By the early 1960s, the economy had stagnated, and even strict censorship could not quell growing complaints. Eventually, calls for change started to come from within the Communist ranks as well. As head of the Communist Party, Antonín Novotný refused to implement any

<sup>66</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>67</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>68</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>69</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>70</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

reforms, and in January 1968 he was forced to resign as party secretary. Reformer Alexander Dubček was elected to lead the party.<sup>71</sup>

Dubček quickly instituted a series of economic and political reforms, ushering in what is known as the Prague Spring. Censorship was relaxed, as were restrictions on religion. Dubček's government called for sweeping reforms in agriculture and industry, greater autonomy for Slovakia (Dubček was Slovakian), and greater protection for civil liberties.<sup>72</sup> Alarmed by events in Prague, the Soviet Union warned Dubček that if he did not bring the press under control, the country would be swept up in a full-blown revolution. Unimpressed by Dubček's promises to rein in the press, the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia with 200,000 troops on 20 August 1968, beginning a 20-year occupation. Dubček and his supporters were forced to resign. Their reforms were repealed, and totalitarian rule was reestablished.<sup>73</sup>



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Soviet invasion

### *Velvet Revolution and Velvet Divorce*

Dissatisfaction with the authoritarian regime continued to grow through the 1970s and 1980s. In 1977, a group of dissidents known as Charter 77 published an open letter accusing the government of violating the human rights of the Czechoslovakian people and calling on it to uphold civil liberty protections in the 1960 constitution. Although those associated with the movement faced harsh retribution, more than 1,800 people eventually signed the charter.<sup>74</sup>

In November 1989, a peaceful march to commemorate the death of Jan Opletal, a student killed while protesting the Nazi occupation, turned violent when police moved into the crowd, viciously beating unresisting students. Rumors that one of the students had died from his injuries sparked a series of mass protests, calling for the end of Communist rule. Acting as spokesman for the crowds was dissident playwright and Charter 77 co-author Václav Havel.<sup>75</sup>



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Depiction of Václav Havel

After a general strike on 27 November, the government was forced to negotiate. The government resigned on 3 December, and Havel was appointed to lead a new provisional government. The following July, Havel became the first freely elected president

<sup>71</sup> Ihor Gawdiak, ed., *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 60–62.

<sup>72</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>73</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>74</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Charter 77," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 34–36.

<sup>75</sup> Rob McRae, "Chapter 16: The November 17 Massacre," in *Resistance and Revolution: Václav Havel's Czechoslovakia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 104–6.

of Czechoslovakia since Beneš.<sup>76</sup> Following the Communist collapse (the Velvet Revolution), the new government moved quickly to privatize industries and return businesses and property to private owners. As economic reforms progressed, it became increasingly clear that the Slovaks and the Czechs had different needs and visions for the new country. On 1 January 1993, the Velvet Divorce took place when Czechoslovakia was officially dissolved, and the independent nations of the Czech Republic and Slovakia came into being.<sup>77</sup>

## Government

The Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy with executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The current constitution came into effect in 1993 when the republic was formed. It is based on the original constitution of Czechoslovakia, written in 1920.<sup>78</sup>

### *Executive Branch*

The president functions as the head of state, while the prime minister is the head of the government. Neither is elected directly through popular vote, although this may change in the near future. The National Assembly appoints the president for a 5-year renewable term, but some political parties are now suggesting that the presidency should be determined by popular vote.<sup>79</sup>



© Presidential Press and Information Office  
Diplomatic welcome

The position is seen as largely ceremonial: the president has few executive powers and mainly functions as a figurehead for the country at international forums.<sup>80</sup> The president's main executive power lies in appointing and dismissing the prime minister and other senior officials. The president holds the power to convene and dissolve the lower house of parliament, to call for elections, and to veto nonconstitutional legislation.<sup>81</sup>

The prime minister is usually the leader of the political party that holds the majority of seats in parliament. The prime minister forms a cabinet, or government, by appointing ministers to head the 14 ministries that oversee public administration. Those chosen to serve in the cabinet may be members of parliament, usually from the prime minister's own party or coalition, or members of the general public with expertise in a particular area.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>77</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>78</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Constitution," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 50–52.

<sup>79</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "President," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 205.

<sup>80</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "President," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 205.

<sup>81</sup> Rick Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet* (Florence, KY: Gordon and Breach Publishing, 2000), 46.

<sup>82</sup> Rick Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet* (Florence, KY: Gordon and Breach Publishing, 2000), 51.



### Legislative Branch

Parliament consists of the Chamber of Deputies (Poslanecká Sněmovna) and the Senate (Senat). Both houses pass legislation and vote in presidential elections.<sup>83</sup>

The Chamber of Deputies is the lower chamber, with 200 members elected to serve 4-year terms.<sup>84</sup> The cabinet, or government, is answerable to the Chamber of Deputies and may be dissolved or reorganized if it receives a no-confidence vote from parliament. If the government is unable to reorganize sufficiently to win a vote of confidence from the Chamber of Deputies, the president may call a general election.<sup>85</sup>



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Joint session of Parliament

The Senate has 81 members, each elected for a 6-year term, with elections taking place on a rolling basis; approximately one-third of the Senate is up for election every 2 years. The president does not have the power to dissolve the Senate when he calls for a general election.<sup>86</sup> The Senate can veto bills passed by the lower chamber and has the power to approve the president's appointments of judges and certain senior officials. The president of the Senate serves a similar function as the vice president in the United States.<sup>87</sup>

### Judicial Branch

The Czech Republic has three high courts: the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Administrative Court.<sup>88</sup>

The Constitutional Court consists of 15 judges appointed by the president for 10-year terms, subject to the approval of the Senate. The court reviews legislation to make sure that it does not violate the terms of the constitution and generally to protect the constitutional rights of the public.<sup>89, 90</sup>

The Supreme Court is the highest court in civil and criminal matters. The Czech president appoints the president and vice president of the court. These officials oversee panels of judges who review cases according to topic.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 186.

<sup>84</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 186.

<sup>85</sup> Rick Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet* (Florence, KY: Gordon and Breach Publishing, 2000), 50, 71.

<sup>86</sup> Rick Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet* (Florence, KY: Gordon and Breach Publishing, 2000), 50.

<sup>87</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 187, 226–27.

<sup>88</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Czech Republic,” in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>89</sup> Rick Fawn, *The Czech Republic: A Nation of Velvet* (Florence, KY: Gordon and Breach Publishing, 2000), 53.

<sup>90</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, “Constitutional Court,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 52–53.

<sup>91</sup> Nejvyšší Soud, “The Supreme Court of the Czech Republic,” 2010, [www.nsoud.cz/JudikaturaNS\\_new/ns\\_web.nsf/Edit/AbouttheSupremeCourt~Generalinformation...](http://www.nsoud.cz/JudikaturaNS_new/ns_web.nsf/Edit/AbouttheSupremeCourt~Generalinformation...)

The Supreme Administrative Court reviews cases dealing with government, including elections, political parties, and cases of government corruption or negligence. It is similar in composition and structure to the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>92</sup>

### *Local Administration*

There are 14 regions (*kraje*) in the Czech Republic, which form a level of administration between towns and local councils and the national government.<sup>93</sup>

## **Media**

### *Print Media*

In the years following the fall of Communism, print media flourished, with as many as 2,000 newspapers and magazines being published in 1995. Rising production costs have driven that number down in recent years, and with two-thirds of the country connected to the internet, many Czechs access the news online.



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Magazines in Prague

When the country's newspapers were privatized in the 1990s, foreign companies bought most of the major papers and magazines. Only one nationally published daily—*Právo*—is owned by Czechs. German companies own the republic's largest daily, *Mladá fronta Dnes* (*Young Front Today*), as well as *Lidové noviny* (*National News*) and most of the larger regional publications.<sup>94</sup> The most popular paper by a large margin is the tabloid *Blesk*, with a circulation of more than 400,000.<sup>95</sup>

### *Broadcast Media*

Broadcast media were under government control from the 1920s, when radio was first introduced to Czech society, until the fall of Communism in 1989. Instead of privatizing state-owned stations, the government retained control over its stations, but opened up the market for commercial and private enterprises.<sup>96</sup> Today there are 350 television channels, 4 of which are publicly operated. Only 13 television stations broadcast nationally. The most popular is Nova TV, famous



© Hanuš Hanslík  
TV studio in Prague

<sup>92</sup> Nejvyšší Správní Soud, "Obecné Informace (General Information)," 31 January 2012, <http://www.nssoud.cz/General-Information/art/557?menu=173>

<sup>93</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Czech Republic," in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ez.html>

<sup>94</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 107–8.

<sup>95</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 207.

<sup>96</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 212–13.

for being the first private television station.<sup>97</sup> Only 15 of the country's 85 radio stations are publicly owned, and 16 stations broadcast nationally.<sup>98</sup>

## Basic Economic Structure

The past few decades have marked a period of transition from the planned economy that existed under Communism to a free-market economy. Sound fiscal and monetary policy helped the Czech Republic avoid the problems of inflation and unemployment. A strong industrial sector helped the Czech Republic with the transition, but it has left a legacy of environmental damage. Today the country is moving toward a more service-oriented economy to reduce pressure on the environment.<sup>99</sup>



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Factory in Czech Republic

## Main Industries

The service sector is growing. This includes jobs in transportation, tourism, and business services such as IT support, customer service, software design, and public administration.<sup>100</sup> Currently, the service sector accounts for nearly 60% of both jobs and GDP (gross domestic product). The industrial sector accounts for about 38% of jobs. The Czech Republic is one of the largest car manufacturers in Europe. The country produces machinery, airplane parts, and electric railway cars. Agriculture accounts for about 3% of jobs and contributes only 2.2% to the GDP.<sup>101</sup>

## Currency and Trade

Although the Czech Republic is a member of the European Union, it has not adopted the euro as a form of currency. The Czech koruna is the national currency. The Czech National Bank is responsible for issuing currency and setting monetary policy, including exchange rates.<sup>102</sup>

Trade plays a major role in the Czech economy. Germany is the country's largest trading partner, accounting for 32% of its exports and



© Usien / Wikipedia.org  
ATM in Cheb

<sup>97</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 213.

<sup>98</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Czech Republic," in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>99</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Czech Republic," 19 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3237.htm>

<sup>100</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Economic Surveys: Czech Republic* (Paris: OECD, 2008), 88, 90.

<sup>101</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Czech Republic," in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>102</sup> Czech National Bank, "About the CNB," 2012. [http://www.cnb.cz/en/about\\_cnb/](http://www.cnb.cz/en/about_cnb/)

26% of its imports. China, Slovakia, Poland, and Austria are also important trading partners.<sup>103</sup>

## Ethnic Groups and Languages

Czechs are by far the largest ethnic group in the Czech Republic, accounting for 90% of the population. But Moravians, who make up nearly 4% of the population, are increasingly identifying themselves as a distinct group.<sup>104</sup> Czechs and Slovaks were part of the same country for more than 70 years, but few Slovaks live in the Czech Republic today. They constitute about 2% of the population.<sup>105</sup>



© I, JialiangGao  
Roma street performers

Before World War II, nearly one-quarter of Czechoslovakians were German. After the war the government expelled about 3 million Germans.<sup>106</sup> The issue remains sensitive with some Czechs and Germans, who now account for less than 1% of the Czech population.<sup>107</sup> Poles and Ukrainians also account for about 1% of the population.<sup>108</sup>

## Other Minorities

Vietnamese account for the largest non-European minority living in the Czech Republic. Many Vietnamese came to Czechoslovakia when it was a Communist state to receive education and training.<sup>109</sup>

## Roma

The exact number of Roma living in the Czech Republic is unknown. Census figures suggest that about 11,000 Roma live in the country, but the actual number is believed to be in the neighborhood of 300,000.<sup>110</sup> The Roma are descendants of a tribal people thought to have immigrated to Europe from India in the 14th and 15th centuries. They have never fully assimilated, retaining their own language and culture. The Nazis wiped out nearly all Roma living in Czech lands during the Holocaust; it is believed that surviving Roma numbered only in

<sup>103</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Czech Republic," in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>104</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Czech Republic," in *The World Factbook*, 11 January 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>105</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Czech Republic," 19 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3237.htm>

<sup>106</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>107</sup> *Economist*, "The Benes Decrees: A Spectre over Central Europe," 15 August 2002, [http://www.economist.com/node/1284252?Story\\_ID=1284252](http://www.economist.com/node/1284252?Story_ID=1284252)

<sup>108</sup> Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Czech Republic," 19 August 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3237.htm>

<sup>109</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 157.

<sup>110</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 157.



the hundreds. But even before the war, Roma had faced centuries of persecution not only in Czechoslovakia, but throughout Europe.<sup>111</sup>

Part of the persecution stems from their reputation for lawlessness. The economic activities of the Roma have traditionally fallen in the informal sector, existing outside the mainstream economy. Until the 20th century, many Roma made their living as traveling artisans, supplementing their incomes by entertaining or providing labor on construction projects.<sup>112</sup> After World War II, Roma from Slovakia were transferred to lands left vacant by the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. In spite of efforts by the Communist regime to force them to integrate, the Roma remain very much segregated from mainstream society. In the years since the Velvet Revolution, they have increasingly become the targets of racially motivated violence and prejudicial citizenship laws that limit their access to government services.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Minorities at Risk, "Data: Assessment for Roma in the Czech Republic," 31 December 2006, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=31602>

<sup>112</sup> Minorities at Risk, "Data: Assessment for Roma in the Czech Republic," 31 December 2006, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=31602>

<sup>113</sup> Minorities at Risk, "Data: Assessment for Roma in the Czech Republic," 31 December 2006, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=31602>

## Chapter 1 Assessment

1. There are no major rivers in the Czech Republic.

**False**

Three major European waterways have sources in the Czech Republic. The Vltava, the Czech Republic's longest river, flows into the Elbe River near Prague. The Morava flows south through Moravia toward Austria where it joins the Danube, and the Oder River's source lies near the town of Ostrava in the northeast.

2. Prague is considered one of the major cultural centers of Europe.

**True**

Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, was once capital of the Holy Roman Empire. It is the site of the first university in Central Europe and a major cultural center for literature, art, and architecture.

3. After the Czechs lost the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, Bohemia became a crown possession that the Habsburgs of Austria dominated for centuries.

**True**

After losing the Battle of White Mountain to imperial forces, Bohemia lost its status as a kingdom in the Holy Roman Empire. The Habsburgs ruled it as a crown possession until 1918, when the Czechs declared their independence and became part of Czechoslovakia.

4. World War II drastically altered the ethnic makeup of the country.

**True**

Not only did many Jews and Roma perish in the Holocaust, but after the war millions of Germans, some of whom had lived in Czechoslovakia for generations, were forced out of the country. Many Hungarians were also expelled from the country.

5. The main executive power of the government rests with the president.

**False**

The main executive power for the country rests with the prime minister and cabinet. Although the president has the power to appoint and dismiss judges and senior officials, most of his appointments must be approved by the Senate.

## CHAPTER 2: RELIGION

### Introduction

Around 27% of Czechs identify themselves as Catholic; while 40% state that they are atheists.<sup>114, 115</sup> The percentage of Czechs who identify with a Protestant sect is in the single digits, which is especially surprising for a people who brought about church reform before Martin Luther and the Reformation and who started two religious wars against orthodox Catholicism. Much of the remainder of the population is unaffiliated. Despite the seeming indifference to religion that these numbers reflect, religion played a large role in the history of the Czech people. It helped shape the Czech national identity and continues to influence cultural traditions.



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Our Lady of Victories church

### Religion in Czech History

#### *Early Christianity*

Christianity was introduced to the Slavic nations of Central Europe in the 9th century. At this time, the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church strove not only to convert the pagan masses of Europe and Central Asia, but also to increase their political reach. The Catholic Church gained a supporter in Charlemagne, whom the Pope crowned Roman Emperor in 800.<sup>116</sup>



© Andrzej O / Wikipedia.org  
Christian manuscript

Rostislav, leader of the Great Moravian Empire, saw the spread of Christianity as inevitable. Still, he was unsettled by the growing influence of the Franks to the west, and he worried that opening the door to their missionaries would mean opening the door to political domination as well. He invited missionaries from the Orthodox Church in the east to come to Moravia to teach the Christian gospel.<sup>117</sup> The Orthodox Church had a policy of preaching and administering in the vernacular—translating the liturgy and scripture into the language of the people it sought to convert.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Czech Republic: People and Society,” in *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>115</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 35.

<sup>116</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 24.

<sup>117</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>118</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 24.

Two monks, Cyril and his brother, Methodius, arrived from the east in 863. They brought with them a Slavic translation of the Bible. It had been rendered using the alphabet that Cyril had developed for writing Slavic tongues.<sup>119</sup> (The Cyrillic alphabet is still used today by Eastern Slavs.) However, Rostislav's successor allied himself with the Germans, thus encouraging the spread of Catholicism and the use of the Latin alphabet among the Czechs.<sup>120</sup>

### *Jan Hus*

Czechs sought church reform about 100 years before Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the Wittenberg church door in 1517.<sup>121</sup> The writings of John Wycliffe, an English religious reformer, influenced Jan Hus, a lecturer at Charles University in Prague. Hus' calls for reform, and especially his criticism of indulgences (forgiveness of sins for money), drew the disfavor of the Catholic Church. Convicted of heresy in 1415, authorities burned him at the stake.<sup>122</sup>



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Jan Hus

Hus' death sparked a series of armed conflicts between the Holy Roman Emperor and church reformers, which eventually resulted in a compromise. By the time the Protestant Reformation began in earnest about a century later, Czechs were already practicing a modified form of Catholicism. The *Unitas Fratrum*, the independent church credited with creating the Kralice Bible—one of the great works of early Czech literature—was founded in 1457, 26 years before Luther's birth.<sup>123</sup>

### *The Habsburgs and the Counter-Reformation*

The Czechs' drive for autonomy eventually led to trouble with the Habsburgs of Austria, who claimed the Bohemian throne in 1526. The Habsburgs, who were devout supporters of the pope, tried several times to suppress the spread of Lutheranism in the Czech lands.<sup>124</sup> Tempers flared when the Czechs felt the Habsburgs were not honoring promises of religious freedom. In 1618, the Czechs rebelled by throwing two agents of the Holy Roman Emperor out of a window in Prague Castle.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 24.

<sup>120</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>121</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Martin Luther," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/351950/Martin-Luther>

<sup>122</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>123</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>124</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Czechoslovak History," 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>125</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

This event, known as the Defenestration of Prague, ushered in the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) between the Habsburgs and Protestant powers of Europe. The Habsburg army quickly and decisively defeated the Czechs in 1620 in the Battle of White Mountain.<sup>126</sup> They rounded up the leaders of the rebellion and executed them.<sup>127</sup> Not only was religious freedom revoked, but the Czechs lost their sovereignty as well. For the next 300 years, the Habsburgs ruled Bohemia and Moravia as crown possessions.<sup>128</sup>



© Osln / Wikipedia.org  
High altar of church in Frýdek

At the time the war began, three-quarters of the Czech population belonged to Protestant denominations.<sup>129</sup> However, by the end of the century Protestantism had been nearly stamped out—the result of Protestants being forced to convert or leave the region.<sup>130</sup> The Habsburgs successfully turned Bohemians and Moravians into loyal Catholics, but in doing so, they created a nation of people who associated the Catholic Church with imperial authority.<sup>131</sup>

### *Religion and Nationalism*

When Tomáš Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia in 1918, he is reported to have commented, “We have got rid of Vienna. Now we will get rid of Rome!” The comment, whether true or fabricated, reflects the feelings of the Czechs at the time of their independence. In their minds, Catholicism and imperialism went hand in hand, and independence was not complete as long as the Czech people retained any loyalty to Rome. During the struggle for nationhood, symbols of the early Protestant movement became symbols of the Czech nation, particularly the chalice, a symbol of the Hussite movement. The Czechs eventually incorporated the chalice into the national emblem of Czechoslovakia, much to the chagrin of the Vatican.<sup>132</sup>



© Hoodinski / Wikipedia.org  
Hussite Banner

After the formation of Czechoslovakia, new laws targeted the Catholic Church. Its properties in Czechoslovakia were subjected to tax, and in areas where the Church was in the minority, its property was seized and turned over to the newly formed Czechoslovak Church, whose name

<sup>126</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>127</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>128</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>129</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, “Catholicism,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 61.

<sup>130</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>131</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 27.

<sup>132</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 27, 34–35.

was changed to the Czechoslovak Hussite Church in 1972.<sup>133</sup> Founded in 1920, the church practiced a form of modified Catholicism based on Hussite reforms, similar to what had been practiced in Bohemia and Moravia before the Thirty Years' War.<sup>134</sup> Still, by 1930, more than 73% of Czechoslovakians remained Roman Catholic. The rise of Sudeten German nationalists forced the Czechoslovakian government to back away from its anti-Catholic policies to consolidate support against the growing Nazi threat.<sup>135</sup>

### *Religion under Communism*

Although many cite Communism as a reason for the decline in Czech religiosity, by the end of World War II the Czechs were already leaning toward secularism. It is true that the Communists made no secret of their dislike of organized religion, feeling that it split the loyalties of the people between the church (specifically the Catholic Church) and the state.<sup>136</sup> The constitution of 1960 guaranteed freedom of worship but placed heavy and broadly interpreted restrictions on what could be preached from the pulpit. Religion was limited to the private sphere, but even this area of freedom was negligible because the government could interpret almost any teaching as interference in public life, resulting in persecution.<sup>137</sup>



© Oslm / Wikipedia.org  
Depicting communism, Prague

Moreover, the Communist regime confiscated Church land, abolished Catholic orders, and closed 11 of the 13 seminaries in Czechoslovakia. Protestants were less of a threat, but they still faced harassment. The Prague Spring in 1968 brought with it a surge in religious activity that the government quickly stamped out under the “normalization” that followed. For the next 20 years, the Communists conducted a public smear campaign to discredit religion and discourage people from participating in organized religions. During this time, the Hidden Church operated underground, out of sight of government informers, and beyond the control of Rome. An estimated 10,000–25,000 people are thought to have taken part in the movement.<sup>138</sup>

The drop in church attendance during the Communist years is hardly surprising given the possible consequences of participating in religious activity. However, by the time religious freedom was reinstituted in 1989, Czechs were largely indifferent to organized religion, much

<sup>133</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 35.

<sup>134</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak Hussite Church,” 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149143/Czechoslovak-Hussite-Church>

<sup>135</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 35.

<sup>136</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 36.

<sup>137</sup> Helen Fedor and Mark. W. Gould, “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment,” in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989),

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>138</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 37–38.



more so than their neighbors in Slovakia were.<sup>139</sup> The Czech Republic has remained staunchly secular, with reportedly the second-highest proportion of atheists in Europe, behind Estonia.<sup>140</sup>

## Major Religions

### *Roman Catholicism*

The Catholic Church is the oldest and largest Christian church in the Czech Republic. The Church was established in Czech lands in the 10th century. Archdioceses in Prague and Olomouc lead the church, but it recognizes the Pope in Rome as its head.<sup>141</sup> While 27% of Czechs identify themselves as Catholics, it is estimated that only about 4% of the population attends Mass regularly.<sup>142</sup> Church attendance is so low that Catholic churches struggle to pay priests, even with state assistance.<sup>143</sup>



© Aconcagua / Wikipedia.org  
St. Vitus Cathedral

Since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, the Church has sought the return of 1,500 buildings and nearly 200,000 hectares (494,211 acres) of land that was confiscated under Communism—including St. Vitus Cathedral in the Prague Castle complex—but it has met with little success.<sup>144</sup>

### *Protestantism*

Although Czechs were at the forefront of the Protestant reformation, today only about 5% identify themselves as Protestant. The two largest Protestant denominations are the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren and the Czechoslovak Hussite Church.<sup>145</sup>

The Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren is a modern-day iteration of the Unitas Fratrum. It was founded in 1918 by the unification of the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church.<sup>146</sup> A group of disaffected Catholic priests who preferred to perform the Mass in Czech founded the Czechoslovak Hussite Church in 1920. The Hussite Church broke with the Vatican when reforms, such as allowing priests to marry, were



© Diego's sideburns / flickr.com  
Church of our Lady Before Týn

<sup>139</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 26.

<sup>140</sup> Ringo Ringvee, "Is Estonia Really the Least Religious Country in the World?" *The Guardian* (UK), 16 September 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/sep/16/estonia-least-religious-country-world>

<sup>141</sup> Catholic Church in the Czech Republic, "Dioceses," 2012, <http://www.cirkev.cz/en/dioceses/>

<sup>142</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Catholicism," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 30.

<sup>143</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 40.

<sup>144</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Catholicism," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 29.

<sup>145</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 37.

<sup>146</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/196839/Evangelical-Church-of-Czech-Brethren>

rejected.<sup>147</sup>

### *Judaism*

The number of Jews living in the Czech Republic today is unclear, which is not surprising.<sup>148</sup> Before the Nazis began their systematic slaughter of Jews in World War II, the fortunes of the Jews rose and fell on the whims of Czech rulers. Jews arrived in the Czech lands shortly after the Christians, and even at the best of times, they faced high levels of prejudice. Jews were evicted from the country in pogroms in the 14th century and were severely repressed under the reign of Empress Maria Theresa in the 18th century. Even when they were allowed to live in Czech cities, they were strictly segregated.<sup>149</sup>



© Marcin Szala  
Synagogue in Křivá

In 1941, the Nazis transformed the medieval fortress town of Terezin (Theresienstadt) into a holding pen for Jews being transported from Czechoslovakia to concentration camps in Germany and Poland. Of the more than 140,000 Jews to enter the camp during the war, about 33,000 died in Terezin and 88,000 were sent to concentration camps where they were killed. Of the 350,000 Jews living in Czechoslovakia at the start of World War II, about 245,000 were killed in the Holocaust.<sup>150</sup>

Because of their reticence to list their religion on official documents, it is unclear how many Jews currently live in the Czech Republic. However, several thousand Czech Jews do receive pensions from the German government in reparation for the Holocaust.<sup>151</sup> The Czech government is working to return artwork seized from Jews during the war.<sup>152</sup>

### **Influence of Religion on Daily Life**

Given the Czechs' general apathy toward religion, religious activity has little impact on their daily lives. Mass is held at major churches, but few Czechs attend it regularly, even if they profess to be Catholic.<sup>153</sup> The churches themselves constitute an important part of the historic fabric of cities, towns, and villages and are a recognizable part of the streetscape, even though

<sup>147</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Czechoslovak Hussite Church," 2012,

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149143/Czechoslovak-Hussite-Church>

<sup>148</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 36.

<sup>149</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 28–30.

<sup>150</sup> Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team, "The Jews of the Sudetenland: Bohemia and Moravia," 2009, <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/nazioccupation/sudetenland.html>

<sup>151</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 100.

<sup>152</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic," in *July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report*, 13 September 2011, [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010\\_5/168304.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168304.htm)

<sup>153</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Catholicism," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 30.



Czechs no longer actively use them as places of worship. The ringing of church bells, greatly frowned on under Communism because it represented an intrusion of religion into public life, is now heard regularly, although it is no longer a call to worship.<sup>154</sup>



© Nostrifikator / Wikipedia.org  
Church Service

## Religion and Government

Czechs have a constitutional right to practice any religion they choose. In addition, the government does not endorse any religion.<sup>155</sup> Nevertheless, officially registered churches are eligible for tax benefits and government subsidies. Currently, 17 religious organizations receive USD 78 million in government funding, most of which goes to pay the salaries of the clergy.<sup>156</sup>

Government laws regulate the establishment of new churches in the republic. Some of these laws discourage the introduction of new religions into Czech society. Any group that wishes to register a church and qualify for state funding must have at least 10,000 members and obtain the approval of the Czech government to be registered.<sup>157</sup> The government continues to resolve issues involving the seizure of church property under the Communist regime.<sup>158</sup>



© Chmee2 / Wikimedia.org  
Stone Bridge in Písek

## Religious Holidays

Although most Czechs do not practice their religion regularly, the government recognizes Christmas and Easter as national holidays.

### Christmas

Czechs enjoy a month-long Christmas season during which several events take place. The first event is Saint Nicholas Eve. St. Nicholas, the Czech version of Santa Claus, visits children on 5 December to determine whether they have been good. Accompanying him are an



© Honza Groh  
Traditional Christmas ornament

<sup>154</sup> Jan Richter, "The Bells of Prague," *Radio Prague*, 26 December 2009, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/special/the-bells-of-prague>

<sup>155</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic in The Hague, "Religion," n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/hague/en/general\\_information\\_on\\_the\\_czech/religion/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/hague/en/general_information_on_the_czech/religion/index.html)

<sup>156</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic," in *July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report*, 13 September 2011, [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010\\_5/168304.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168304.htm)

<sup>157</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 40.

<sup>158</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic," in *July–December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report*, 13 September 2011, [http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010\\_5/168304.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168304.htm)

angel and a devil (often teenagers paid to dress up for the roles).<sup>159</sup> St. Nicholas asks the children if they have been good; they may sing a song or recite a poem to put him in a good mood. If the children have been good (and if St. Nicholas is in a good mood), the angel gives them a handful of candy. If they have been bad, the devil may frighten them by threatening to take them away in his bag.<sup>160</sup> This is reportedly one of the most traumatic childhood experiences for many Czechs.<sup>161</sup>

As in America, Christmas preparations may take several weeks and include buying a Christmas tree (which is not decorated until Christmas Eve), baking cookies, and attending Christmas markets and festivals with elaborate outdoor nativity scenes.<sup>162</sup> Christmas itself is usually a quiet celebration with family. Christmas dinner, eaten on Christmas Eve, is traditionally carp. In the weeks preceding Christmas, vendors sell live carp on the street. Czechs take the fish home and often let them live in the bathtub until Christmas Eve when they are fried and served with potato salad. (Carp bones are notorious for lodging in the throat, making Christmas Eve trips to the emergency room an unofficial Czech tradition.) Families fast before the meal to bring on visions of the “golden piglet,” an omen of good luck for the coming year.<sup>163</sup> During the evening, Baby Jesus (parents) secretly leaves presents for the children under the decorated Christmas tree.<sup>164</sup>



© Hynek Moravec  
Christmas market in Prague

### Exchange 1: Merry Christmas!

Visitor:	Merry Christmas!	veseleh vaanotseh!
Local:	Same to you, too!	vaam tahkeh!

### Easter

Czechs celebrate Easter in the spring on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. In terms of religious observance, Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and prayer, and Holy Week, which includes Palm Sunday and Good Friday, precede it. Most Czechs observe Easter primarily through folk traditions. They clean and decorate houses with pussy willows, and on Easter Sunday girls decorate eggs in preparation for Easter Monday. Egg decorations can range from dying eggs with onion skins to creating elaborate designs. In Prague and other places

<sup>159</sup> Andrew Roberts, “Mikulas a cert (Nicholas and the Devil),” in *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 105.

<sup>160</sup> My Czech Republic, “Saint Nicholas Day (Mikuláš),” 2012, [http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech\\_culture/czech\\_holidays/saint\\_nicholas.html](http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech_culture/czech_holidays/saint_nicholas.html)

<sup>161</sup> Andrew Roberts, “Mikulas a cert (Nicholas and the Devil),” in *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 105.

<sup>162</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 58.

<sup>163</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 58.

<sup>164</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 190.

around the country, egg-decorating competitions are held. Another Easter tradition is a family dinner of lamb and pastries.<sup>165</sup>

However, the main event occurs on Easter Monday, which is a day off for most Czechs. Boys traditionally whip girls lightly on the legs with a whip of willow branches (*pomáľzky*) while reciting the rhyme *hody hody doprovody*. The gesture is intended to ensure youth and health (and fertility) for the coming year.<sup>166</sup> In turn, girls reward the boys by tying ribbons to the *pomáľzky* and giving the boys decorated eggs. Today, every woman in the family is whipped—it is considered rude to exclude older women—and the women reward the men with chocolates, eggs, and alcohol. It is not unusual for men to be slightly drunk by mid-morning.<sup>167</sup>



© Courtney Powell  
Child painting Easter eggs

Women generally take the tradition in good humor, but there are many who feel that it gets out of hand, especially once alcohol is involved, and many complain of being beaten too hard, particularly by adult men.<sup>168</sup> Still others believe that the custom—by encouraging men to beat women, even in jest—demonstrates an acceptance of domestic violence, which is a problem in the country.<sup>169</sup>

## Buildings of Worship

The Czech Republic has an abundance of historic churches representing a host of architectural styles. In fact, Prague is sometimes called the “city of 100 spires.”<sup>170</sup> For the most part, churches are open to the public for worship services and, especially in cities, for concerts. Many of the churches are known for their fine acoustics.<sup>171</sup>

### Exchange 2: May I enter the church?

Visitor:	May I enter the church?	moozhu vstope-it do kostelah?
Local:	No, it is closed today.	neh, dnes yeh zavRzhenoh.

<sup>165</sup> Dana Shanberg, “Czech Easter (Velikonoce),” My Czech Republic, 2012,

[http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech\\_culture/czech\\_holidays/easter/index.html](http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech_culture/czech_holidays/easter/index.html)

<sup>166</sup> Andrew Roberts, “Velikonoce (Easter),” in *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 177.

<sup>167</sup> Dana Shanberg, “Czech Easter (Velikonoce),” My Czech Republic, 2012,

[http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech\\_culture/czech\\_holidays/easter/index.html](http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech_culture/czech_holidays/easter/index.html)

<sup>168</sup> Emily Prucha, “A ‘Proper’ Czech Easter,” Prague Daily Monitor, 17 April 2009,

<http://praguemonitor.com/2009/04/17/proper-czech-easter>

<sup>169</sup> Justin Huggler, “Medieval Fertility Ritual Leaves Czech Women’s Rights in the Dark Ages,” *Independent*, 1 April 2002, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/medieval-fertility-ritual-leaves-czech-womens-rights-in-the-dark-ages-659005.html>

<sup>170</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 163.

<sup>171</sup> Prague Experience, “Opera/Ballet/Concerts,” 2012,

[http://www.pragueexperience.com/opera\\_concerts/concert\\_halls.asp](http://www.pragueexperience.com/opera_concerts/concert_halls.asp)

**Exchange 3: When do you worship?**

Visitor:	When do you worship?	gdy so bohosloozhby?
Local:	On Sunday.	v-ned-yeli.

Unfortunately, hundreds of the country's churches are in need of repair. For centuries, the churches' financed their own upkeep with money raised from parishioners and church lands. Each church traditionally had a parcel of farmland attached that was used to raise money to support the priest. Under Communism, the state seized church property, including church buildings, and churches became dependent on the government to pay their clergy and maintain chapels.<sup>172</sup>

Churches continue to rely on financial support from the government, and with dwindling congregations, they are unable to raise the money necessary to repair run-down buildings. Because Czechs consider the churches an important part of the Czech cultural heritage, the Ministry of Culture and some local councils provide grants to churches to undertake repairs. However, many grants require the church to raise matching funds, something that is difficult for smaller churches to do.<sup>173</sup>



© Paul / flickr.com  
St. Nicholas Church, Prague

Since the fall of Communism, several religious groups, especially the Catholic Church, have pressed the government to return church buildings and land. One notable example is St. Vitus Cathedral on the grounds of Prague Castle.<sup>174</sup> The government claims that it was built with government funds (Emperor Charles IV sponsored its building) and is a national monument that belongs to the Czech people. Initially the courts ruled in favor of the Catholic Church, but subsequent appeals have reversed and re-reversed the decision.<sup>175</sup>

In a recent deal worked out with the country's 17 official churches, the government agreed to return most church property and pay USD 2.9 billion in restitution over 30 years. In exchange,

<sup>172</sup> Lenka Petaková, "Czech Republic Sees Highest Percentage of Dilapidated Churches in Central Europe," *Radio Prague*, 12 March 2007, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/czech-republic-sees-highest-percentage-of-dilapidated-churches-in-central-europe>

<sup>173</sup> Lenka Petaková, "Czech Republic Sees Highest Percentage of Dilapidated Churches in Central Europe," *Radio Prague*, 12 March 2007, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/czech-republic-sees-highest-percentage-of-dilapidated-churches-in-central-europe>

<sup>174</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, "Catholicism," in *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 29.

<sup>175</sup> Pavla Horáková, "Catholic Church, Prague Castle Administration Discuss Handing Over of St. Vitus Cathedral," *Radio Prague*, 7 March 2007, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/catholic-church-prague-castle-administration-discuss-handing-over-of-st-vitus-cathedral>

the government will phase out funding that currently covers salaries for clergy and other expenses.<sup>176</sup>

### Behavior in Places of Worship

Although churches are often open to the public, it is important to remember that even if a service is not being held, the church is still a house of worship and should be treated with respect. Most churches do not have a posted dress code, but modest dress is always appreciated—no shorts or short skirts; shoulders covered. Behavior should be respectful: speak quietly and do not take pictures, touch artifacts, or bring food into the church without permission.<sup>177</sup>

#### Exchange 4: May I take photographs inside the church?

Visitor:	May I take photographs inside the church?	moozhu v kosteleh foto-gRahfovaht?
Local:	Yes.	anoh.

<sup>176</sup> Associated Press, “Czech Republic: Churches to Get Restitution for Seized Property,” *New York Times*, 11 January 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/12/world/europe/czech-republic-churches-to-get-restitution-for-seized-property.html>

<sup>177</sup> Rick Steves and Honza Vihan, *Rick Steves’ Prague and the Czech Republic*, 6th ed. (Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel, 2010), 18.

## Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Most Czechs are Catholic.

**False**

The Catholic Church is the largest denomination in the Czech Republic. However, most Czechs do not identify themselves as Catholic. Many Czechs are atheists, and a small number belong to Protestant churches.

2. Religion has played a major role in Czech history.

**True**

Two religious wars were started in Bohemia—the Hussite Wars in the 15th century and the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648). After the Thirty Years' War, the Catholic Habsburgs dominated the Czechs for 300 years.

3. Religion was strongly encouraged by the Communist regime.

**False**

The Communist government worried that people loyal to a religion would cease to be loyal to the government. The government seized church properties and closed several religious orders. Religions were allowed to operate if they did not interfere in public life.

4. The Czech government today does not endorse any particular religion.

**True**

The Czech constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and the government does not endorse a particular religion. The government does grant tax benefits and financial aid to churches that meet specific criteria.

5. Czechs eat roast beef for the traditional Christmas dinner.

**False**

The traditional Czech dinner consists of fried carp and potato salad. Vendors sell the carp live on the street, and Czechs keep them in bathtubs until Christmas Eve, when they cook and serve them to the family.



## CHAPTER 3: TRADITIONS

### Introduction

One of the lasting legacies of the Communist regime is that it created a nation of introverts.<sup>178</sup> Czechs are notoriously reserved in public and around strangers, a holdover from the days when neighbors could report one's every move to the authorities and any stranger could be a member of the secret police (known as the StB). Consequently, it takes time to get to know Czechs and to be invited into their inner circles. Still, Czechs know how to relax and have a good time. When Czechs were part of the Austrian empire, they loved festivals, which generally involved major beer consumption, so much that the emperor limited the number of festivals to one per village per year.<sup>179</sup> Today, Czechs still hold to their centuries-old traditions, including drinking at the local pub where, after a few beers, everyone is a friend.



© saikofish / flickr.com  
People in traditional dress

### Values and Characteristics

Centuries of domination by foreign powers have left the Czechs with a penchant for self-examination. It is perhaps for this reason that Czechs constantly look to their history to define who they are.<sup>180</sup> One thing that history reveals about the Czechs is that they are peace-loving. Czechs do not necessarily avoid confrontation, but they generally favor civil disobedience over violence.<sup>181</sup> They met the Soviet invasion in 1968 with passive resistance, taking down street signs and refusing to give the troops food and water. In 1989, the Velvet Revolution was accomplished through peaceful protests.<sup>182</sup>



© Stanislav Jelen  
Bust of Jara Cimrman

Czechs are well known for their subversive sense of humor. In 2005, Czechs voted Jara Cimrman the “Greatest Czech of All Time,” selecting him over candidates like Václav Havel and Charles IV. However, Cimrman—the unrecognized genius who is credited with inventing the light bulb, nearly reaching the North Pole, and (almost) proposing the Panama Canal—was disqualified from the contest on the grounds that he is, in fact, a fictional character.<sup>183</sup> Much of Czech humor is tongue in cheek, with a heavy emphasis on sarcasm and

<sup>178</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 63.

<sup>179</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 130–31, 160.

<sup>180</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 156.

<sup>181</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 62–63.

<sup>182</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Czechoslovak History,” 2012, [www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149152/Czechoslovak-history)

<sup>183</sup> Craig S. Smith, “Prague’s Greatest Hero Is Really a Blank Czech,” *New York Times*, 16 May 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/16/world/europe/16iht-letter.2.5734022.html>

irony. Czechs have a firm grasp of the absurd. They have long used humor to cope with life under difficult circumstances.<sup>184</sup> They are not known for political correctness: Czechs like to call it as they see it.<sup>185</sup>

### Values

Overall, Czechs are homebodies who place a high premium on spending time with their families. The goal of most Czechs is not fame and fortune, but *pohoda*, which roughly translated means “comfort” or “well-being.” Czechs generally work less than Americans do and prefer jobs that do not require extra hours, allowing them ample leisure time. They are often reluctant to move great distances even for the sake of employment, preferring to stay close to family and friends.<sup>186</sup>

Czechs see themselves as industrious and “handy.” Even in their off time, Czechs keep busy with gardening and home improvement projects.<sup>187</sup> The common proverb “Work ennobles” reflects the value that Czechs place on earning what one has. There is a healthy skepticism of privilege in Czech culture that can be traced back to at least the time of Austrian rule.<sup>188</sup>

Czechs are intellectual and tend to be highly educated and well rounded in their knowledge. Reading is one of the most popular national pastimes, and many Czechs speak more than one language.<sup>189, 190</sup> Czechs are proud of their art, literature, film, and, perhaps most of all, their music. “Every Czech is a musician,” is a popular saying.<sup>191</sup>

### Codes of Politeness

#### Communication Styles

In their interpersonal communications, Czechs are indirect communicators and extremely non-confrontational. Rather than saying “no,” a Czech might reply with “We’ll see,” or “It is difficult.” Lowered eyes and silence are signs that a Czech may disagree with you or be uncomfortable with the situation. In this case, it is usually more productive to move on rather than to press a point.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Emily Prucha, “Czech Humor—SOS,” Prague Daily Monitor, 23 September 2011, <http://praguemonitor.com/2011/09/23/czech-humor-sos>

<sup>185</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 46.

<sup>186</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 128, 184.

<sup>187</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 68.

<sup>188</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 131, 137, 154.

<sup>189</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 64.

<sup>190</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 42.

<sup>191</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 40–41.

<sup>192</sup> World Business Culture, “Czech Communication Styles,” 2012, <http://www.worldbusinessculture.com/Czech-Business-Communication-Style.html>



Czechs like to be organized. They have a low tolerance for uncertainty. They expect appointments to be made well in advance, and punctuality is absolutely expected.<sup>193</sup> Business deals can move slowly because every angle must be considered and every detail hammered out before any agreements can be made.<sup>194</sup>

Czech respect personal space. This involves speaking at a moderate volume, especially in public spaces, such as on buses and trains.<sup>195</sup> Although physical contact is limited, eye contact is extremely important, particularly when greeting someone or making a toast.<sup>196</sup> Czechs do not generally greet strangers on the street, but it is customary to say hello when entering an enclosed space, such as a small shop or an elevator, and to say goodbye when leaving.<sup>197</sup>

Expressive body language tends to be minimal in public and in formal settings, with one exception. When upset or exasperated, Czechs may throw their arms up in the air in a “What’s going on?” sort of gesture. The appropriate response is an apologetic shrug. Swearing (when upset) is generally done under the breath and best avoided in polite company; however, among friends, Czechs often employ it lightheartedly.<sup>198</sup>

### *Greetings and Polite Expressions*

The standard Czech greeting is a formal hello (*dobrý den*) and a handshake. Czechs are not a country of huggers, and even modest displays of affection are reserved for close friends and family. When shaking hands, it is important to make eye contact. In group settings, the standard practice is to shake hands with everyone. They repeat the process upon parting, with a handshake and a goodbye.



© Colin and Sarah Northway  
Men shaking hands

Formality is a sign of respect, and Czechs view abandoning it as an attempt to humiliate the other person. One does not use first names until the other person indicates that it is acceptable to do so.<sup>199</sup> Academic and professional titles are commonly used.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>193</sup> World Business Culture, “Czech Meetings,” 2012, <http://www.worldbusinessculture.com/Business-Meetings-in-Czech-Republic.html>

<sup>194</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 58, 61.

<sup>195</sup> Expats.cz, “Czech Etiquette: Avoiding Cultural Blunders,” 21 November 2008, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/the-czech-republic/czech-etiquette-survival-guide/>

<sup>196</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 81.

<sup>197</sup> David Creighton, “Czech Etiquette,” Expats.cz, 24 November 2005, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/czech-culture/czech-etiquette/>

<sup>198</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 78, 82.

<sup>199</sup> Michael Powell, “The Czech Republic,” in *Behave Yourself! The Essential Guide to International Etiquette* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2005), 32–33.

<sup>200</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 77.

**Exchange 5: Good morning.**

Visitor:	Good morning.	dobRe Raanoh
Local:	Good morning.	dobRe Raanoh

**Exchange 6: Good night.**

Visitor:	Good night.	dobRo nots
Local:	Good night.	dobRo nots

When talking to people, “please” and “thank you” expressions are always expected. It is best to use formal versions of these expressions unless you are on a first name basis with the person you are addressing.<sup>201</sup> If someone pays you a compliment, you should defer the compliment rather than express thanks.<sup>202</sup>

**Male and Female Interactions**

The Czechs have a fairly lax attitude toward sex, resulting in few, if any, taboos on interactions between the sexes. The Czech Republic has a strongly male-dominated culture. However, Czechs are not chauvinistic; they respect the traditional male and female roles.<sup>203</sup> Although Czech men may make the occasional sexist comment, they can be quite chivalrous. Men always pick up restaurant tabs and offer their seats on public transportation to women, the elderly, and the very young. In what is viewed as a protective gesture, gentlemen enter a room first, not ladies. When meeting for the first time, a man should wait for a woman to extend her hand first for a handshake.<sup>204</sup>



© Darwin Wins  
Companions on the street

**Hospitality and Gift-Giving**

Because Czechs value their privacy, it is rare for them to invite people to their homes. Having guests, therefore, is a special occasion, and hosts lavish attention on visitors. However, an invitation to visit someone’s home, even in the late afternoon or early evening, does not necessarily imply that a meal will be served.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 77–78.

<sup>202</sup> Michael Powell, “The Czech Republic,” in *Behave Yourself! The Essential Guide to International Etiquette* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2005), 32–33.

<sup>203</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 53–55.

<sup>204</sup> Michael Powell, “The Czech Republic,” in *Behave Yourself! The Essential Guide to International Etiquette* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2005), 32–33.

<sup>205</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 87.

When visiting a home for a meal, it is customary to bring a modest gift such as a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates. Flowers are acceptable, although one should take care if giving roses. Roses have a romantic association. One should not give chrysanthemums because Czechs traditionally place them on graves. Custom dictates that one should give an odd number (besides 13) of flowers.<sup>206</sup> Czechs typically refuse gifts when first offered; however, they will accept when it is offered again.<sup>207</sup>



© Andy Hares  
Having a meal with guests

### Exchange 7: Thank you for your hospitality.

Guest:	Thank you for your hospitality.	d-yeh-kuyu vaam zah vashi pohostyinnost
Host:	It's nothing.	nehnee zach

When you enter a house, you should take off your shoes—socks should therefore be clean and in good condition. Hosts may provide visitors with a pair of house slippers, but visitors will otherwise spend the visit in their stocking feet.<sup>208</sup> Guests are usually offered a drink, and it is polite to accept, even if it is just a glass of water.<sup>209</sup>

### Exchange 8: Shall I take off my shoes?

Guest:	Shall I take off my shoes?	maam sih zote bohty?
Host:	Please do.	pRoseem, zuyteh seh

Before beginning a meal, it is customary to say *dobrou chuť*, the Czech equivalent of “bon appétit,” and a simple toast to good health, *na zdraví*, usually precedes the first drink. Guests should compliment the cook during the meal. Hosts will usually offer second helpings, and one should accept, even if only in small amounts. After the meal, it is common practice to retire to the living room to have coffee and visit.<sup>210</sup> Because the workday begins early, visitors should not stay later than 10 p.m.<sup>211</sup> Guests are not expected to help with the meal or the cleanup, and offering to do so may hurt the host's or hostess' feelings.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>206</sup> David Creighton, “Czech Etiquette,” Expats.cz, 24 November 2005, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/czech-culture/czech-etiquette/>

<sup>207</sup> Vayama, “Czech Etiquette Tips,” 2012, <http://www.vayama.com/etiquette/czech/>

<sup>208</sup> Michael Powell, “The Czech Republic,” in *Behave Yourself! The Essential Guide to International Etiquette* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2005), 32–33.

<sup>209</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 87.

<sup>210</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 87–88.

<sup>211</sup> Vayama, “Czech Etiquette Tips,” 2012, <http://www.vayama.com/etiquette/czech/>

<sup>212</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 87.

**Exchange 9: What ingredients are used to make this gravy?**

Guest:	What ingredients are used to make this gravy?	yakeh suhRovihny poh- oozheevaateh nah tuh ohmaachkuh?
Host:	Butter, onion, caraway seeds and salt.	maasloh, tsihbuhlih, kmeen ah sool

*Special Occasions*

Czechs often celebrate birthdays by going out for drinks with friends. On these occasions, the birthday person picks up the tab. Czechs also have name days that are as important to remember as birthdays. Each calendar date is associated with the name of a saint, and people with the corresponding name celebrate the day as a personal “holiday.” Since it is customary to give a woman flowers on her name day, florists often post the day’s name outside their shops as a reminder. The customary gift for men is a small flask of liquor.<sup>213</sup>

**Eating Habits**

Because the workday usually starts at 7 a.m., breakfast is eaten early and generally consists of a buttered roll with yogurt or cheese.<sup>214, 215</sup> Dinner, unless eaten at a restaurant or pub, is also small, usually a roll with cold cuts and cheese, a bowl of soup, or a fruit-filled dumpling.<sup>216</sup>



© Karelji / Wikipedia.org  
Pickled bratwurst

Lunch is traditionally the main meal of the day, although this is changing in urban areas, where the lunch hour is shrinking.

Czechs take the meal in the office cafeteria or at a local pub. Even though it is the main meal of the day, they eat lunch relatively quickly.<sup>217</sup> Czechs have a reputation for bolting down food, rather than lingering over it.<sup>218</sup> A typical starter is soup, followed by a main course of goulash (stew) or of meat and dumplings or potatoes.<sup>219</sup>

<sup>213</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 71–72, 111.

<sup>214</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 144.

<sup>215</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 64, 73.

<sup>216</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 94.

<sup>217</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 94.

<sup>218</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 70.

<sup>219</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 95–97.

**Exchange 10: What is the name of this dish?**

Guest:	What is the name of this dish?	yaak seh ymenooyeh toh yeedloh?
Host:	This is <i>vepřová s knedlikem a se zelím</i> .	to yeh vepRzhovaa s-knedleekem ah seh zehleem

*The Drinking Culture*

The standard drink for almost any occasion is Czech beer. Brewing beer, a longstanding tradition for the Czechs, goes back as far as the 13th century, and Czechs take it very seriously.<sup>220</sup> Even under Communism, schools let out for a week in the fall so that students could help harvest the hops (known as “green gold”) used to make beer.<sup>221</sup>



© Dudva / Wikipedia.org  
Beers

The Czechs hold the current world record for the most beer consumed per capita.<sup>222</sup> On a typical night at the local pub, a Czech male will consume on average about 2.5 L (2.6 qt) of beer.<sup>223</sup> Most Czechs start drinking in their teenage years, well before the official drinking age of 18. Drinking in pubs with friends is an important rite of passage for young Czech men. Alcohol is only loosely regulated and is easily available at any time of day. Czechs excuse hangovers as a normal part of life, and calling in sick after a night of drinking is common.<sup>224</sup>

It is not surprising that a host of problems accompanies this level of drinking. Liver disease is prevalent and reported cases of alcoholism are on the rise. However, beer drinking in Czech culture, unlike in many other cultures, is not associated with violence or aggression.<sup>225</sup>

*Pubs*

Pubs are an important part of Czech culture. Czechs consider beer drinking a manly activity, and pub culture is decidedly masculine. Women drink beer, but on a much smaller scale. They are unlikely to venture into a pub when not in the company of a husband or boyfriend.<sup>226</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “Pivo at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 67.

<sup>221</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 26.

<sup>222</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “Pivo at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 65.

<sup>223</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “Pivo and Pohoda: The Social Conditions and Symbolism of Czech Beer-Drinking,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 21, no.1 (2003), <http://condor.depaul.edu/rrotenbe/aeer/V21n1/Hall.pdf>

<sup>224</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “Pivo at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 73, 79–80.

<sup>225</sup> Marc Di Duca, *Czech Republic* (Bucks, England: Bradt Travel Guides, 2006), 58.

<sup>226</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “Pivo at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 72, 74.



Pub etiquette demands that the first drink is not taken until everyone in the group is seated and has a beer in front of him. Before drinking commences, a toast of *na zdraví* must be made while members of the group touch glasses. Czechs toast on a one-on-one basis, and eye contact with the person you are toasting is expected.<sup>227</sup>



© czechian / flickr.com  
Local pub

One should never pour beer from one glass to another at the table, and leaving beer in the glass implies that there is something wrong with it. Except on birthdays and name days, each person pays for his own drinks. Czechs rarely buy one another rounds, and doing so can create friction when it comes time to settle the bill.<sup>228</sup>

### Dress Codes

Czechs have a reputation for being fairly lax in their dress—former Czech president Václav Havel was frequently seen wearing jeans and a T-shirt to work.<sup>229</sup> However, this appears to be changing. For example, parliament recently expressed disfavor of casual wear on the job when it mandated that journalists wear business attire inside the parliament building.<sup>230</sup> Trips to the theater or concert hall require formal dress, as do the many balls that take place each winter.<sup>231</sup>



© beketchai / flickr.com  
Casual clothing

Fashion, overall, has not played a large part in Czech culture, although as wages rise, the ability to afford fashionable clothes increases.<sup>232</sup> Czechs tend to follow Western fashion trends, but their clothing is generally more conservative in cut and color.<sup>233</sup>

Because good clothing was hard to acquire under Communism, Czechs developed a habit of changing from their work or going-out clothes into “house” clothes when they got home. This was meant to help keep work clothes clean and make them last longer. Inside the comfort of their homes, Czechs are extremely casual and often wear sweats and boxer shorts. The same applies to

<sup>227</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “*Pivo* at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 75.

<sup>228</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “*Pivo* at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 71, 75–76.

<sup>229</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 82.

<sup>230</sup> Petr Bokuvka, “Parliament Adopted Dress Code for Journalists,” *Czech Daily Word*, 7 June 2011, <http://czechdaily.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/parliament-adopted-dress-code-for-journalists/>

<sup>231</sup> Ryan Scott, “Dos and Don’ts: Czech Fashion,” *Expats.cz*, 24 January 2011, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/czech-culture/dos-and-donts-czech-fashion/>

<sup>232</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 85.

<sup>233</sup> Daniela Lazarová, “Magazine,” *Radio Prague*, 26 September 2009, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/magazine/magazine-2009-09-26>

shoes, which come off at the door. Teachers expect children to remove their shoes and don slippers before they enter a school building.<sup>234</sup>

It is worth noting that nudity is nothing shocking to the Czechs. One finds it on billboards, in newspapers, and on television.<sup>235</sup> Although Czechs dress modestly in the city, in the country they wear underwear and swimwear during the summer when working on their cottages or in their gardens.<sup>236</sup> It is common for children to go naked and for women to go topless at beaches and in swimming pools.<sup>237</sup>

## Nonreligious Celebrations

### *Fairs and Festivals*

Cities and villages hold fairs and festivals around major holidays, with stalls of merchants hocking wares in the weeks leading up to Christmas and Easter.<sup>238</sup> In addition, each village hosts its own *pout'* each year, usually in late summer or fall. Formerly a religious celebration honoring the local patron saint and celebrating the harvest, the *pout'* is now an occasion for drinking, dancing, and all-around merrymaking. Preparations for the *pout'* can take weeks and involve making and stockpiling sweets. In larger villages, rides may be set up.<sup>239</sup>



© Jialiang Gao  
Ride of the Kings

A notable festival, observed only in some parts of southern Moravia, is the Ride of the Kings. During the week-long celebration, a local boy is chosen to be the king. On the day of the ride, he rides through the town dressed in a *kroj* (a traditional woman's dress) with a rose between his teeth. His entourage, also riding extravagantly decorated horses, call out to passersby, who honor the king with gifts of money.<sup>240</sup>

### *National Holidays*

Czechs celebrate New Year's Day (1 January) by cleaning their homes, wearing new clothes, being extra nice to friends and family, and making sure they have cash in their pockets.

<sup>234</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 123, 169.

<sup>235</sup> Ryan Scott, "Dos and Don'ts: Sexual Attitudes," Expats.cz, 10 October 2011, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/czech-culture/dos-and-donts-sexual-attitudes/>

<sup>236</sup> Ryan Scott, "Dos and Don'ts: Czech Fashion," Expats.cz, 24 January 2011, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/czech-culture/dos-and-donts-czech-fashion/>

<sup>237</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 109.

<sup>238</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 68.

<sup>239</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 62.

<sup>240</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Ride of the Kings in the South-East of the Czech Republic," *Intangible Heritage*, 2011, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00564>

According to tradition, whatever happens on New Year's Day determines what will happen in the coming year.<sup>241</sup>

Although 1 May is May Day, for years the Communist regime celebrated it as International Workers' Day. Czechs still have the day off, but the celebrations no longer involve parades of workers carrying portraits of Karl Marx. The true revelry takes place the night before (30 April) with the Burning of the Witches, or Walpurgis Night. This was once a pagan celebration meant to drive away evil spirits that rise on the eve of May Day. Today, effigies of witches are thrown on bonfires that burn through the night while people make merry.<sup>242</sup>

The Communists, who wanted to discourage nostalgia for the First Republic, the era of Czechoslovakian nationhood between the world wars, downplayed Independence Day, 28 October. Although this holiday is the Czech equivalent of the 4th of July, celebrations are much lower-key than in America.<sup>243</sup>

### *Other Public Holidays*

During public holidays, banks, offices, and many stores are closed. Additionally, many businesses close during July and August when Czechs, guaranteed a month of vacation each year, tend to take extended breaks.<sup>244, 245</sup>

- 8 May: Liberation Day
- 5 July: Cyril and Methodius Day
- 6 July: Jan Hus Day
- 28 September: Czech Statehood Day
- 17 November: Freedom and Democracy Day
- 26 December: St. Stephen's Day



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Cyril & Methodius day

## **Dos and Don'ts**

### **Do**

- Do greet people when entering a shop, elevator, or other small, shared space.
- Do remember to say goodbye when you leave.
- Do ask, "Is this seat taken?" at a pub or restaurant before sitting down.
- Do begin meals with a toast.
- Do make eye contact when shaking hands or making a toast.

<sup>241</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 66.

<sup>242</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 60.

<sup>243</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 148.

<sup>244</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 440–41.

<sup>245</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 68.

- Do be patient and flexible when negotiating.

### **Don't**

- Don't put your feet on furniture.
- Don't speak loudly in public.
- Don't arrive without an appointment (or if visiting someone's home, an invitation).
- Don't pour beer from one mug to another.
- Don't refer to Czechs as Czechoslovakians.
- Don't discuss politics, and, in particular, don't bring up Communism.<sup>246, 247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Michael Powell, "The Czech Republic," in *Behave Yourself! The Essential Guide to International Etiquette* (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 2005).

<sup>247</sup> Vayama, "Czech Etiquette Tips," 2012, <http://www.vayama.com/etiquette/czech/>

## Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Czechs are not known for their political correctness.

**True**

Czechs have an ironic sense of humor and a tendency to say what they think. It is not unusual for them to make comments that to Americans might seem sexist or racist.

2. When Czechs disagree with someone, they often express their displeasure by yelling.

**False**

Czechs tend to be non-confrontational. If they disagree with someone, they generally lower their eyes and become silent rather than risk saying something that will exacerbate the situation.

3. When you are invited to someone's home for dinner, you should bring chocolates, wine, or flowers.

**True**

Having guests is a special occasion, and a small gift for the host or hostess is a sign of appreciation. When giving flowers, always give an odd number (other than 13) and avoid giving chrysanthemums, which are traditionally used to decorate graves.

4. Czechs are proud of their beer and observe a strict etiquette for drinking it.

**True**

Czechs, who have a long and proud tradition as beer brewers, have the highest per capita beer consumption in the world. At pubs, beer-drinking etiquette includes toasting before drinking and not mixing beers.

5. Village fairs and festivals no longer play a large role in Czech life.

**False**

In both cities and villages, fairs and festivals are still very popular in the Czech Republic. Not only do special festivals and markets often precede major holidays, but also every village has its own annual festival.



## CHAPTER 4: URBAN LIFE

### Introduction

The history of the Czech Republic is reflected in its urban architecture. Like tree rings, urban areas expanded in stages. At the core lies the medieval city center. Surrounding the city center, a ring of industrial-era buildings marks the first wave of urbanization, touched off by the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century.<sup>248</sup> Next come the ubiquitous rows of *panelaks*, postwar Soviet-style high-rise apartment buildings. These buildings grew out of an urban population explosion in the 1950s. Under Communism, people spent years on government lists waiting for apartments. Some families exploited a loophole in the system to hold onto the apartments of deceased relatives, illegally subletting the apartments at a premium.<sup>249</sup> Those who could not pay the higher rents were forced to share cramped apartments with relatives until their names moved to the top of the waiting lists.<sup>250</sup>



To address the growing housing crisis, the Communists began building extensive housing estates of *panelaks*, constructed from prefabricated concrete slabs. Fast and affordable to build, the 80,000 *panelaks* built between 1959–1995 continue to house one-third of the Czech population.<sup>251</sup>

Beyond the forest of *panelaks* lie the ever-expanding suburbs with their modern housing and sleek shopping centers.<sup>252</sup> When the post-Communist government began privatizing housing in the 1990s, rent for privately owned properties skyrocketed, particularly in crowded city centers. Owners of apartment buildings, discovering that they could get more rent for offices than for apartments, began to convert their property. People were forced to leave city centers as residential buildings were turned into office buildings. Many families, drawn by quieter, safer housing accommodations in outer districts, abandoned city centers, leaving them to young, single professionals, who make up a growing portion of urban society.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Luděk Sýkora, “Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague,” in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 116.

<sup>249</sup> Olga Szantová, “Illegal Trade in Apartments Solution to Housing Shortage,” Radio Prague, 30 November 2000, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/illegal-trade-in-apartments-solution-to-housing-shortage>

<sup>250</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 144.

<sup>251</sup> Matt Reynolds, “Still Standing,” *Prague Post*, 10 March 2005, <http://www.praguepost.com/archivescontent/40712-astill-standing.html>

<sup>252</sup> Mike Powell, “House Hunting in . . . the Czech Republic,” *New York Times: Great Homes and Destinations*, 1 September 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/02/greathomesanddestinations/02gh-househunting.html?adxnnl=1&pagewanted=all&adxnnlx=1330023757-KIN9k3X0dsGTzx/MCqP6Wg>

<sup>253</sup> Pavla Horáková, “Centre of Prague Depopulating,” Radio Prague, 26 September 2006, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/centre-of-prague-depopulating>

## Urbanization Issues

### *Housing*

Over the last decade, housing has become increasingly privatized, with municipal governments and cooperative building societies selling their holdings to tenants, members, and other private entities.<sup>254</sup> In addition, the government phased out rent controls in most areas between 2007–2011. (Prague will retain some rent controls until 2013.) Although the move has prompted fears of price gouging, rental prices have remained fairly stable mostly because of the variation in the quality of housing. Private properties continue to command higher prices, often because owners have invested in renovations that increase the value of the property.<sup>255</sup>



© Johnathan Khoo  
Panelaks in Haje

Rent-controlled properties, on the other hand, have been at the mercy of limited government budgets for maintenance and modernization. *Panelaks*, which still house millions of Czechs, are a prime example. Although the buildings are still structurally sound, many of the materials used in their construction need to be replaced (windows and balcony railings, for example). The *panelaks* are also poorly insulated and energy inefficient. It would cost an estimated USD 18 billion to refurbish all the buildings—nearly half of the Czech government’s current annual budget.<sup>256</sup>

Most *panelaks* are now the property of tenant associations or building cooperatives, some of which are attracting private investment to finance renovations. With affordable housing in short supply, *panelaks*, particularly those close to public transportation, remain an attractive housing option for many Czechs.<sup>257, 258</sup> However, more affluent Czechs are increasingly opting for more modern accommodations.<sup>259</sup> Urban planners worry that large-scale migration of the middle class from the housing estates may transform the once equitable *panelaks*—where, under Communism, surgeons lived next door to factory workers—into enclaves of poverty and social ills.<sup>260, 261</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Ondřej Kubala, “Preliminary Results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census,” Czech Statistical Office, 15 December 2011,

[http://www.czso.cz/sldb2011/eng/redakce.nsf/i/preliminary\\_results\\_of\\_the\\_2011\\_population\\_and\\_housing\\_census](http://www.czso.cz/sldb2011/eng/redakce.nsf/i/preliminary_results_of_the_2011_population_and_housing_census)

<sup>255</sup> Benjamin Cunningham, “End of Rent Regulation Prompts Speculation, Unease,” *Prague Post*, 10 November 2010, <http://www.praguepost.com/real-estate/6355-end-of-rent-regulation-prompts-speculation-unease.html>

<sup>256</sup> Matt Reynolds, “Still Standing,” *Prague Post*, 10 March 2005, <http://www.praguepost.com/archivescontent/40712-still-standing.html>

<sup>257</sup> Matt Reynolds, “Still Standing,” *Prague Post*, 10 March 2005, <http://www.praguepost.com/archivescontent/40712-still-standing.html>

<sup>258</sup> Simproperty group, “International Property News,” 11 June 2009, <http://www.simpropertygroup.com/News/20090611CZ-panelak-prices-fall.php>

<sup>259</sup> Sean Hanley, “Concrete Conclusions: The Discreet Charm of the Czech Panelak,” *Central Europe Review* 0, no. 22 (22 February 1999), [http://www.ce-review.org/authorarchives/hanley\\_archive/hanley22old.html](http://www.ce-review.org/authorarchives/hanley_archive/hanley22old.html)

<sup>260</sup> Olga Szantová, “Illegal Trade in Apartments Solution to Housing Shortage,” *Radio Prague*, 30 November 2000, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/illegal-trade-in-apartments-solution-to-housing-shortage>

## City Planning

Under the Communist regime, people were assigned apartments at random. A person could end up in a *panelak* next to a young couple with children or in a historic building near a city center next to a former convict.<sup>262</sup>



© Peter Fend'a  
Jižní Čechy

In the post-Communist era, the government has largely allowed market forces to dictate urban development. Urban development including policies for housing, land use, and economic development became generally the purview of the local governments. Foreign direct investment often favored the development of greenfield sites (open, undeveloped land) over reclaiming brownfield sites (abandoned industrial and military sites near a city center) because of environmental policies, which generally conflicted with government policy.<sup>263</sup> The result was more than a decade of unsustainable patterns of development, and a shift in the demographic makeup of urban population.

The uneven concentration of redevelopment in the 1990s left some districts thriving and others trapped in a downward spiral. People who could afford it moved to new upscale neighborhoods, while those who could not found themselves living in areas of economic stagnation and decline.<sup>264</sup> Additionally, as people grew increasingly unable or unwilling to live close to their jobs, commutes grew longer.<sup>265</sup> Families moved away from city centers, leaving behind a largely childless set of young professionals and older couples.<sup>266</sup> Suburbs grew rapidly and with little regulation, placing a strain on both infrastructure and the environment.<sup>267</sup>

<sup>261</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague," in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 120–21.

<sup>262</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague," in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 114.

<sup>263</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague," in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 136.

<sup>264</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Czech Republic," in *Urban Issues and Urban Policies in the New EU Countries*, eds. Ronald van Kempen, Marcel Vermeulen, and Ad Baan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 33.

<sup>265</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague," in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 120–21.

<sup>266</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague," in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 114.

<sup>267</sup> Luděk Sýkora, "Czech Republic," in *Urban Issues and Urban Policies in the New EU Countries*, eds. Ronald van Kempen, Marcel Vermeulen, and Ad Baan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 23.

Today, cars are gaining popularity as the preferred method of transportation for many suburbanites, particularly in areas underserved by public transportation. More cars on the road means more congestion, more air pollution, and, ultimately, more roads.<sup>268</sup>

Although a national urban planning program does not yet exist, many municipalities have developed strategic plans to coordinate policy and capitalize on redevelopment funding available from the government and the European Union (EU). Prague is developing a long-term strategy to maintain the quality of life in the city by concentrating development near public transportation, reclaiming brownfield sites, reducing traffic congestion, and preserving green space. However, urban sprawl around Prague remains an unsolved regional issue.<sup>269</sup>

## Employment Issues

Over the last two decades, the economy of the Czech Republic has shifted away from manufacturing in favor of jobs in the service industry—particularly in retail and administration. Although national unemployment numbers are low (estimated at 8.5% for 2011), urban areas that are more dependent on manufacturing—especially those in northern Moravia and northern Bohemia—have struggled with high levels of unemployment as manufacturing jobs disappear faster than the service industry can replace them.<sup>270, 271</sup>



© Yair Haklai  
Men at work

Some cities, such as Plzeň and Kladno, have reindustrialized, investing in new manufacturing facilities to create jobs. The exception to the job loss trend is Prague, where the rapid growth of the service industry has resulted in a shortage of workers and even a decline in the number of low-paying jobs, jobs which Eastern European migrants often fill.<sup>272</sup>

## Labor Issues

Workers are protected by the labor code established in 1965 and updated to conform to EU regulations. The code limits the work week to 40 hours and allows workers to take daily breaks and two rest days per week. Workers have a generous amount of vacation days per year.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>268</sup> CENIA, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, *Report on the Environment of the Czech Republic*, 2009, 8, 80, [http://www.mzp.cz/C125750E003B698B/en/report\\_on\\_the\\_environment\\_2009/\\$FILE/OEUPZP-Report\\_2009\\_EN-20110131.pdf](http://www.mzp.cz/C125750E003B698B/en/report_on_the_environment_2009/$FILE/OEUPZP-Report_2009_EN-20110131.pdf)

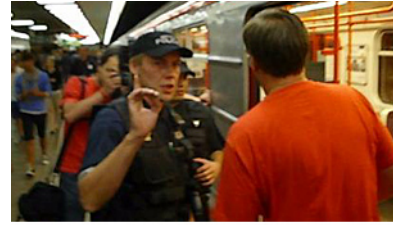
<sup>269</sup> Luděk Sýkora, “Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague,” in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 127, 134–36.

<sup>270</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Czech Republic,” in *The World Factbook*, 19 April 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>271</sup> Luděk Sýkora, “Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague,” in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 114–16.

<sup>272</sup> Luděk Sýkora, “Urban Development, Policy and Planning in the Czech Republic and Prague,” in *Spatial Planning and Urban Development in the New EU Member States: From Adjustment to Reinvention*, eds. Uwe Altrock, et al. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006), 114–16.

Unions are legal and independent from government control, although they cannot engage in business or political activities. Czechs have the right to collective bargaining and can strike, but only after mediation has been attempted. The government does not actively enforce collective bargaining agreements and has a poor record of investigating labor violations. Some workers, such as members of the police, military personnel, judges, and prosecutors do not have the right to strike. Those employed in industries such as nuclear power, healthcare, and air traffic control have a limited ability to strike.<sup>274</sup>



© Joker Island / flickr.com  
Consumers on strike

Foreign workers are guaranteed the same rights, including equal pay and the right to unionize. However, labor laws are routinely violated in the case of migrant workers, who are often employed illegally. They can be denied access to healthcare and other government services.<sup>275</sup> Human trafficking and forced labor of foreigners continues to be a matter of serious concern. Each year, large numbers of men and women from Eastern Europe and Asia are brought to the Czech Republic. They are forced to work in construction, forestry, manufacturing, and service jobs and to live in substandard conditions.<sup>276</sup>

Women are guaranteed equal rights, and because of the former-Communist regime's emphasis on egalitarianism and the expectation that women do the same work as men, they are generally well represented in all fields.<sup>277</sup> However, women's wages are typically lower than men's, and women are less likely to hold senior positions in companies. Sexual harassment laws are poorly enforced.<sup>278</sup>

## Healthcare

### *Quality and Availability of Care*

In terms of quality and availability, the healthcare system in the Czech Republic is on a par with Western European care systems. In addition, hospitals and health clinics in cities are likely to have some English-speaking staff.<sup>279</sup> The physician to population ratio is high in cities—in

<sup>273</sup> Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Czech Republic, "Labour Code," 2006, [http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/3221/labour\\_code.pdf](http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/3221/labour_code.pdf)

<sup>274</sup> Freedom House, "The Global State of Workers' Rights: Czech Republic," *Refworld*, 31 August 2010, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d4fc802c.html>

<sup>275</sup> Z.H.A. Zayonchkovskaya, "Czech Republic," in *UNESCO Series of Country Reports on the Ratification of the UN Convention on Migrants*, UNESCO, 1 July 2004, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001395/139533e.pdf>

<sup>276</sup> U.S. Department of State, "2011 Trafficking in Persons Report: Czech Republic," *Refworld*, 27 June 2011, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e12ee84c.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e12ee84c.html)

<sup>277</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 54.

<sup>278</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Reports: Czech Republic*, 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eur/154420.htm>

<sup>279</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 463.



Prague, it is nearly twice the EU average.<sup>280, 281</sup> On the other hand, compared to their European neighbors, Czechs log twice as many visits to the doctor.<sup>282</sup>

Despite having universal healthcare, the Czech government spends less per capita than most OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. Since a funding crisis in 2004, the government has increased funding for the healthcare system. In 2008 it instituted a 30 koruna (roughly USD 2) co-pay for some services.<sup>283</sup> Although Czech doctors make nearly twice the average annual salary, they are paid only a fraction of what their European counterparts make. Many are concerned the system is broken.<sup>284</sup> Thousands of doctors leave the country each year to find more lucrative positions abroad. This exodus still has not affected the reserve of doctors or the quality of the Czech healthcare system.<sup>285</sup>



© Wolfram Burner  
Hospital in Prague

About 99% of the population are immunized against tuberculosis, tetanus, diphtheria, and measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR)—one of the highest vaccination rates in Europe.<sup>286</sup>

### *Healthcare System*

Health insurance is mandatory for all residents of the Czech Republic, including foreigners.<sup>287</sup> Except for children, students under the age of 26, and those eligible for pensions, all Czechs (and foreigners working for Czech companies) are required to pay into the state healthcare system (in some cases, employers pay part or all of the fee).<sup>288</sup> Healthcare is administered through nine

<sup>280</sup> OECD iLibrary, “Health at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators,” n.d., [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/health\\_glance-2011-en/06/04/index.html?jsessionid=3dln9sdrovedm.delta?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/health\\_glance-2011-55-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/19991312&accessItemIds=/content/book/health\\_glance-2011-en&mimeType=text/html](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/health_glance-2011-en/06/04/index.html?jsessionid=3dln9sdrovedm.delta?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/health_glance-2011-55-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/19991312&accessItemIds=/content/book/health_glance-2011-en&mimeType=text/html)

<sup>281</sup> Martina Rokosova and Petr Hava, “Health Care Systems in Transition: Czech Republic,” World Health Organization, 2004, 64.

<sup>282</sup> Martina Rokosova and Petr Hava, “Health Care Systems in Transition: Czech Republic,” World Health Organization, 2004, 52.

<sup>283</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 115–16.

<sup>284</sup> Eric Westervelt, “Czech Doctors Prepare to Abandon the Republic,” *NPR*, 19 December 2010, <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/19/132117768/czech-doctors-prepare-to-abandon-the-republic>

<sup>285</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>286</sup> Martina Rokosova and Petr Hava, “Health Care Systems in Transition: Czech Republic,” World Health Organization, 2004, 46.

<sup>287</sup> Všeobecná zdravotní pojišťovna České republiky (General Health Insurance Company of the Czech Republic), “Registration of Insured Person/Participation in Public Health Insurance,” 26 May 2008, <http://www.vzp.cz/en/registration-of-insured-person.php>

<sup>288</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 116.

nonprofit health insurance agencies, the largest being the General Insurance Company of the Czech Republic (VZP CR). Private health insurance is also available.<sup>289</sup>

Everyone is required to register with a general practitioner (GP). Much of a GP's time is spent certifying illnesses—a doctor's note is required to miss even one day of work. GPs can have their own offices or work in a *polyclinic*, a facility with several GPs and specialists.<sup>290</sup> Czechs do not need a referral from their GP to see a specialist.<sup>291</sup>



© elPadawan / flickr.com  
Baroque pharmacy

### Exchange 11: Is Dr. Dvořák in, please?

Visitor:	Is Dr. Dvořák in, please?	pRoseem vaas, yeh tam doctoR dvohRzhaak?
Local:	No.	neh

Doctors can work in private practice or contract with one of the public health insurance companies, which pays them directly for their services. Hospitals are publicly or privately funded. When patients visit a doctor or hospital that has a contract with their particular insurance agency, they do not have to pay for treatment. Except in cases of emergency, patients cannot visit doctors or facilities not included on their insurance plan.<sup>292</sup>



© MPD01605 / flickr.com  
Ambulance

### Exchange 12: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	yeh tuh n-yekdeh bleezkoh nehmotsnitseh?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	anoh, v-tsentrRo m-yehsta

Emergency care is handled differently in the Czech Republic than in the United States. Patients are not always taken to the nearest hospital, but to the hospital that specializes in emergency care

<sup>289</sup> Všeobecná zdravotní pojišťovna České republiky (General Health Insurance Company of the Czech Republic), "Registration of Insured Person/Participation in Public Health Insurance," 26 May 2008, <http://www.vzp.cz/en/public-health-insurance.php>

<sup>290</sup> Martina Rokosova and Petr Hava, "Health Care Systems in Transition: Czech Republic," World Health Organization, 2004, 49–50.

<sup>291</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>292</sup> David Creighon, "Insurance in the Czech Republic," *Expats.cz*, 16 June 2005, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/prague-relocation/house-auto-insurance/>

for a particular condition, such as severe burns or cardiac problems. Ambulance service is not free, and payment is expected at the time of service (credit cards are accepted).<sup>293</sup>

### *Pharmacies*

Pharmacies are the only place in the Czech Republic where you can buy medication. Drugs are tightly regulated, and some medications available over the counter in the United States require a prescription in the Czech Republic.<sup>294</sup>

## **Education and Schools**

The requirement for Czech children to attend school dates back to 1774 when Bohemia and Moravia were still part of the Austrian Empire.<sup>295</sup> Prague is home to one of the oldest universities in Europe—Charles University, founded in 1348 by Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV.<sup>296</sup> It is not surprising then that more than 99% of Czechs are not only literate or that many read and write in a second language. Public education, including programs at public universities, is free, and private schools are subsidized by state contributions. Compulsory education applies to ages of 6–15, but Czechs on average spend 15 years in the educational system.<sup>297</sup>



© Edgar Vonk  
Preschool children walking

### *Preschool*

Preschool, or nursery school, begins at the age of 3. Although preschool attendance is not compulsory, 86% of children attend preschool.<sup>298</sup>

### *Primary School*

Primary school begins at the age of 6. It is divided into two four-year stages. During the first stage, children stay in the same class and often have the same teacher. After four years, they advance to upper primary school, although students who are gifted may have the option of entering the *gymnázium*, a college-prep secondary school, or another specialized



© Kathy McGraw  
School children

<sup>293</sup> Embassy of the United States, Prague, Czech Republic, “Information Regarding Medical Services in Prague,” January 2012, [http://prague.usembassy.gov/medical\\_services.html](http://prague.usembassy.gov/medical_services.html)

<sup>294</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 170–71.

<sup>295</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic, Dublin, Ireland, “The Czech Education System,” n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/education\\_in\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about_the_czech_republic/education_in_the_czech_republic/index.html)

<sup>296</sup> Charles University in Prague, “History of CU,” 2012, <http://www.cuni.cz/UKENG-181.html>

<sup>297</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Czech Republic,” in *The World Factbook*, 15 February 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>298</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic, Dublin, Ireland, “The Czech Education System,” n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/education\\_in\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about_the_czech_republic/education_in_the_czech_republic/index.html)

school.<sup>299</sup> *Gymnáziums* offer six- and eight-year tracks for students who leave primary school early.<sup>300</sup>

Under Communism, teachers were forced to teach directly from state-approved books. Today, much of what students learn, at least in the early grades, is largely through rote memorization and recitation.<sup>301</sup>

### *Secondary and Postsecondary School*

Different types of secondary education are available to Czech students. About 17% of secondary students attend a *gymnázium*, a college-prep high school that focuses on the liberal arts. Students must apply to the *gymnázium*, and admissions are based on grades and students' scores on the entrance exam (although bribery is a widely used method of securing a spot in a top school). About 38% attend technical schools, which offer specialized programs ranging from health services to economics to the fine arts. Students from the *gymnázium* and technical schools must pass an exit test called the *maturita* to earn their diplomas and qualify for entrance to universities.<sup>302, 303</sup>



© Jaroslav Mrkvica  
University library

The *maturita* is an oral exam. One week before the test, students are given a list of 50 questions in each subject. The week before the *maturita* is spent cramming and occasionally blowing off steam by dressing in costumes and soliciting donations for a graduation party, an all-night drinking binge. On the day of the test, students enter the exam room one at a time and draw a question out of a hat that they must answer in front of their teacher, a specialist in the subject, and a school inspector. If they fail, they must attend summer school or repeat their senior year.<sup>304</sup>

Most students (about 45%) opt for a third type of secondary education. They attend trade or vocational schools, which offer programs in food preparation, cosmetology, construction, and auto mechanics. After graduation, students have several options for postsecondary vocational training.<sup>305, 306</sup> Only about 10% of Czechs obtain university degrees, although more and more

<sup>299</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic, Dublin, Ireland, "The Czech Education System," n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/education\\_in\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about_the_czech_republic/education_in_the_czech_republic/index.html)

<sup>300</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 52.

<sup>301</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 153.

<sup>302</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 148, 152.

<sup>303</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic, Dublin, Ireland, "The Czech Education System," n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/education\\_in\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about_the_czech_republic/education_in_the_czech_republic/index.html)

<sup>304</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 104.

<sup>305</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 152.

<sup>306</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic, Dublin, Ireland, "The Czech Education System," n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/education\\_in\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/dublin/en/about_the_czech_republic/education_in_the_czech_republic/index.html)



Czechs are enrolling in universities as the number of high-paying jobs in the service sector grows. As a result, universities are overcrowded and underfunded.<sup>307</sup>

## Marketplace

### *Business Hours*

Business hours are typically 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday and 9 a.m.–noon on Saturdays. Large stores may stay open later on Fridays and Saturdays and may have Sunday hours. It is not recommended to schedule meetings on Friday afternoons since many people leave work early to spend the weekend in the countryside.<sup>308</sup> Many offices close between noon and 1 p.m. for lunch.<sup>309</sup>



© Stephanie Yoder  
Grapes at the market

### *Money*

Credit cards are often, but not universally, accepted. It is best to always have some cash on hand. The best exchange rates can be obtained by using a debit card at an ATM to withdraw cash.<sup>310</sup> However, one should be cautious about where and when one uses an ATM: use machines inside banks and away from tourist areas, and be careful about using ATMs at night. To protect against scams, one should not exchange currency on the street; use only banks or official currency exchange kiosks.<sup>311</sup>

### Exchange 13: Can you give me change for this?

Buyer:	Can you give me change for this?	moozhete mi toh Roz-m-yennit?
Seller:	Yes.	anoh

### *Telephones*

The telephone system was completely updated in 2002 and is in line with EU standards. All phone numbers have nine digits (even local calls require dialing all nine). To call into the country, the code is 420; to make international calls from within the country, dial 00 + the country code for the country you are calling (for the United States, dial 1) then the number, starting with the area code. Cell phones are widely used and can even be rented, but they use

<sup>307</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>308</sup> Kwintessential, “Czech Republic: Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/czech.html>

<sup>309</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 433–34.

<sup>310</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 443.

<sup>311</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Czech Republic: Country Specific Information,” 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html)



GSM 900 frequency, which is not compatible with phones purchased in North America. Pay phones are also available, but may require a prepaid phone card.<sup>312</sup>

#### Exchange 14: Do you have a telephone?

Visitor:	Do you have a telephone?	maateh telefon?
Local:	Yes, the number is 257-138-467	anoh, moyeh cheesloh yeh dvah, pyet, sedum, yedna, tRzhi, osum, ch-tiRzhi, shest, sedum

#### Shopping

Czechs shop at *prodejny potravin* (corner grocery stores) for most of their daily needs. To enter a *prodejna potravin*, customers must have a basket (there is usually a small deposit required to get the basket). Stores usually charge for bags, so people often bring their own, and customers bag their own groceries.<sup>313</sup>

*Prodejny potravin* do not generally carry a wide selection of fresh food (meat is usually frozen). Outdoor markets, such as Havel's Market in Prague, have a wide selection of seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables.<sup>314</sup>

Outdoor markets are known for their wide selection of handmade goods. Special markets are held for Christmas and Easter, selling seasonal specialties and featuring entertainment.<sup>315</sup> Fresh meat can be found at the butchers, and fresh bread and baked goods can be found in bakeries.<sup>316</sup>



© HelpAge International / flickr.com  
Grocery store

#### Exchange 15: Do you sell crystal vases?

Buyer:	Do you sell crystal vases?	pRodaavaateh bRo-shenay vaazy?
Seller:	Yes.	anoh

Although *prodejny potravin* carry some toiletries, a wider selection is available at the drug store (*drogerie*). However, drug stores do not carry medicine; medications must be purchased at a pharmacy (*lékárna*).<sup>317</sup>

<sup>312</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 445.

<sup>313</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 117–18.

<sup>314</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 118–19.

<sup>315</sup> “Shops and Markets,” *Prague Experience*, 2012, [http://www.pragueexperience.com/shops\\_markets/markets.asp](http://www.pragueexperience.com/shops_markets/markets.asp)

<sup>316</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 119–21.

## Restaurants

Restaurants that serve lunch open around 11 a.m., and dinner is served around 7 p.m. Many restaurants and pubs stop serving hot food around 9 p.m., even if they remain open.<sup>318, 319</sup> At pubs and most restaurants, you are expected to seat yourself and, especially in busy pubs, share tables. Before sitting down, politely ask if the seat is available. Eating out is a leisurely experience, so the waiters will take their time attending you, and attempts to draw their attention by calling out or snapping fingers may not be appreciated.<sup>320, 321</sup>



© Courtesy of Wikipedia.org  
Outdoor restaurant

Czech restaurants have a reputation for cheating customers, although this situation is probably exaggerated. Restaurants often charge a cover charge (basically, you are paying for the use of the table whether or not you order anything), and items such as bread and condiments are often listed as separate charges. If you find something on your bill that you did not order, treat it as an honest mistake and politely bring it to the attention of the staff.<sup>322</sup>

At pubs, it is assumed that you will be drinking beer, so the waiter may bring you beer without waiting for an order and refill your glass as soon as it is empty. Your tab is kept at the table on a slip of paper, which you should not write on.<sup>323</sup> Many pubs serve food, which is ordered from the table.<sup>324</sup>

### Exchange 16: May I have a glass of water?

Customer (male):	May I have a glass of water?	moozhu dohstat sklehnitsi vohdy?
Waiter:	Yes.	anoh

<sup>317</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 121–22.

<sup>318</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 94.

<sup>319</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 66.

<sup>320</sup> “Prague: Restaurants,” *Frommer’s*, 2012, <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/prague/0063010028.html>

<sup>321</sup> Meghan O’Connell, “The Don’ts of Czech Dining,” *Prague Wanderer*, 21 November 2008, <http://www.thepraguewanderer.com/2008/11/21/the-donts-of-czech-dining/>

<sup>322</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 136, 436.

<sup>323</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 113–14.

<sup>324</sup> Marc Di Duca, *Czech Republic* (Bucks, England: Bradt Travel Guides, 2006), 58.

**Exchange 17: Do you have dessert?**

Customer:	Do you have dessert?	maateh dehzeRt?
Waiter:	Yes, we have <i>ovocné knedliky</i> .	anoh, maameh ovoh-tsneh knedleeky

It is assumed that a man will pay for a woman, and in business situations the person who issued the invitation should pick up the bill. In pubs, people generally pay separately, except on birthdays and name days when the person celebrating picks up the tab.<sup>325</sup>

**Exchange 18: Please bring the bill to me.**

Customer:	Please bring the bill to me.	pRo-seem, pRzhineste mi oochet
Waiter:	Yes, right away.	anoh, hnet

You should not leave money on the table. Rather than tipping, Czechs usually round the bill up, allowing the cashier to keep the change.<sup>326</sup> Usually this amounts to about a 5% tip; adding 10% to the bill is considered generous. If you do tip, hand the money directly to the waiter.<sup>327</sup>

**Traffic and Transportation**

The transportation infrastructure in the Czech Republic is extensive and in good repair. Highways and railways provide transport between cities for goods and people, and the country has 60 airports.<sup>328</sup> Most cities have extensive bus systems that are efficient and safe. Prague also has a metro system. Tickets can be purchased at stations or in bundles from newsstands and shops. When you board a bus or the metro, you must validate your ticket by having it time-stamped. Tickets are good for a specific amount of time once they have been validated, but they can be used for unlimited travel within that time. People caught without a validated ticket are fined.<sup>329</sup>



© Ralf Roletschek  
Tram in Prague

<sup>325</sup> Timothy M. Hall, "Pivo at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities," in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 71.

<sup>326</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 115.

<sup>327</sup> "Prague: Restaurants," *Frommer's*, 2012, <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/prague/0063010028.html>

<sup>328</sup> Rick Fawn and Jiří Hochman, *Historical Dictionary of the Czech State*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 260, 262.

<sup>329</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 458.

**Exchange 19: Is there a metro station nearby?**

Visitor:	Is there a metro station nearby?	yeh tu n-yegdeh bleezkoh stahnitseh metRah?
Local:	Yes.	anoh

Taxis are available in urban areas, but should be called rather than hailed on the street, which could result in getting an unofficial cab. If you do hail a cab, negotiate the fare before you get in, and always make sure that the driver is running the meter.<sup>330</sup>

**Street Crime and Safety**

Crime rates in the Czech Republic are generally low, but basic precautions should be taken when traveling alone. Although there are some concerns about police corruption, crimes can and should be reported to local authorities, either directly or with the assistance of the U.S. Embassy.<sup>331</sup>



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Police patrolling streets

*Theft and Pickpocketing*

Pickpocketing is the largest threat to foreigners, especially in crowded areas such as city centers and public transportation. Criminals often operate in groups and can be armed. Foreigners are expected to carry passports or some other official identification (ID) at all times. Keep your ID secure, preferably not in the same place as your wallet, and have copies as a backup in case it is stolen. Auto theft and break-ins are common. Valuables, if left in a car, should be hidden from sight.<sup>332</sup>

*Sex Trade and Solicitation*

Prostitution thrives, in part because of the lucrative sex tourism industry. Prague is a popular destination for stag parties from other countries, and many red-light districts about tourist areas.<sup>333, 334</sup> In an effort to discourage prostitution and sex tourism, local governments have outlawed brothels, pimping, and prostitution in public places.<sup>335</sup>

<sup>330</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 151.

<sup>331</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic: Country Specific Information," 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html#crime](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html#crime)

<sup>332</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic: Country Specific Information," 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html#crime](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html#crime)

<sup>333</sup> Simon Boazman, "Stag Parties 'Fuel Sex Trafficking,'" *BBC News*, 14 January 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8457172.stm>

<sup>334</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 31.

<sup>335</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Reports: Czech Republic*, 8 April, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eur/154420.htm>

The Czech Republic is a point of origin, transit, and arrival for human trafficking and forced prostitution of men, women, and children, usually by organized crime syndicates. Victims often come from Eastern Europe and Asia, although Roma people and children in the foster system are considered vulnerable to internal trafficking.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, *2010 Human Rights Reports: Czech Republic*, 8 April, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eur/154420.htm>



## Chapter 4 Assessment

1. As housing has become increasingly privatized, areas have become more socially segregated.

**True**

Under Communism, the government assigned housing at random. After the fall of Communism, when people could choose where to live, those who could afford better housing began moving away from city centers to redeveloped neighborhoods and suburbs.

2. Urban sprawl has placed pressure on the infrastructure and environment by making commutes longer.

**True**

Longer commutes mean more time spent driving, which means more air pollution. In some areas, extending public transportation has helped with the problem, but cars are becoming an increasingly popular form of transportation.

3. Most people in cities work in manufacturing.

**False**

The service industry now provides most of the jobs in the urban areas of the Czech Republic.

4. The Czech healthcare system is basic and lacks modern facilities.

**False**

The Czech healthcare system is modern and well developed. Its standards are similar to those of Western European systems.

5. Czech cities have good public transportation systems.

**True**

Most urban areas have extensive bus systems that are safe and efficient. Prague also has a metro system.

## CHAPTER 5: RURAL LIFE

### Introduction

Industrialization in the 19th century dramatically transformed the lives of Czechs, who very early embraced the Industrial Revolution. The end of serfdom allowed workers to move to cities in large numbers to operate the factories and mills of Bohemia and Moravia. At its inception, Czechoslovakia contained almost 80% of the industry of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>337</sup>



© Harke / Wikipedia.org  
Rural streets

Although more than 70% of Czechs live in urban areas, they remain firmly attached to their agrarian roots.<sup>338</sup> During the 19th century, nationalists seeking authentic Czech culture looked to the countryside. Country life was romanticized, and the Bohemian peasant, untouched by foreign influences, was celebrated as the purest and truest kind of Czech. To this day, Czechs embrace country life as part of their national identity, spending weekends and summer vacations at country cottages and attending village fairs and festivals.<sup>339</sup>

However, agriculture accounts for less than 3% of the national economy, and smaller villages are dwindling as young people move away to pursue educational opportunities and careers. Nearly half the country's farmland is considered at risk for abandonment.<sup>340</sup> Although agriculture and the rural life it supports no longer play a large role in the economy, they serve an important social and environmental function. For example, some farmers receive financial aid to protect biodiversity and to help prevent desertification.<sup>341, 342</sup>

### Land Distribution and Ownership

The Czech Republic has one of the highest proportions of arable land to total area in the European Union. One-third of its land is under cultivation, and more than half of all land is used in some form of agriculture. However, arable land is slowly disappearing, particularly near cities

<sup>337</sup> Zenon E. Kohut, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting," in *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study*, ed. Ihor Gawdiak (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1989), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cstoc.html>

<sup>338</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Czech Republic," in *The World Factbook*, 15 November 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cz.html>

<sup>339</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 38.

<sup>340</sup> Jana Hajduchová, "Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions" (assessment, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, UN Environment Programme, June 2007), 9, <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/NR/rdonlyres/B14CB654-004C-4FEC-8372-6F8A4F07048B/0/SARDMcountryassessmentCzechRepublicFinal.pdf>

<sup>341</sup> Embassy of the Czech Republic, Tel Aviv, Israel, "Agriculture in the Czech Republic," n.d., [http://www.mzv.cz/telaviv/en/economy\\_and\\_trade/agriculture\\_in\\_the\\_czech\\_republic/index.html](http://www.mzv.cz/telaviv/en/economy_and_trade/agriculture_in_the_czech_republic/index.html)

<sup>342</sup> Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission, "Rural Development Policy 2007–2013: Aid to Farmers in Less Favoured Areas (LFA)," 21 April 2009, [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/index_en.htm)

where suburban development has increased land values.<sup>343</sup> In less favorable areas, some land has been allowed to revert to permanent grassland.

About 90% of Czech farmers rent land from cooperatives and corporate farms, which own more than 50% of the land.<sup>344, 345</sup>

### Exchange 20: Do you own this land?

Official:	Do you own this land?	yeh tah poodah vah-sheh?
Local:	Yes.	anoh

At the time of the Velvet Revolution (1989), nearly 90% of agricultural land was held in state or collective farms.<sup>346</sup> Privatizing land and restoring property rights to those whose land had been confiscated by the Communists was a priority for the government in the 1990s. In some cases, the government restored land directly to the previous owners or their descendants. In most cases, the government made restitution in kind with land and assets equal to the value of what had been lost.<sup>347</sup> As a result, 3 million people—most of who did not work in agriculture—ended up holding claims to 40% of the land.<sup>348</sup>



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Fields

The government offered claimants three options: use the land for independent farming; leave it in the hands of a co-op, which will pay rent for its use; or exchange the land for cash after seven years. Because plots were small and scattered, farming was not a viable option for most owners. Most claimants left their land in cooperative farms, with the co-ops acting as mediators between the landowners (who in some cases numbered in the thousands) and farmers.<sup>349</sup>

<sup>343</sup> CENIA, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, *Report on the Environment of the Czech Republic*, 2009, 60–61, [http://www.mzp.cz/C125750E003B698B/en/report\\_on\\_the\\_environment\\_2009/\\$FILE/OEUPZP-Report\\_2009\\_EN-20110131.pdf](http://www.mzp.cz/C125750E003B698B/en/report_on_the_environment_2009/$FILE/OEUPZP-Report_2009_EN-20110131.pdf)

<sup>344</sup> Jana Hajduchová, “Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions” (assessment, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, UN Environment Programme, June 2007), 12, <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/NR/rdonlyres/B14CB654-004C-4FEC-8372-6F8A4F07048B/0/SARDMcountryassessmentCzechRepublicFinal.pdf>

<sup>345</sup> Jarmila Curtiss, Tomáš Ratinger, and Tomáš Medonos, “Ownership and Investment Behavior in Transition: Case of Czech Collective and Corporate Farms” (paper, EAAE 2011 Congress, Switzerland, 30 August–2 September 2011), 2, [http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/114282/2/Curtiss\\_Jarmila\\_646.pdf](http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/114282/2/Curtiss_Jarmila_646.pdf)

<sup>346</sup> Jana Hajduchová, “Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions” (assessment, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, UN Environment Programme, June 2007), 12, <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/NR/rdonlyres/B14CB654-004C-4FEC-8372-6F8A4F07048B/0/SARDMcountryassessmentCzechRepublicFinal.pdf>

<sup>347</sup> Nigel Swain, “Agricultural Restitution and Co-operative Transformation in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 7 (November 1999): 1203–4, [www.jstor.org/stable/154119](http://www.jstor.org/stable/154119)

<sup>348</sup> Csaba Csaki, Michel Debatisse, and Oskar Honisch, *Food and Agriculture in the Czech Republic: From a “Velvet” Transition to the Challenges of EU Accession* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1999), 29.

<sup>349</sup> Nigel Swain, “Agricultural Restitution and Co-operative Transformation in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 7 (November 1999): 1203–6, [www.jstor.org/stable/154119](http://www.jstor.org/stable/154119)

Some cooperatives incorporated into private companies, converting the landowners to shareholders and allowing the corporations to own the land outright. As landowners, corporations could more easily use the land as collateral to get loans for improvements, such as updated irrigation systems and farming equipment.<sup>350</sup>

## Rural Economy

Between 1989 and 1999, the percentage of Czechs working in agriculture dropped from 10% to less than 3%, while agricultural production dropped by 30%. The rural population declined as people left villages to find work in cities. Young people accounted for a large part of the rural exodus. In 2007, the average age of a landowner was over 50; 42% of landowners were over 55 years of age, and 27% were aged 45–54. Only 12% of landowners were less than 35.<sup>351</sup>



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Fields

Rural flight has slowed in recent years. It has even reversed in areas near larger cities, where villages have become bedroom communities in which people buy single-family homes within commuting distance of their city jobs.<sup>352</sup> Less than 25% of rural residents work in agriculture.<sup>353</sup>

About 34% of agricultural holdings produce less than 1 ESU (European Size Unit—a comparative measure of the economic output of a farm) per year. The farmers mainly use these smallholdings to produce food for their family, with 61% producing for subsistence and only 18% producing for direct sales.<sup>354</sup> Of the farms producing more than 1 ESU per year, 56% have fewer than 20 hectares (49 acres) and rely heavily on part-time help, often from family members who are also employed elsewhere. Today, many landowners have another side job besides farming.<sup>355</sup>

About 15% of farms engage in economic activities other than agricultural production, such as food processing, small-scale manufacturing, aquaculture, handicrafts, and tourism.<sup>356</sup> However,

<sup>350</sup> Nigel Swain, “Agricultural Restitution and Co-operative Transformation in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 7 (November 1999): 1206, 1210, [www.jstor.org/stable/154119](http://www.jstor.org/stable/154119)

<sup>351</sup> Carla Martins, “Farm Structure in Czech Republic—2007,” *Eurostat*, 2008, 3, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF)

<sup>352</sup> Jana Hajduchová, “Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions” (assessment, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, UN Environment Programme, June 2007), 14, <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/NR/rdonlyres/B14CB654-004C-4FEC-8372-6F8A4F07048B/0/SARDMcountryassessmentCzechRepublicFinal.pdf>

<sup>353</sup> Hannah Chaplin, Sophia Davidova, and Matthew Gorton, *Farm Household-Firm Unit: Its Importance in Agriculture and Implications for Statistics* (paper, Imperial College, University of London, 12–13 April 2002), 2, <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/15728/1/cp02da01.pdf>

<sup>354</sup> Carla Martins, “Farm Structure in Czech Republic —2007,” *Eurostat*, 2008, Republic – 2007,” *Eurostat: Statistics in Focus*, 86/2008 (European Commission, 2008), 7, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF)

<sup>355</sup> Carla Martins, “Farm Structure in Czech Republic—2007,” *Eurostat*, 2008, 3–4, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF)

<sup>356</sup> Carla Martins, “Farm Structure in Czech Republic—2007,” *Eurostat*, 2008, 4, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF)

the lack of job opportunities in smaller, remote villages remains a problem, and unemployment is persistently higher in rural areas than in cities.<sup>357</sup>

### Exchange 21: What crops do you grow?

Official:	What crops do you grow?	tso p-yes-tuh-yeteh?
Local:	I grow wheat and potatoes.	p-yes-tuh-yu psheh-nitsi ah bRambohRy

The number of farms is falling.<sup>358</sup> The European Commission has classified half of all arable land in the Czech Republic as being in danger of abandonment, a situation that could lead to environmental problems and an erosion of village life.<sup>359</sup> To preserve farmland, and by extension rural culture, the European Commission is providing financial aid to farmers in areas where farming is difficult or no longer economically attractive.<sup>360</sup>

### Healthcare Issues

The ratio of doctors to the population is markedly lower in rural areas. Whereas there may be nearly 7 doctors per 1,000 people in Prague, in rural areas the ratio may be just over 2:1,000, the minimum considered adequate by the World Health Organization.<sup>361</sup>



© JD Lasica  
Nursing students

The distribution of doctors also means that people may not have immediate access to healthcare in rural areas. On average 1%–3% of villages with fewer than 200 people have a doctor. In villages with 500–1,000 people, the existence of a medical office ranges from 26%–84%, depending on the region.<sup>362</sup> Facilities

<sup>357</sup> Division for Sustainable Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Czech Republic: National SD Reports: CSD-16/17 (2008–2009): Rural Development,” 2009, 11–12,

[http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd\\_aofw\\_ni/ni\\_natiinfo\\_czechrepu.shtml](http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/dsd_aofw_ni/ni_natiinfo_czechrepu.shtml)

<sup>358</sup> Carla Martins, “Farm Structure in Czech Republic—2007,” *Eurostat*, 2008, 1,

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-08-086/EN/KS-SF-08-086-EN.PDF)

<sup>359</sup> Jana Hajduchová, “Project for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions” (assessment, Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, UN Environment Programme, June 2007), 14,

<http://www.carpathianconvention.org/NR/rdonlyres/B14CB654-004C-4FEC-8372-6F8A4F07048B/0/SARDMcountryassessmentCzechRepublicFinal.pdf>

<sup>360</sup> Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission, “Rural Development Policy 2007–2013: Aid to Farmers in Less Favoured Areas (LFA),” 21 April 2009, [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/lfa/index_en.htm)

<sup>361</sup> OECD iLibrary, “Health at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators,” n.d., [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/health\\_glance-2011-](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/health_glance-2011-)

[en/06/04/index.html;jsessionid=3dln9sdrovedm.delta?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/health\\_glance-2011-55-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/19991312&accessItemIds=/content/book/health\\_glance-2011-en&mimeType=text/html](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/health_glance-2011-en/06/04/index.html;jsessionid=3dln9sdrovedm.delta?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/health_glance-2011-55-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/19991312&accessItemIds=/content/book/health_glance-2011-en&mimeType=text/html)

<sup>362</sup> L. Svatošová, “Human Resources Development in Rural Areas of the Czech Republic,” *Agricultural Economics—Czech* 54 (2008): 75, <http://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/00833.pdf>



may not be as modern as those found in cities, and specialists may be sparse.<sup>363</sup> Healthcare workers in rural areas are also less likely to speak English.<sup>364</sup>

### Exchange 22: Do you know this area very well?

Official:	Do you know this area very well?	znaateh toh tu dobRzheh?
Local:	Yes, I grew up here.	anoh, vyRostl sem tahdy

### Exchange 23: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Official:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	yeh tuh bleezkoh poh- liklihnika?
Local:	Yes, over there.	anoh, taamhle

Although the deficiency in health services does not seem to have had a significant impact on the overall health of rural dwellers, it does mean that emergency care may be harder to obtain in rural areas.<sup>365</sup>

Ticks are a significant rural health hazard. They carry both Lyme disease and encephalitis. Anyone hiking or camping in rural areas between March and October should take precautions to prevent tick bites, including wearing long pants and closed-toed shoes and using insect repellent.<sup>366</sup> Vaccinations are available for encephalitis, but not for Lyme disease, so it is important to treat tick bites quickly.<sup>367</sup>

### Rural Schools

Even though literacy rates are high in rural areas, the overall level of education may be lower. In rural areas, only 22% of people have passed the *maturita* exam (exit exam for *gymnáziums* and technical high schools), and only 4% have college degrees, compared with 31% and 11% respectively in urban areas.<sup>368</sup> The quality of rural education is slightly lower as well. Rural students lag behind their urban peers



© Mary Funderburk  
Rural school door

<sup>363</sup> Martina Rokosova and Petr Hava, "Health Care Systems in Transition: Czech Republic," World Health Organization, 2004, 81.

<sup>364</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 463.

<sup>365</sup> P. Pospěch, M. Delín, and D. Spěšná, "Quality of Life in Czech Rural Areas," *Agricultural Economics—Czech* 55 (2009): 291, <http://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/07901.pdf>

<sup>366</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 464.

<sup>367</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic: Country Specific Information," 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html)

<sup>368</sup> P. Pospěch, M. Delín, and D. Spěšná, "Quality of Life in Czech Rural Areas," *Agricultural Economics—Czech* 55 (2009): 287, <http://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/07901.pdf>

by at least half a proficiency level and show significantly lower test scores in reading.<sup>369</sup>

A possible reason for the discrepancy is that rural students often have to travel farther to attend school. In most regions, only 1%–2% of villages with fewer than 200 people have an elementary school, and only 70% of municipalities with 500–1,000 inhabitants have an elementary school.<sup>370</sup>

#### Exchange 24: Is there a school nearby?

Official:	Is there a school nearby?	yeh tuh bleezkoh shkohláh?
Local:	Yes.	anoh

### Village Life

Although the overall rural population has stabilized in recent years, the lack of jobs, schools, doctors, and other amenities in small villages has driven younger people to move to cities, or at least larger towns. Consequently, there is now an inverse relationship between the size of a village and the average age of its inhabitants; smaller villages have a higher percentage of people over the age of 65.<sup>371</sup>



© Vince Perritano  
Village life

Today, nearly three-quarters of village dwellers commute to a city for work, and many children can no longer attend a local village school. With so many people spending so much time outside the village on a daily basis, some Czechs worry that village life is losing some of its once celebrated vibrancy.<sup>372</sup> Many of the hallmarks of village life—brass bands, amateur theaters, and even village fairs—are not as prevalent as they once were.<sup>373</sup>

At least one distinguishing feature of village life remains alive and well in many areas: the village loudspeaker. On an almost daily basis, speakers in the village announce local events, including recycling days, concerts, and theater rehearsals. In some villages, the speakers function as a sort of public radio station, playing music and broadcasting news to the residents.<sup>374</sup>

<sup>369</sup> OECD iLibrary, “Government at a Glance 2011,” n.d., [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/gov\\_glance-2011-en/12/02/index.html?jsessionid=us2j1jd7u7x.delta?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/gov\\_glance-2011-58-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/22214399&accessItemIds=/content/book/gov\\_glance-2011-en&mimeType=text/html](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/gov_glance-2011-en/12/02/index.html?jsessionid=us2j1jd7u7x.delta?contentType=&itemId=/content/chapter/gov_glance-2011-58-en&containerItemId=/content/serial/22214399&accessItemIds=/content/book/gov_glance-2011-en&mimeType=text/html)

<sup>370</sup> L. Svatošová, “Human Resources Development in Rural Areas of the Czech Republic,” *Agricultural Economics—Czech* 54 (2008): 75, <http://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/00833.pdf>

<sup>371</sup> L. Svatošová, “Human Resources Development in Rural Areas of the Czech Republic,” *Agricultural Economics—Czech* 54 (2008): 73, <http://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/00833.pdf>

<sup>372</sup> P. Pospěch, M. Delín, and D. Spěšná, “Quality of Life in Czech Rural Areas,” *Agricultural Economics—Czech* 55 (2009): 288, <http://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/07901.pdf>

<sup>373</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 178.

<sup>374</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 106.

Village fairs also continue to be a draw for Czechs. Almost every village holds a *pout'* as well as fairs for major holidays such as Christmas and Easter. During the summer, villagers may organize a *letni noc*, an outdoor party for the whole village, featuring music, dancing, and large consumption of beer.<sup>375</sup>

Czechs who own country homes that they visit only on weekends are called *zapadikovs* or “podunks.” Country cottages were one of the few luxuries afforded under Communism, although they are far from luxurious. Most families built them themselves, often on special cottage reservations, and many lack running water and electricity. However, they continue to be popular, giving Czechs the opportunity to showcase their famous “handiness” and spend time with their families, gardening, hiking, mushrooming, and taking care of the never-ending list of repairs.<sup>376</sup>

### Rural Transportation

The Czech Republic has a large network of paved roads and one of the most extensive rail networks in Europe. Railways usually connect larger towns and villages. Trains are frequent and service is reliable. An impressive bus network connects smaller villages both to the rail network and to other villages.<sup>377</sup>



© Sandy Millin  
Steam Train

### Exchange 25: Will the bus be here soon?

Visitor:	Will the bus be here soon?	pRzhiyedeH autoh-buhs bRzy?
Local:	Yes.	anoh

Except in major cities, where the use of public transportation is increasing, the use of bus and rail is decreasing. Personal car ownership is on the rise, resulting in quadrupled traffic volume in the last 20 years.<sup>378, 379</sup> Because of the decreasing number of passengers, bus service in many villages is being cut back or in some cases eliminated, particularly on weekends.<sup>380</sup>

<sup>375</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 66, 91.

<sup>376</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 25.

<sup>377</sup> Neal Bedford, Jane Rawson, and Matt Warren, *Czech and Slovak Republics* (Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004), 454–55.

<sup>378</sup> CENIA, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, *Report on the Environment of the Czech Republic*, 2009, 78, 80, [http://www.mzp.cz/C125750E003B698B/en/report\\_on\\_the\\_environment\\_2009/\\$FILE/OEUPZP-Report\\_2009\\_EN-20110131.pdf](http://www.mzp.cz/C125750E003B698B/en/report_on_the_environment_2009/$FILE/OEUPZP-Report_2009_EN-20110131.pdf)

<sup>379</sup> Association for Safe International Road Travel, “Road Travel Report: Czech Republic,” 2004, 1, [http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech_Republic.pdf)

<sup>380</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 29.

All cars are required to have a toll sticker, which one can purchase at most gas stations, to drive on highways. Any car without one is subject to a sizable fine.<sup>381</sup>

### *Road Safety*

Main roads, especially those linking major cities, are usually well marked and well maintained. Side roads and smaller roads in rural areas may have uneven surfaces, including cobblestones in some villages and city side streets. Ruts and potholes are common on all but main roads and highways.<sup>382</sup>



© Adr Hesselink  
Rural Road

The number of cars on the road has increased faster than roads can be built or expanded, leading to heavy traffic conditions on highways and especially in and around urban areas. Traffic can slow significantly, where highways pass through villages. The speed limit in towns, villages, and residential areas is 50 km/h (31 mph).<sup>383</sup>

Czechs are known for their aggressive driving—speeding, tailgating, high-speed passing, and failing to stop for pedestrians. The road crash fatality rate is three times as high as in the United States, with pedestrians accounting for 28% of casualties.<sup>384</sup>

One should exercise extra caution in rural areas. Dense fog or smog can form during the wintertime, limiting visibility. Mountain roads can be narrow with sudden turns. Horse-drawn vehicles, farm machinery, and pedestrians are common on the road.<sup>385</sup>

Traffic laws are rigorously enforced, and foreigners are popular targets. Authorities usually collect fines for infractions on the spot. The Czech Republic has a zero tolerance policy for drinking and driving—the legal blood alcohol level is 0, and police can administer breathalyzer tests at will.<sup>386</sup> Czech law requires drivers to wear seat belts and carry basic safety equipment in the car, including a fluorescent green high-visibility safety jacket, a first aid kit, a warning triangle, and, for drivers requiring corrective lenses, a spare set of prescription glasses.<sup>387</sup>

<sup>381</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Czech Republic: Country Specific Information,” 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html)

<sup>382</sup> Association for Safe International Road Travel, “Road Travel Report: Czech Republic,” 2004, 1-4, [http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech_Republic.pdf)

<sup>383</sup> Association for Safe International Road Travel, “Road Travel Report: Czech Republic,” 2004, 3, [http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech_Republic.pdf)

<sup>384</sup> Association for Safe International Road Travel, “Road Travel Report: Czech Republic,” 2004, 3, [http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech_Republic.pdf)

<sup>385</sup> Association for Safe International Road Travel, “Road Travel Report: Czech Republic,” 2004, 2, [http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech_Republic.pdf)

<sup>386</sup> Association for Safe International Road Travel, “Road Travel Report: Czech Republic,” 2004, 1-3, [http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech\\_Republic.pdf](http://www.asirt.org/portals/0/Reports/Czech_Republic.pdf)

<sup>387</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Czech Republic: Country Specific Information,” 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html)

## Border Crossings and Checkpoints

In 2007, the Czech Republic joined the Schengen Area, an European border-free zone eliminating virtually all border checks between member states.<sup>388</sup> Schengen rules allow member countries to close their borders or institute border checks in times of heightened security, as Austria did in June 2011 during the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia in Vienna.<sup>389</sup>



© dubnars / flickr.com  
Germany/Czech Border

Authorities still monitor borders. Although stopping at the border is no longer required, police occasionally stop and search vehicles coming across the border, especially in the border zone of Germany and Austria. They do not need probable cause to do so.<sup>390</sup>

### Exchange 26: Please get out of the car.

Guard:	Please get out of the car.	pRoseem, vystupteh z-autah
Driver:	Okay.	dobRzeh

### Exchange 27: Show us the car registration.

Official:	Show us the car registration.	ukah-zhteh naam RegistRah-tsi nah autoh
Driver:	Here.	tahdy

Americans do not need a visa to enter the Czech Republic. They are allowed to stay up to three months. However, passports must be stamped to document the amount time spent in the Schengen Area countries. Therefore, it may be necessary to request a stamp at an official point of entry. One should carry passports or other official identification at all times.<sup>391</sup>

### Exchange 28: Is this all the ID you have?

Guard:	Is this all the ID you have?	to yeh yedinee pRookas, kteRee maateh?
Driver:	Yes.	anoh

<sup>388</sup> Jan Richter and Vlasta Gajdošiková, "Czech Republic Joins Schengen Border-Free Zone," *Radio Prague*, 21 December 2007, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/czech-republic-joins-schengen-border-free-zone>

<sup>389</sup> Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, "Austria Temporarily Reintroduced Border Checks at the Austrian-Czech Border," 2011, <http://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/austria-temporarily-reintroduced-border-checks-at-the-austrian-czech-border.aspx>

<sup>390</sup> Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Department for Asylum and Migration Policy, "For Schengen Without Border Checks," 4 March 2011, <http://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/for-schengen-without-border-checks.aspx>

<sup>391</sup> Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Czech Republic: Country Specific Information," 30 January 2012, [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1099.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1099.html)



## Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Agriculture plays an important role in preserving the environment.

**True**

The European Commission provides financial aid to farmers in areas with natural handicaps to preserve biodiversity and prevent desertification, flooding, and forest fires. The Czech Republic is losing arable land because of development and abandonment.

2. The rural population is rapidly shrinking.

**False**

Urban flight has slowed in recent years as more people begin to buy homes in villages and towns within commuting distance of their jobs. However, small villages continue to lose young people, especially in areas where there are few doctors and schools.

3. Most of the people who live in villages work in agriculture.

**False**

Less than 25% of the rural population work in agriculture. Three-quarters of people living in rural areas commute to cities for work.

4. Some Czechs who live in cities have a second home in the countryside.

**True**

Owning a country cottage was one of the few luxuries that Czechs were allowed under Communism. Many built their own cottages as a retreat from the stress of city life. Cottages continue to draw Czechs to the countryside on weekends and during holidays.

5. All cars must stop at the border for inspection.

**False**

As part of the Schengen Area border-free zone, the Czech Republic's borders are open, although border checks can be reinstituted in times of heightened security. Traffic is monitored in border areas, and police have been known to stop and search vehicles.

## CHAPTER 6: FAMILY LIFE

### Introduction

One of the curious ironies of Communism was that, although the arts and the economy languished, family life thrived.<sup>392</sup> Undoubtedly, this was partly because the home was a refuge from the suspicion, paranoia, and uncertainty that accompanied public life under the Communist regime, when coworkers, neighbors, and even friends could be informers.<sup>393</sup> Shortages of goods and services also reinforced dependency on family. Family members could pool knowledge and resources to procure extra food and clothing and to keep the home in repair.<sup>394</sup>



© Carl Guderian  
Apartments in Czech

However, perhaps the greatest influence on family life was the housing shortage. Multiple generations of families were crowded into apartments; children lived with their parents until, and often after, marriage. Moreover, divorce was often pointless. You could divorce your spouse, but until your name came up on the waiting list for apartments, you were forced to live together.<sup>395</sup>

Under Communism, unemployment was not an option, even for women, who were sent to work en masse along with men. The unfortunate result was an alarming (to the Communists) drop in fertility rates. Working women were not having enough babies to ensure a steady supply of workers. To stave off future labor shortages, the government enacted a series of pro-natal policies aimed at making motherhood more attractive.<sup>396</sup>

By the 1970s, the fertility rate had rebounded. Beyond that, marriage had become nearly universal. In the age 50–54 category, only 3% of women had never married. Women were marrying young: the median age at first marriage was 20. That half of them were pregnant at the time of their marriage is not surprising, given that birth control was not widely used. The housing crisis that pervaded Communist life partially drove this shift toward early marriage and childbearing. Marriage was one of the few ways someone could qualify for an apartment. Marriage with children was even better.<sup>397</sup>

After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, family life changed drastically. Birth rates dropped sharply; by 1995, the Czech Republic had one of the lowest birth rates in the world. Divorces

<sup>392</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 45, 48.

<sup>393</sup> Timothy M. Hall, “Pivo at the Heart of Europe: Beer-Drinking and Czech Identities,” in *Drinking Cultures*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson (New York: Berg, 2005), 72.

<sup>394</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 438, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>395</sup> Tim Nollen, *Culture Shock! A Guide to Customs and Etiquette: Czech Republic* (London: Kuperard, 1997), 144.

<sup>396</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 47–48.

<sup>397</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 48.

skyrocketed, and cohabitation gained popularity as the median age of marriage steadily rose. However, despite the rapid changes in family life, the nuclear family remains both the norm and, for most Czechs, the ideal.<sup>398</sup>

### Typical Household Structure

Despite sizable shifts in the average age of marriage and the decline in fertility rates, marriage and children remain important to most Czechs. Nearly 52% of Czechs over age 20 are married, and 40% of young Czechs live with their parents. The two-child family remains the ideal family size. Although the overall fertility rate has dropped, the percentage of families with two children has remained fairly stable.<sup>399</sup>



© writergem / flickr.com  
Czech Family

### Exchange 29: How many people live in this house?

Official:	How many people live in this house?	kollik lihdee bydlee v-tomto dom-yeh?
Local:	Four.	chtyRzhee

Czech households have become more diverse over the last two decades. There is a growing acceptance of cohabitation, although people aged 20–34 are nearly 10 times more likely to be living with their parents than with a romantic partner. About 40% of children are now born out of wedlock, compared to less than 20% in 1990.<sup>400</sup> Large families (three or more children) are becoming less common, while the number of childless and one-child families is on the rise.<sup>401</sup> Although grandparents played an important role under Communism, less than 5% of Czech households include extended family members today.<sup>402</sup>

<sup>398</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 404, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>399</sup> OECD, Social Policy Division, Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, “SF3.3: Cohabitation Rate and Prevalence of Other Forms of Partnership,” 1 July 2010, 2, [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/27/41920080.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/27/41920080.pdf)

<sup>400</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 420, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>401</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 408, 439, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>402</sup> Maria Iacovou and Alexandra J. Skew, “Household Composition Across the New Europe: Where Do the New Member States Fit In?” *Demographic Research* 25, no. 14 (16 August 2011): 471, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol25/14/>

## Traditional Gender Roles

### *Men*

Men are the traditional breadwinners. The government offers equal benefits to both men and women who choose to stay home to care for young children, but only about 1% of men opt to be the primary caretaker. Part of the reason for this is economic: men typically make more money than women do. Because women tend to stay home with children, they make less money. This in turn makes it difficult for them to obtain senior positions and reinforces the idea that they are secondary wage earners, which leads to lower wages.<sup>403</sup>



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Czech men

Czechs expect fathers to take an active role in raising children, although they view this as an activity that takes place outside work, rather than a primary responsibility. The lion's share of childcare and housework falls to women, with men taking on gender-neutral chores such as sweeping the floor and dusting.<sup>404</sup> The reluctance to participate in "women's work," such as cooking and laundry, is not necessarily about preserving masculinity or reinforcing the man's role as head of the household. Rather, interference can be viewed as disrespectful of a woman's role in the home. Women can be territorial, placing limits on a husband's involvement in childcare and housework. Hence, Czechs often see women as the determining force in the division of labor in the home.<sup>405</sup>

### *Women*

Czech women hold a skeptical view of Western feminism. Because they were required to work under Communism, having a job is not regarded as emancipation or a path to self-fulfillment. In fact, taking advantage of generous parental leave allowed women to step away from the constant pressures of the public sphere.<sup>406</sup>



© Marek Delko  
Woman at market

Czechs see women as the primary caretakers for children, even if they work full time and do more than 60% of the

<sup>403</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 441–42, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>404</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 200.

<sup>405</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 200.

<sup>406</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 45.

housework. However, Czech women are largely satisfied and even complicit in the uneven division of labor, often acting as gatekeepers who determine the level of a husband's involvement with child rearing and housework.<sup>407, 408</sup>

Women often take extended breaks from work to raise children, sometimes up to eight years. The government mandates that women be granted a minimum of 28 weeks paid maternity leave, and women usually take several years of parental leave.<sup>409</sup> One reason for choosing to stay home with children is economic—women make less, so the family income is less impacted. In some cases, the parent benefit may pay more than the woman makes at her job.<sup>410</sup> Another factor is the low availability of childcare for children under age three. Government-subsidized care for these children has all but disappeared, and private childcare can be prohibitively expensive.<sup>411</sup>

Yet culture is the largest determining factor in a woman's choice to stay home with children. Czechs see mothers as irreplaceable in terms of caring for infants, and they view early maternity as a special time in a woman's life that should not be interrupted.<sup>412</sup> While men derive status from their careers, Czech women are more likely to derive status from motherhood, believing strongly that it is a source of self-fulfillment.<sup>413</sup> Still, about 50% of mothers work, and nearly 70% of women whose children go to school (6–16 years) are working.<sup>414</sup>

## Married Life and Divorce

### Marriage

Although Czechs are becoming more accepting of cohabitation, marriage remains the most popular form of domestic partnership. Nearly 52% of adults are married, while less than 3% are

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<sup>407</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 428, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>408</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 200.

<sup>409</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 442, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>410</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 201–2.

<sup>411</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 443, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>412</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 200–1.

<sup>413</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 194.

<sup>414</sup> OECD, "Chapter 1: Families Are Changing," in *Doing Better for Families*, 2011, 37, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/34/47701118.pdf>



cohabiting.<sup>415</sup> Moreover, they often see cohabitation as a logical step toward marriage, particularly among Czechs with university-level educations.<sup>416</sup>

The average age for marriage has risen steeply in recent decades. During the 1980s, the average age at first marriage was about 21 for women and 24 for men. Today, men and women often put off marriage until they are in their 30s; the average age for first marriage is 28 for women and 30 for men. One reason for this shift is the increased importance of higher education in a growing service economy. People are spending more time in school, pushing back marriage by several years.<sup>417</sup> During the Communist era, Czechs entered the workforce at a younger age, and marriage was one of the fastest means for young Czechs to secure an apartment once they were ready to leave the parental home.<sup>418</sup>



© VitVit / Wikipedia.org  
Russian Orthodox Wedding

Another factor is the wider use of birth control and greater acceptance of non-marital births. Under Communism, birth control was not widely used and teen pregnancy rates were high. Because there was a social stigma associated with giving birth outside marriage, women were often pressured into marrying the fathers of their children. During the 1980s, about half of all brides were pregnant. Today, the widespread use of contraception has given women more control over the timing of a pregnancy, and marriage is no longer seen as a prerequisite to parenthood.<sup>419</sup>

### *Divorce*

The divorce rate in the Czech Republic has historically been high, even under Communism when divorcing couples were often forced to live together for several years because of the housing shortage. Divorce rates, which spiked in the 1990s in anticipation of new laws intended to discourage divorce for couples with children, have climbed steadily since.<sup>420</sup> Between 40%–50% of marriages end in divorce, this is more common among couples who have no children or only one child. Remarriage is common, with nearly one-third of all marriages involving at least one divorced partner.<sup>421</sup>

<sup>415</sup> OECD, Social Policy Division, Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, “SF3.3: Cohabitation Rate and Prevalence of Other Forms of Partnership,” 1 July 2010, 2, [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/27/41920080.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/27/41920080.pdf)

<sup>416</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 428, 437, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>417</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour after the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 427, 434, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>418</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 163.

<sup>419</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 417, 419, 429–32, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>420</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 428, 430, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>421</sup> OECD, “Chapter 1: Families Are Changing,” in *Doing Better for Families*, 2011, 24, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/34/47701118.pdf>

## *Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence is a common problem between Czech couples. About 9% of Czech women experience some kind of assault each year, either physical or sexual, from a husband or partner, and 37% will experience such violence during their lives.<sup>422</sup> It is believed that men also suffer from high levels of abuse. Czech law allows the police to remove an abusive spouse or partner from the home for up to 10 days. However, authorities believe that most cases of abuse go unreported.<sup>423</sup>

## **Parenthood**

### *Family Planning*

Birth control is available and widely used by Czech women, although to a greater extent by women with higher levels of education. The proportion of women taking oral contraceptives rose from 4% to 47% between 1990 and 2006. Oral contraception remains the most common form of birth control, although the use of intrauterine devices and condoms has also risen.<sup>424</sup>

Effective contraception has given women more control over planning pregnancies. Under Communism, the teen pregnancy rate was high, and the average age at first birth was about 22. Because of the social stigma of giving birth outside marriage, teen pregnancies were terminated in large numbers. Less than 10% of children were born out of wedlock, and about one-half of women getting married were already pregnant.<sup>425</sup>



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Mom and Child

Today, 40% of children are born outside marriage, and the average age at first childbirth has risen to 27. Driving this trend is the growing tendency of women to seek out higher education while delaying marriage and motherhood. Fertility rates have fluctuated widely over the last 50 years, falling during the 1950s and 1960s and rising during the 1970s before bottoming out at 1.1 in the mid-1990s. The reasons for these fluctuations include the availability of abortion, changes in government policy, and the economic uncertainty of the 1990s. The rate has risen in recent years but remains about 1.4. Current projections show that fertility rates and family sizes will remain close to current levels.<sup>426</sup>

<sup>422</sup> OECD, Social Policy Division, Directorate of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, "SF3.4: Family Violence," 1 July 2010, 3, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/30/26/45583188.pdf>

<sup>423</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Reports: Czech Republic," 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eur/154420.htm>

<sup>424</sup> Tomáš Sobotka et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 432, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>425</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 412-413, 417, 429, 432, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>426</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008), 410, 412, 434-435, 439-440, 447, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

Abortion has been legal since 1957, and it is widely accepted. Two-thirds of Czechs believe that a woman should be able to obtain an abortion for any reason. By the late 1980s, abortions were almost as common as live births. Abortion rates have fallen drastically in recent years, largely because of the increased use of contraception. The two most likely groups to seek out abortion are women who already have two children and unmarried women seeking to delay motherhood.<sup>427</sup>

### *Pregnancy and Birth*

The Czech Republic has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world, at 3.7 deaths per 1,000 births (about half the rate of the United States). Maternal mortality is also relatively low, with 6.9 deaths per 100,000 births.<sup>428</sup> Both rates have fallen significantly in the last 20 years, a result of government efforts to improve the quality of healthcare. However, 24% of pregnant women smoke, a key risk factor for low birth weight, which has been on the rise since 1987.<sup>429</sup>



© Nik Page  
Baby

Prenatal care is nearly universal, with 92% of women visiting a doctor in their first trimester of pregnancy and nearly 100% having at least one doctor's visit before birth. Less than 1% of births take place outside hospitals or birth clinics.<sup>430</sup>

Breastfeeding is strongly encouraged. Nearly all babies are breastfed during the first 48 hours after birth, 60% are breastfed for at least 3 months, and 40% are breastfed for 6 months or more. Legislation guarantees women 28 weeks of maternity leave, including up to 6 weeks of leave before giving birth. Only 1%–2% of women return to work immediately after maternity leave.<sup>431</sup> The majority of mothers (78%) take two or more years of parental leave.<sup>432</sup>

### *Parental Support*

The government provides financial support for parents until their children finish school (up to age 26). Parents receive a lump sum birth grant of 13,000 koruna (USD 687) and a monthly

<sup>427</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 432, 437, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>428</sup> "Maternal Mortality: How Many Women Die in Childbirth in Your Country?" *The Guardian* (UK), 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/apr/12/maternal-mortality-rates-millennium-development-goals#data>

<sup>429</sup> E. Králíková, et al., "Smoking and Pregnancy: Prevalence, Knowledge, Anthropometry, Risk Communication," *Prague Medical Report* 106, no. 2 (2005): 195, <http://pmr.cuni.cz/Data/files/PragueMedicalReport/PMR%2005-02%20Kr%C3%A1l%C3%ADkov%C3%ADkov%C3%A1.pdf>

<sup>430</sup> "Doctors: Planned Home Births at Odds with Medical Science," *Prague Daily Monitor*, 9 March 2012, <http://praguemonitor.com/2012/03/09/doctors-planned-home-births-odds-medical-science>

<sup>431</sup> Helena Tomešová Bartáková, "Gender Division of Work and the Labour Market Re-entry of the [sic] Czech Women After the [sic] Parental Leave," *Sociologia* 42, no. 3 (2010): 196.

<sup>432</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., "Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism," *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 442, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

allowance ranging from 500 koruna (USD 26) to 700 koruna (USD 37).<sup>433</sup> Additionally, parents who opt to take parental leave are entitled to draw a stipend for up to four years. The stipend amount depends on the length of the leave; it ranges from 11,400 koruna (USD 600) per month for leave up to 2 years to 3,800 koruna (USD 200) per month for leave extending beyond the third year.<sup>434</sup>

## Children, Teenagers, and the Elderly

### Children

Czechs view family and parenthood as an important element of self-realization and fulfillment. Most Czechs marry and have children, and despite the high rates of divorce and extramarital birth, married couples raise three-quarters of Czech children.<sup>435</sup> Most children under age three are raised at home by a parent, usually the mother. About 88% of children aged 3–5 are enrolled in nursery school.<sup>436</sup>



© Robert Wallace  
Young Child

### Exchange 30: Do your children go to school?

Official:	Do your children go to school?	Khodee vasheh d-yeh-ti doh shkohly?
Local:	Yes.	anoh

Czech parents have a reputation for being strict, and corporal punishment is not uncommon, although child abuse is relatively low: 10% of Czech children will experience some form of abuse in their lifetimes.<sup>437, 438</sup>

Children, who usually live at home until marriage (which is commonly preceded by a brief period of cohabitation), typically have a close relationship with their parents. More than 70% of

<sup>433</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic, “State Social Support,” n.d., <http://www.mpsv.cz/en/1603>

<sup>434</sup> OECD, “Czech Republic 2009,” in *Benefits and Wages*, 1 July 2009, 20, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/26/47346517.pdf>

<sup>435</sup> OECD, “Chapter 1: Families Are Changing,” in *Doing Better for Families*, 2011, 28, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/34/47701118.pdf>

<sup>436</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 443, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>437</sup> Pavla Horáková, “Study: Eighty-Six Percent of Czech Children Have Experienced Corporal Punishment at Home,” *Radio Prague*, 10 August 2004, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/science/study-eighty-six-percent-of-czech-children-have-experienced-corporal-punishment-at-home>

<sup>438</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “2010 Human Rights Reports: Czech Republic,” 8 April 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/eur/154420.htm>



Czech teenagers report eating dinner with their parents several times a week and talking with them regularly.<sup>439</sup>

The *maturita*, the exam students must take to graduate from high school, is the closest thing to a rite of passage in Czech society. During the week before the exam, known as “holy week,” students dress up in outrageous costumes and beg for money to spend on their graduation party—generally a night of drinking.<sup>440</sup>

The transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by a series of firsts. By age 16 (at least 2 years before the legal drinking age), 95% of Czechs have tasted alcohol, with many of them partaking regularly.<sup>441</sup> The average age at which Czech teenagers first have sex is 18.<sup>442</sup> Recent studies suggest that drug and alcohol abuse, as well as smoking and obesity, are rising among Czech teens.<sup>443</sup>

### *The Elderly*

Life expectancy in the Czech Republic has risen over the last 20 years, although it remains somewhat lower than rates in the rest of Europe. With a life expectancy of 79, women live on average 6 years longer than men do.<sup>444</sup> Consequently, women over the age of 70 are several times more likely to be widowed and living on their own.<sup>445</sup>



© Linda Skalova  
Elderly Couple

The role of extended family members, and especially grandparents, has changed somewhat in recent years. Under Communism, people were allowed to retire early (age 60 for men and 57 for women, with 2 years earlier for each child). Although retired Czechs collected pensions from the government, they were allowed to work. This made

<sup>439</sup> UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, Report Card 7, “Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries,” UN Children’s Fund, 2007, 24–25,

<http://www.unicef.org/media/files/ChildPovertyReport.pdf>

<sup>440</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 105.

<sup>441</sup> Salme K. Ahlström and Esa L. Österberg, “International Perspectives on Adolescent and Young Adult Drinking,” NIAAA, n.d., <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh284/258-268.htm>

<sup>442</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 431, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>443</sup> Sarah Borufka, “Study: Obesity, Smoking and Drug Abuse on the Rise Among Czech Adolescents,” *Radio Prague*, 29 February 2012, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curaffrs/study-obesity-smoking-and-drug-abuse-on-the-rise-among-czech-adolescents#0>

<sup>444</sup> Tomáš Sobotka, et al., “Czech Republic: A Rapid Transformation of Fertility and Family Behaviour After the Collapse of State Socialism,” *Demographic Research* 19, no. 14 (1 July 2008): 405, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol19/14/19-14.pdf>

<sup>445</sup> Maria Iacovou and Alexandra J. Skew, “Household Composition Across the New Europe: Where Do the New Member States Fit In?” *Demographic Research* 25, no. 14 (16 August 2011): 475, <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol25/14/>



retirement a potentially lucrative period of their lives and made it possible for them to lend financial support to their children and grandchildren.<sup>446</sup>

Today, families are less dependent on intergenerational support, and few households include members of the extended family. However, informal caretakers, usually family members and volunteers, provide about 80% of elderly care. Less than 2% of Czechs over the age of 65 receive long-term care in an institution such as a nursing home, while 11.4% receive such care in their own homes. The government funds institutional care and in-home care, as well as respite care for family members. Depending on the extent of a person's dependence, the government also pays a monthly care allowance in addition to their pension to help finance professional care.<sup>447</sup>

## Family Social Events

### Weddings

Czech weddings are similar to weddings in the United States. The bride wears a white dress, she is given “something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue” to wear or carry with her on her wedding day, and she tosses her bouquet after the ceremony.<sup>448</sup>

#### Exchange 31: Congratulations on your wedding!

Visitor:	Congratulations on your wedding!	blaaho-pRzhayee vaam k-svaht-byeh!
Local:	We are glad to have you here.	smeh Raadyee, zehh steh pRzhi-shel

Because the country is largely secular, the wedding ceremony (which is fairly simple) may take place in a town hall, although churches are still frequently used. After the wedding, family and close friends gather at a restaurant or pub for a reception with food and dancing. Receptions tend to be smaller in the Czech Republic than in the United States.<sup>449</sup>

#### Exchange 32: I wish you both happiness.

Visitor:	I wish you both happiness.	pRzhayee vaam ob-yemah hodnyeh shtyes-tee
Local:	Thank you.	d-yeku-yemeh

<sup>446</sup> Craig Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 48–49.

<sup>447</sup> OECD, “Czech Republic: Long-Term Care,” in *Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care*, 18 May 2011, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/57/47877501.pdf>

<sup>448</sup> “Wedding Traditions in the Czech Republic,” *Prague Guide*, 20 February 2010, <http://www.prague-guide.co.uk/articles/wedding-traditions-in-the-czech-republic.html>

<sup>449</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 163.

There are several uniquely Czech traditions that are usually observed at the reception. When entering the restaurant or reception hall, someone breaks a plate in front of the couple, who must work together to sweep up the pieces, one holding the broom and the other the dustpan.<sup>450</sup> In some regions, the bride and groom may wrestle for the broom since tradition holds that the person with the broom has the upper hand in the relationship.<sup>451</sup>



© Nik Page  
Bride and her father

Another tradition is for the groom's men to kidnap the bride at the reception and take her to a pub. When the groom finds them, he must pay their tab to get her back—an incentive for him to find her quickly. During the reception, the couple feed each other soup from the same bowl, taking turns with the same spoon, as a symbol of unity in the marriage.<sup>452</sup>

### Christenings

Although church christenings have made a small comeback in the Czech Republic, the *vítání občánků*, or “welcoming of the little citizens,” continues to be the most popular commemoration of birth. The Communist regime instituted this ceremony as a substitute for christening. Parents would take their newborn children to the city hall on the designated day (ceremonies were for groups, not individuals) to have their names recorded in the town records. The mayor would give a speech (most likely about being a good Communist citizen) and the parents would receive a small gift.<sup>453</sup>

Today the practice continues, although without the Communist rhetoric. The ceremony may include music, brief speeches by town officials, the recording of names in a register, and the presentation of gifts.<sup>454</sup>

### Funerals

The secular nature of Czech culture and by 40 years of Communist rule strongly influenced attitudes toward death. There are taboos about discussing death publicly, and memorial services, if they are held at all, tend to be small and extremely private.<sup>455</sup>

<sup>450</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 163.

<sup>451</sup> Top Table Planner, “Wedding Reception Traditions of the Czech Republic,” 11 November 2011, <http://www.toptableplanner.com/blog/wedding-reception-traditions-of-the-czech-republic>

<sup>452</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 163.

<sup>453</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 179.

<sup>454</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 179.

<sup>455</sup> Olga Nešporová, “Believer Perspectives on Death and Funeral Practices in a Non-Believing Country,” *Czech Sociological Review* 43, no. 6 (2007): 1175, [http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/abb7215878f34911d9bfd919cfe0043961433f83\\_513\\_07-6%20Nesporova.pdf](http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/abb7215878f34911d9bfd919cfe0043961433f83_513_07-6%20Nesporova.pdf)

Because few Czechs belong to an organized religion, funeral directors handle most funerals, with little involvement from the family, and tend to follow the format that was favored under Communism. Because 78% of Czechs prefer cremation, the ceremony often takes place at a crematorium. The secular service lasts about 25 minutes and mostly includes listening to music and a short speech by a professional speaker, who, in most cases, does not know the deceased or the family.<sup>456</sup>

**Exchange 33: I offer my condolences to you and your family.**

Visitor:	I offer my condolences to you and your family.	oopRzheem-no so-stRaast vaam ih vahshee Rod-yin-yeh
Local:	Thank you.	d-yeku-yemeh

Because the bereaved show little desire to be involved in making arrangements, personalized funerals are uncommon. Some family members may choose their own music for the service, but often they simply pick from a list of recorded music offered by the funeral director. Even in cases where a religious funeral is held, the ceremony tends to follow a format determined by the church liturgy.<sup>457</sup>

In small towns and villages, a funeral lunch may be organized at which friends and neighbors can gather to share remembrances of the deceased and to offer comfort to the bereaved. However, in many cases the funeral is skipped altogether. Catholics and some Protestants are more likely to hold funeral services. Catholics believe that their prayers play an important role in helping the deceased transition to the afterlife, while other religions view prayers as comforting affirmations of their belief in life after death. However, many Czechs, lacking a belief in an afterlife, see a funeral as a pointless expense. Most Czechs are also self-conscious about public displays of grief and view funerals as an emotional strain.<sup>458</sup>



© Scott Lowe  
Czech national cemetery

After cremation, the deceased's ashes are either buried in a cemetery or deposited in a columbarium; the spreading or scattering of ashes is not a common practice.<sup>459</sup>

<sup>456</sup> Olga Nešporová, "Believer Perspectives on Death and Funeral Practices in a Non-Believing Country," *Czech Sociological Review* 43, no. 6 (2007): 1179, 1188–89.

[http://review.soc.cas.cz/uploads/abb7215878f34911d9bfd919cfe0043961433f83\\_513\\_07-6%20Nesporova.pdf](http://review.soc.cas.cz/uploads/abb7215878f34911d9bfd919cfe0043961433f83_513_07-6%20Nesporova.pdf)

<sup>457</sup> Olga Nešporová, "Believer Perspectives on Death and Funeral Practices in a Non-Believing Country," *Czech Sociological Review* 43, no. 6 (2007): 1188–89.

<sup>458</sup> Olga Nešporová, "Believer Perspectives on Death and Funeral Practices in a Non-Believing Country," *Czech Sociological Review* 43, no. 6 (2007): 1180, 1188–91.

<sup>459</sup> Olga Nešporová, "Believer Perspectives on Death and Funeral Practices in a Non-Believing Country," *Czech Sociological Review* 43, no. 6 (2007): 1180.

## Naming Conventions

### *First Names*

Boys are usually named after their fathers, but non-Czech girls' names are making inroads.<sup>460</sup> The Czech government regulates baby naming—parents must receive government sanction to choose a name that does not appear on the official list of approved names; usually only a couple hundred families receive approval for nontraditional names each year.<sup>461</sup>



© Tony Bracjun  
Young boy

Most Czech names have several diminutive forms. A form may be a shortened version of the name followed by an ending such as *-ek*, *-ík*, *-ka*, or *-ko*, which indicate “little,” or *-eček*, *-ečka*, *-íček*, or *-ička*, which connote “tiny” or “dear little.” Czechs use this latter form for babies or people from whom you are asking a big favor. Examples of diminutives for the name David are Davidek and Daveček, and for Katerina, Katka, Kača, Katerinka, Kačenka, and so forth.<sup>462, 463</sup>

Nicknames based on diminutive forms are typically only used by adults addressing children, or by family members and friends. It is inappropriate to use the diminutive form of a casual acquaintance's name.<sup>464</sup>

### *Last Names*

Boys and girls usually take their father's last name, and women generally take their husband's name when they marry. However, women's last names are almost always modified by adding the suffix *-ova*. Roughly translated, it means “of,” implying that the woman belongs to her father or husband. Thus, the daughter of Mr. Dvorak is Miss Dvorakova, until she marries Mr. Novak and becomes Mrs. Novakova.<sup>465</sup>

In an increasingly global society, the practice can be somewhat awkward; for example, if Miss Dvorakova marries Mr. Smith in the Czech Republic, her wedding certificate and passport will show Smithova as her last name, creating the potential for confusion should she emigrate.<sup>466</sup>

<sup>460</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 66, 68.

<sup>461</sup> Bára Procházková, “We Will Name Her Coco,” *Prague TV*, 25 February 2011, <http://prague.tv/articles/art-and-culture/we-will-name-her-coco-respekt>

<sup>462</sup> Lucie Králová, “Diminutives in Czech, the Formation Process and Their Use,” *The Use of Diminutives in Czech and Portuguese Translations: Corpus Comparative Study* (MA thesis, Masaryk University, 2006), 17, [http://is.muni.cz/th/53243/ff\\_m/?lang=en;so=nx](http://is.muni.cz/th/53243/ff_m/?lang=en;so=nx)

<sup>463</sup> “Czech Name Days: Diminutives,” *My Czech Republic*, 2012, [http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech\\_culture/czech\\_name\\_days/](http://www.myczechrepublic.com/czech_culture/czech_name_days/)

<sup>464</sup> Ryan Scott, “Dos and Don'ts: Names,” *Expats.cz*, 30 May 2011, <http://www.expats.cz/prague/article/czech-culture/dos-and-donts-names/>

<sup>465</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 119–20.

<sup>466</sup> Henry Chu, “Being a Czech Mate Can Cause Women Pain and Suffix,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jun/26/world/fg-czech-names26>

The practice is applied to foreign names as well—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is referred to as Hillary Clintonova and German Chancellor Angela Merkel becomes Angela Merkelova. The practice is so ingrained that one television commentator was fired for refusing to add *-ova* to the names of non-Czech women.<sup>467</sup> However, given the low opinion many Czechs have of feminism in general, it is unlikely that the practice will change anytime soon.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Henry Chu, “Being a Czech Mate Can Cause Women Pain and Suffix,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jun/26/world/fg-czech-names26>

<sup>468</sup> Andrew Roberts, *From Good King Wenceslas to the Good Soldier Švejk: A Dictionary of Czech Popular Culture* (Herndon, VA: Central European University Press, 2005), 119–20.



## Chapter 6 Assessment

1. Czechs view marriage and children as impediments to self-fulfillment.

**False**

Family and parenthood are viewed as an important element in happiness and self-fulfillment. Maternity is seen as a particularly special time in a woman's life.

2. The government provides up to four years of parental leave as well as a monthly allowance for parents.

**True**

A mother or father can draw a stipend for up to four years to stay home and raise small children. Parents also receive a monthly allowance ranging from 500 koruna (USD 26) to 700 koruna (USD 37).

3. Housekeeping and childcare are split evenly between men and women.

**False**

Despite the fact that most women work full time, they still perform most of the housework and child care. This is not necessarily because men demand it. Women can be territorial and often determine the degree to which a husband is involved in the home.

4. The average ages of marriage and parenthood have fallen since Communism.

**False**

Czechs are delaying marriage and parenthood to pursue higher education. Today, the average age at first marriage is 28 for women and 30 for men; in the 1980s, it was much lower under Communism.

5. When women marry, they usually take their husband's last name but add *-ova*, meaning "of," to the end.

**True**

Czech women almost always add the suffix *-ova* to their husband's last name to reflect that they are "of" their husband. The practice extends to daughters and is often applied to names of foreign females.

## FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Mountains surround Bohemia.  
**True / False**
2. The Elbe and Oder Rivers connect the landlocked country to the ocean.  
**True / False**
3. Bohemia was a kingdom under the rule of the German Empire.  
**True / False**
4. The Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia are the same country.  
**True / False**
5. Czechoslovakia broke up after the fall of Communism.  
**True / False**
6. Most Czechs who say they are Catholic attend Mass on a regular basis.  
**True / False**
7. Czechs struggled for church reform before Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation in 1517.  
**True / False**
8. The official number of Jews currently living in the Czech Republic is one million.  
**True / False**
9. Easter is celebrated by men whipping women with willow branches.  
**True / False**
10. Santa Claus visits children on Christmas Eve and brings them gifts.  
**True / False**
11. Czechs are career oriented and work long hours away from home.  
**True / False**
12. It is acceptable to use someone's first name after you have been introduced.  
**True / False**
13. Name days are as important as birthdays and are celebrated with gifts of flowers or liquor.  
**True / False**
14. Breakfast is the main meal of the day.  
**True / False**

15. Czechs often change from work clothes into home clothes to make their work clothes last longer.

**True / False**

16. Nearly one-third of Czechs live in postwar apartment buildings called *panelaks*.

**True / False**

17. Families are more likely to live in city centers than in suburbs.

**True / False**

18. Czechs are not mandated to purchase health insurance.

**True / False**

19. Education is compulsory from ages 6–15.

**True / False**

20. At pubs and most restaurants, you should wait for a waiter or host to show you to a table.

**True / False**

21. Most Czech farmers own all their land.

**True / False**

22. Cooperatives and corporations own the majority of the agricultural land in the Czech Republic.

**True / False**

23. Many farmers have other jobs.

**True / False**

24. Most rural areas are served by buses.

**True / False**

25. Outside city limits, most roads are not paved.

**True / False**

26. Most Czechs marry and have one or two children.

**True / False**

27. The wider use of birth control has contributed to a drastic reduction in the number of pregnancies and abortions.

**True / False**

28. Because many marriages end in divorce, most Czech children are raised in single-parent homes.

**True / False**

29. At Czech weddings, the bride and groom sweep up the shards of a plate to symbolize working together in marriage.

**True / False**

30. Funerals tend to be elaborate and are usually held in a church.

**True / False**

## FURTHER READING

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