

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

THE CZECH NATIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM

As a tourist to the Czech republic I was amazed at and confused by the survival of a culture in which the Czech men are so completely non-aggressive and peaceful, complimented by the truly breath-taking, stunning beauty of the Czech women. For a thousand years the Czechs have been living here and have been invaded and conquered a dozen times, yet the Czech language, culture, blood lines, and buildings appear to have survived for the most part completely unaffected. World history is littered with peaceful cultures that have been decimated by stronger aggressive invading forces. How could the Czech culture survive when so many other cultures have not? Eventually I came to realize that they survived because of the secret Czech National Defense System.

The Czech National Defense System is a secret known by all Czechs...the language.

Perhaps Czech evolved in a manner similar to the children's game of pig Latin, in which a word is made unintelligible to the uninitiated by changing a few letters. Delighting in the confusion this caused, the Czechs continued to add to the complexity of every imaginable aspect of a sentence until achieving a cryptographers nightmare.

I imagine that Czech was so difficult for the foreign invaders that they were unable to interact in a meaningful way with the Czechs. The foreign invaders eventually tired of not being able to communicate much of anything to anyone, so they left, leaving the culture unaffected. When the next invaders came, the Czechs realized that with the secret defensive power of their technically sophisticated language, being non-violent would do less damage to life and property. The Czechs laughed at the pretensions of the crude steel weaponry of the foreigners, and hosted the new temporary administrators in the big castle on the hill, knowing they too would tire of being here, and leave if they could not talk with anyone. The protection of the secrets of the Czech language has been a part of the culture for so long that it is done effortlessly by all, perhaps not even consciously (source: Bruce Davies (<http://www.401czechverbs.com>))

LANGUAGE, THE ACCESS TO CULTURE

Imagine meeting up with your Czech ancestors at the pearly gates and your extreme embarrassment at not being able to have a conversation with them, because you only spoke English and were too busy to learn the Czech language during your hundred or so years living on Earth. You could try an apologetic look, perhaps give your best rendition of 'Narodil se Kristus Pan' and use hand gestures to pantomime: *"I'm sorry but my parents never taught me and there just weren't any places to take Czech lessons and even if I took lessons, there wouldn't be anyone to practice with, etc."*. Your ancestors, knowing better, would respond with a string of undecipherable words that included the word 'SOKOL'. But what is Sokol and what does it have to do with learning the Czech language?

'Sokol' is the Slavic word for 'falcon'. "Sokol Minnesota" is a non-Profit organization based at the C.S.P.S. (Česko-Slovanský Podporující Spolek) Hall located at 383 Michigan Street in St. Paul (on the corner of Michigan Street and West 7th Street) and is affiliated with American Sokol, which grew out of an international movement founded in 1862 by Dr. Miroslav Tyrš. Sokol is a social, cultural, educational and gymnastic organization. Through its many social activities and educational programs, Sokol seeks to preserve and transmit the vitality of Czech, Slovak and immigrant heritage to future generations.



The historic C.S.P.S. Hall has been the home of Sokol since its construction in 1887, and the focal point for its activities in Saint Paul. It was declared a National and State Historic Site in 1977, placed on the National Register of Historic Sites, and is the longest serving Czech-Slovak cultural center in the United States.

Czech & Slovak Sokol Minnesota welcomes all who share an interest in history, culture, gymnastics and good fellowship. You need not be Czech or Slovak to be a member.

Activities at the historic C.S.P.S Hall include:

- Ethnic dinners featuring Czech and Slovak Menus

- Cultural celebrations including Šibřinky (Czech Mardi Gras) Dance, Czech-Slovak Festival (October), Fall Harvest Dinner and Dance (November), Children's and Adult Christmas parties, and the Festival of Nations (through the International Institute of Minnesota)
- Monthly meetings with programs
- Children's folk dancing groups and culture camp
- Young girls' gymnastics program and competitions
- Senior activities (singing, exercise and social groups) including participation in national and international programs
- Film series and musical events
- Partnerships with related cultural and historic organizations including the Czech and Slovak Cultural Center of Minnesota and the Czechoslovak Genealogical Society International (CGSI)
- Gift shop with imported items (beautiful Czech glass, recipe books, language books, etc.)
- Educational classes (language, cooking, genealogy)

Here you can learn the Czech language from a native Czech speaker in an informal, fun setting, with students of all ages:

Language Programs (July-November) Fall Session 2011

Czech Language Class---Beginner (Session 1)

Instructor: Jakub Dajc

Thursday Evenings 7:00-8:30PM CSPS (Sokol) Hall.

8 weeks—September 29 through November 17, 2011

Fee: \$75.00 (Sokol Members) \$90.00 (Non-Members)

Communicative Czech Text plus cassettes/Workbook (Approx.\$115)

Registration due date: September 20, 2011

Czech Language Class---Intermediate (Session 1)

Instructor: Jakub Dajc

Wednesday Evenings 7:00-8:30 PM CSPS (Sokol) Hall.

8 weeks—September 28 through Nov. 16, 2011.

Fee: \$75.00 (Sokol Members) \$90.00 (Non-Members)

Cestina Hrou Text and workbook

Registration due date: September 20, 2011

Czech Language Class---Conversational (Session 1)

Instructor: Jakub Dajc (Norm Petrik Coordinator)

Tuesday Evenings 7:00-8:30 PM CSPS (Sokol) Hall.

8 weeks—September 27 through Nov. 15, 2011.

Fee: \$75.00 (Sokol Members) \$90.00 (Non-Members)

Cestina Hrou Text and workbook

Registration due date: September 20, 2011

NOTE: Registration is required for all classes.

Blank registration forms are available at www.sokolmn.org

Questions? Please contact Education Chair Jean 651-426-2826/education@sokolmn.org

A minimum of 6 paid students will be required for each class. If the minimum number is not registered by the due date, class will be cancelled.

WHAT CZECH OR POLISH PHRASES DO YOU REMEMBER FROM YOUR CHILDHOOD?

Please mail or email your phrases and we will run them in a future column. Thanks.

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: tkadlec@gmail.com or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. See this article online at: www.kadlecovi.com Dekuji! Tony Kadlec
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