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## my last page for the “Kronica” of Bunkr

For one week I am already in Brazil, after spending twelve months in the Czech Republic. The “reclimatization” – or any other pompous neologism you prefer – has ended. I feel at home and seemingly everything is as it was before. However, occasionally I get attacked by reminiscences of the years I spent in Třinec. While unpacked my bags and kept tons of souvenirs purchased, several memories came up, from great moments to the most simple ones. Ah, the *saudades*!

Well, after finally arrange everything and enjoying the rainy and “cold” day (tremble you, now is 22 °C, ehehe) I decided to write my last page for the “Kronica” of Bunkr.

Without doubt, remember all the good times could make this report a book of several pages! Is not this case now. Moreover, my memories are kept properly in my mind, usually I do not forget so easily, mostly when I am talking about so strong memories. So I will make only a brief summary of what 2009 was for me.

As a historian, I like to divide the time in periods. I think there were three different times in the twelve months I stayed: (1) the beginning, the first five months, very interesting, but for certain reasons were not the best; (2) the middle, the next four months, usually very good; and (3) the final, the last three months, which were excellent! So I divided into three periods taking in consideration certain important events and also my state of mind in each one of them.

The start was an epoch of great learning, because there were so many different things I saw for the first time! It took me time to gain some autonomy to do some things alone, like to travel long distances. Perhaps one of the great cross-cultural differences is that in South America we have various types of occupations which not exist in Europe, or because there they were replaced by machines, or simply because the Europeans have always done that thing by themselves. Examples are numerous, and the comparisons often made me smile or think about. A case that I like to remember is the supermarkets, which in the Czech Republic can function normally with minimal staff. In Brazil, a minimum team has about three times more people... In the Czech Republic, there are lockers operated by coins; in Brazil, there is a person whose job is to guard the customers’ bags. Here we also have “supermarket secret agents” checking if anyone is stealing the store, while there in the Czech lands you or anybody can enter the store with bags without being disturbed. Here in Brazil we also have an employee who helps packing the shopping in bags and even carry them to the client’s home if we need help; there in the Czech Republic usually you have to beg for a bag – and quite often you even have to pay for them! –, and also have to pack quickly and take all to your home by yourself.

Still talking about the beginning of my exchange, as would be expected, I hadn’t a large circle of friends. Gradually I was making new friends, and made several mainly after training with the other volunteers.

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The half-time of my EVS coincided with the end of summer and early autumn. I have great memories of that time! Talking about work, what I most liked was the project in Sosna's playground, more or less those seasons. I liked the duties because they were easy, fun and with great proximity to children. I think that we Brazilians are people with a good "welcome card" when we have to introduce ourselves to the others. The "welcome card" is the football! On the playground was very common to see children and young Czechs with shirts of the Brazilian national football team, and this common point made the approaching much easier for making friendship with them. *Saudades...*

It was also during these months that I began to prioritize certain plans, things and friends that would be important for the remaining period of the exchange... and for my life. Another important factor in that time was the arrival of new volunteers, in Bunkr and in the other organizations close to us, all great friends!

It was more or less in the early autumn I decided to stop learning the Czech language. Until then I was well motivated, not only in learning how to speak correctly, but also to appear to be a Czech person. It proved to be impossible, as the people confuse me as being an English (because of the language I speak), an Italian (because of my name), a Spanish (because... the appearance?) or even Ukrainian! (this who said was a half-drunk-Slovak man I met on a train, I don't know why). However, for certain cultural differences, from the wish to pretend to look like a Czech, I jumped to the other extreme, wanting to keep distance from them. If you want to know why, the last straw was when I watched some extremely unfair attitudes of Czechs towards certain minority groups. Finally, I ended up finding a midpoint, basically because a strong critical view usually can forget to considerate the historical-social-politic-environment backgrounds, and worst, it may be blind to see the good points of a culture's country! And no doubt the Czechs have several... if this was a lie, now I would not be willing to be in this country once more.

The Czechs are big drinkers, like strangers sports more or less risky as to climb in trees or roll in the snow, and I think they could become skilled cooks on the day they discover that they should add more sugar in their candies...

Moreover, the Czechs know how to value the place where they live: their homes are beautiful, clean and have nice gardens. I think they have a clear-cut notion of what belongs to the public sphere and what is of particular business, something that is different in other cultures, where the private life and public life are mixed. This makes them a little skittish to friendship at first sight ... But at second sight, the Czechs can be great friends! Czechs are also serious in what they do and very refined. Especially Czech women, who are already naturally beautiful, are the best example that a woman can be elegant and attractive without the necessity to appeal to vulgar clothes.

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The last months have been excellent! I planned my schedule in order to make the most of every moment, doing almost everything I had wish to do in Europe. For months I saved money to do a great trip and it ended up being the journey to Hungary, something that had an important personal value to me: I could visit the city of my grandfather, the house where he was born and the church where he was baptized and married. Even I

met some relatives there! Other good times were the trips through the Beskydy region together with friends, as well sightseeing Ostrava, Brno and some small towns where other volunteers lived.

Moreover, these visits to friends, besides always be occasions of great fun, they also were good opportunities to learn more about the Czech Republic and its people. I really miss all that, and I know that this experience marked my life. Now I have positive feelings for the Czechs. The proof is what I noticed while reading the international news on the Internet, anything related to “Czechia” called me more attention, because even far away I still like to know what is happening in the country that was my home for so long time.

My last few weeks have been very special, but also very melancholy. Day after day, increased in myself the sense of farewell. It has been a bit sad to remember that some moment could be perhaps the last time, as for example when I was visiting a certain place, or when I was experiencing certain thing, or seeing or talking to someone special...

The Luso-Brazilian poetry established the word “*saudade*”, which only exists in our language. It is a feeling difficult to translate: it is something nostalgic, an eternal missing of what finished or who has gone. The fact is that if in one hand the year I spent in the Czech Republic has been so far the best of my life, the “price” to pay for it is forever to have *saudades* of those days. *Saudade* of the work’s routine, *saudade* of Trinec and nearby cities and especially *saudade* of all the people I met there! I know that goodbyes are part of life and that each person has a particular purpose in living. I also know that I do not belong to the European reality, although a part of me will always be linked to Europe. That’s why I promised to myself that one day I will visit you again. Just for one day is already enough. I know that, for certain reasons, it will take a few years until it becomes true... nevertheless, fortunately I’m the kind of man who fulfills what I promise. That’s why now I will not say “farewell”, but just “see you!” Soon or late I’m sure we will see again...

Geovani Németh-Torres

P.S.: I wish you can come to Brazil one day too!!!

