

# THE LIFE ON THE BOTH SIDES OF A BAR COUNTER

## Autor's suggestion

Dear reader,

thank you for your willingness to read my beer book.

For the best results, please, note followings:

1. This is just regular book. Belletristic literature, not encyclopedia. Despite some parts of this book pretend to be, it is just reading for Fun!
2. Life on the Both Sides of a the Bar Counter was written in 2007 and published one year later. Therefore some information might be little outdated.
3. I am not professional translator. I tried to do my best to keep flourishing style of my book. Maybe, some parts might be a little difficult to understand.
4. It takes a time (for me) to translate about 220 pages. That's why at the time of reading the book might not be complete. However, single chapters do not have necessary continuation and can be read separately.

Have a nice reading!

Autor

## Preface

The planet Earth is divided into two parallel worlds. In one of these there is a sunshine, rain, snow, sunrise and sunset, there are the woods, fields, jungles, deserts, seas, rivers which are inhabited by animals, birds, fish, insect and, of course also by humans.

The other world is very small, even tiny, there is mostly only light or dark, more or less humidity and most of its accessory is made of glass. This world is reigned by mighty beer tap and supernatural personality of Bartender with his (or her) helpers. Everywhere in this other world can be permanently smelled a scent of a draught beer. The splitting line between these two worlds is bar counter itself. Both worlds live in mutual respect and they are lively trading with each other. Every day hundred of millions of citizens of various countries commute to the border of tapping microworld, so they receive their dreamed glasses of many different shapes and contains with sacred liquid. The employees of embassies of this remote microworld only very rarely reject a liquid visa application from thirsty applicant, so in a diplomatic soil of many taprooms and pubs every single minute is celebrated peace and friendship among the nations.

While privileged Bartender mostly every day crosses the borderline back to regular civil life after a shift, for a vast majority of consumers from great, but boring generic world is the crossing a splitting point strictly prohibited. But from time to time the chance for eligible person might occur. Sometime is sufficient to ask, other time is necessary to present valid health certificate. A simple step behind a splitting line is for lucky person the entrance to brand new, till this particular moment unknown dimension. After a pulse becomes a regular again and dries out a cold sweat of nervousity in front of debutant on the other side opens up the new perspectives of perception. Freshly oxygenated blood supplies a body with miraculous energy and most of body muscles start working in until this time unrehearsed coordination. The mates, that stayed in the old world behind a splitting line are suddenly turning from drunk pals into zealous clients totally depended on a good will of newborn Bartender. Faucets of a mighty beer tap are becoming leading elements of intrigue wheelwork of genius machine producing pure euphoria, thick sizzling foam, which reminds an icy lava is gushing out from open crater of fantasmagorical vulcano, ripens to goldish nectar and precipitously fills an eager pints, that are instantly lifted to the arid lips of satisfied drinkers. Common man, who can at least for a moment call himself a Bartender leaves his dull shell of negligible being and miraculously discovers till this moment undefined meaning of his universal existence.

I made this step and I was on the other side. Since then my vision of the world is more plastic, colourful and balanced. And this is this book all about.

## Book One – Chasing a beer around the world

Cheap pub of low category was reeked by unfiltred cigarette smoke and a noise of workers celebrating their passed morning shift. I am 18 and one hour ago I has finished an unsuccessful rehearsal of hopeless rock'n roll band Trifid. Political, economical, even cultural situation in Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in 1980 is very disappointing, but draught beer of gravity of 12° Plato tastes excellent.

“We have the best beer in the world, “ says my bandmate Karel, whose most remote place which he had a chance to visit was Liptovsky Mikulas in nearby Slovakia.

“It’s true,” I nod experiencely, “and it is also very cheap.”

In these days even the last beggar on a street could for single cart of scrap metal indulge a beer until he lost a consciousness.

“If we had a freedom of speech and culture here, it wouldn’t be worthy to flee this country.”

However, in this matter no improvement can be expected. The great censor is still sitting firmly in his chair in the office like a hen on the eggs and he has proclaimed an uncompromising war to the all forms of anything reminding rock'n roll. Oh, these communists! We agreed, that Czech beer is likely an isolated oasis in a plain and dry desert of poor quality and that a tasting of hop products in foreign countries would be just wasting a precious time and money.

No wonder. To a beginning of Perestrojka still left about 5 years, an independent traveling especially to the western countries is strongly restricted, there is lack of information or experience, so we wisely have transform ourselves to a characters of the foxes on a vineyard, who after they fail on reaching the grapes growing on a high spot of a bush, they give up their original intention asserting that this fruit is sour anyway.

Now I know, that good or at least interesting beer could be found in a most of civilized countries around the world. Some of these beers don’t necessary have to agree with our trained libido, other may even cause a panic defensive reaction of our spoiled organism. But behind most of beer brands can be felt creative human’s activity and the effort to make often not easy life more pleasant – even in the most remote corners of our planet. The beer ruins the borders and brings the nations together.

So we pack a valid passport, some money, beer opener, Imodium and let’s go for a long journey!

## Chapter 1      Kofi Annan was born on Thursday

.....If he was born on Sunday, he would be given a name Yao. Remarkable information like this can be learned only in an exotic place – in this case in West Africa state Ghana. When I was boarding a plane to Accra I was silently reproaching myself for entering this particular aircraft. All around were wildly looking Nigerians and Ghanians. Only detail missing to their perfect image were the indigenous spears, which they would be trying to squeeze to the overhead lockers. And I was trying to trace back an information why I had bought an airline ticket for 20 000 crowns to this crazy destination. Maybe I was inspired by six grade textbook picture of modern building of bank in Accra or by some TV program about this country, when some Czech people who lived there were talking about Ghana like about an oasis of friendliness and hospitality in otherwise not too peaceful or safe region. From CNN World News I learned in last 6 months about capsizing boat in river Volta when 30 people had drowned and another 50 were killed during the tribe's clashes in the north of the state. If I stay away from Volta and I remain all the time on a south, maybe I'll survive, I was trying to comfort myself during drinking washy Italian lager Peroni, which was supposed to give me more courage. I found disturbing also a fact, that our arrival to Accra was scheduled to 23.00, which added to all this situation even more adventure.

In terminal of my destination I immediately felt like in real Africa, especially after I had left a relatively comfortable air-conditioned arrival lounge and found myself outside on a brink of human ant-hill. Hundreds of local natives were waiting for their relatives and some of them were offering their transportation services to the foreigners. Of course, I did not find a promised hotel shuttle bus, I even did not see any sign with my name, despite I had official reservation and I should have to be expected. After a while of hesitation I took a first taxi I met.

All the time I travel the world I am scared of phony taxi drivers in developing or even not developed countries. A phony taxi driver looks almost exactly same as a real one – even he usually has his phony car equipped with regular sign TAXI. Only small difference is, that he generally does not take his client to his desired destination, but to some dark deserted place, where he robs and brutally kills him and his death body he dumps to a rubbish heap or to an abyss. I recalled an optimistic TV program about Ghana .OK. People of Ghana are friendly. But I can't tell apart Ghanian from Nigerian, Sierra Leonian or Ivory Costian. However, I took the chances and I got into a worn-out taxi cab. Just a few seconds later black head of a local policeman in uniform appeared in a car window.

“So, you are not going to pay any tip to your police officer?” asked me a protector of a strange law, “give me 10 dollars!”

I pulled out a bunch of note of local currency and I handed it out to policeman. It was about 3 USD, but the guy was happy and left. It is subsaharia Africa, I told to myself, I must count in it. Corruption is a big issue here and for instance in neighbor Nigeria you can even get a receipt for a given bribe!

Surprisingly genuine taxi driver took me to the hotel Shangri-la, where a staff did not have any idea about my official reservation. After all, I was lucky. There was some vacancy. I got accommodation for 80 bucks a day in nice looking bungalow. Apart from large anthill on a corner of a room and some ghekkolizard on a ceiling the place looked clean and cozy. I was tired, so I laid down to bed. But instantly I realized what is an original purpose of my trip and inside my head flashed a stupid Czech saying, that the first is a duty and then a leisure.

Regardless if I wanted or not I had to visit hotel bar to taste some samples of Ghana's beer. For a sake of scrupulous analysis I decided to consume the samples out of 750 ml bottles. Lager Star – apparently a flagship of Ghana brewing industry tasted almost the same I had imagined – nohow. More than neutral bitterness prevailed funny synthetic aftertaste, most likely caused by a thorough pasteurization. The second tasted product – beer Club lighted up a weak spark of hope in presumed beer wasteland of this West Africa's country. Despite of all attributes of global brew, Club had at least a hint of some own taste, which lingered on palate even a few seconds after gulp.

Another oversized bottles ABC and Gulden tasted almost the same, so it would be fruitless to endeavor to describe their taste characters. But despite of all my objections finally I had to admit, that all consumed beer met their expected alcoholic purpose and fully replaced a sleeping pill of medium strength.

In a morning I woke up refreshed and full of unexpected energy. There was necessary to go to some pub, but as far as I was in Accra I was also thinking about seeing another points of interest in this City. In a pocket map of Accra I found marked building of National Museum. Not very smart but fortunately real taxi driver in significantly cracky car of indefinite make was driving me almost 15 minutes around along badly looking streets, then he dumped me in some dirty slump, which even was not drawn in my map. I found myself among wildly looking locals being white faced, burdened with new movie camera on a strap and wearing striking T-shirt with image of maple leaf and sign Canada. Next 30 minute I was walking with a steady pace between the ruins of half-demolished dwellings, I was deflecting from suspicious looks of natives trying to return to some spot described in my map. Luckily I found a taxi cab, which's driver was much more helpful and took me directly to the museum. When I was about to pay, a driver asked me also for a little tip to be able to buy some Christmas gifts for his children. I objected, that it was already second half of February and Boxing day had finished even in countries using Julian calendar, but driver definitely deserved his tip when he said: "For a good christian there is Christmas every day.."

In a museum I learned, than a territory of Ghana had been habited as early as 10 000 years ago and I again struggled with a question what the Africans were really doing whit this huge start ahead of European civilization. Perhaps somewhere they have some draught. Hurry, from a history to nowadays!

My infallible instinct to a relatively culture restaurant, which was offering Star on a tap. I had to admit, that apart from unnecessary bubbles of CO<sub>2</sub> this beer had proper temperature for tropical climate and its surface was even covered with continuous, but unluckily fast vanishing foam. As a late breakfast I decided to try local special – fufu. Fufu looks on the first sight like our Czech dumpling. Its preparation is ritual from the beginning and is documented

in many local paintings or sculptures and I am sure that this procedure has also its place in Ghana's folk songs. Special dough is prepared out of ground bulbs of a plant called cassava which is mixed with a water and left for slight fermentation. This dough is later formed into balls and boiled. In spite a recipe sounds tempting and a dish itself looks tasty, certain unaccustomed rawness and African acidity don't agree with spoiled European throats. The taste is even not improved with spicy gravy of streaky goat meat. My tourist guide recommended to have a lunch a restaurant White Bell. After my previous experience I didn't order fufu, but a fish tiapia made in Ghanaian style. It was a good choice. Although on the first sight the food looked as it was vomited by dog filled with a grass, a taste of steamed spicy leaves of vegetables of unknown origin was excellent. Bottled Star I drank just to quench my thirst, but my attention was drawn by little beer glass with a logo of this brewery. It would be a nice souvenir, I thought and I asked passing waitress, if she could sell it to me. She could not, but she helpfully drew me a plan of remote city district of Accra, where was suppose to be a shop, where this glasses were for sale. I didn't feel like to stray through unknown town, that's why I decided to change the tactics. I was lucky. In a restaurant there was one more guy – about 15 years old helper. I call him to come to my table and I handed him 5 dollars bill.

"I am buying one of this glasses", I informed him. Boy was evidently a little baffled, however he managed to wrap my glass into torn double page of local newspaper. After a filling lunch and successfully suppressed thirst I was thinking about buying some souvenirs. In a city park there was a lot of little stalls with typical African goods, so I exploited this occasion and I cheaply bought a bunch of exotically looked trinkets.

When I was leaving a shop, somebody called: "Hey, mister!" I made a fatal mistake and same like Lot's wife I turned back. Ubiquitous street vendor all covered with beads made of timber and black stone approached to me by huge leaps.

"Only five dollars for piece! Is it too expensive? OK. Two for seven!"

That's not bad, I think. "OK. I'll get it!"

However, I lost a few precious second and in a flash I am surrounded by a crowd of other street vendors. To satisfy their urges I am buying a few things and I am considering to whom I am going to give it as a gift. But situation is developing according our proverb: The more beer – the stronger thirst.

"Elephant tooth on a leather string, only 3 USD!"

"Bracelet made of black stone. You say, you already have three of these? But mine is better quality..."

Burdened by cheap gifts I refuse other lucrative offers and I try to escape. A tempo of my pace which could possibly save me from similar danger in Far East in no case can measure up to inhabitants of continent, which gave to the world many exceptional runners and Olympic winners. I speed up and I am cowardly fleeing the scene without obligatory placing my fists to the chest. A group of my pursuers is surprisingly getting thinner, apparently they have quit and now they are searching for easier, slower victim. Near a sidewalk parks a cracky yellow-black taxi cab.

“Help! Save me, brother,” I yell on a driver and I enter a cab. Unbelievable! I escaped! Only from a back seat the most enduring runner is offering me a folklore hat. Despite I don't wear the hats and I have no idea what to do with it, I don't bargain, I buy it for 5 bucks and I rid off the last pest. Finally I realize, that all this adventure has also its bright side. I don't need any more souvenirs and next week of my stay I can be fully devoted to other activities. Randomly I can name a degustation of local beer brands.

The next day I decided to visit a historical town Cape Coast close to Cape of Guinea. At a purser desk in Hotel Shangri-la I asked about possibilities of transportation. The cheapest way was obviously to travel by regular bus line, but a journey in a heat of 35°C without AC seemed to me a little uncomfortable. Near the purser desk I spotted a young man with a new model of cellphone in his hand. By chance it was guy named Ben – the owner of a little transport company and travel agency, who instantly offered me his services. He will charge me 60 USD a day, when he will be 24 hours to my disposal to act as my travel guide, book the hotels etc. 60 bucks is a fair monthly salary of average Ghanian if he is lucky enough to find a job. But luxury Toyota is air conditioned and I judged, that after all this kind of guided traveling would be much safer. Maybe Ghanians are OK, but unlike guy born right in Ghana, who can recognize his countryman on a long distance, I could mix them up with some blood-thirsty inhabitants of other African poverty and famine-stricken countries. So, considering this possible danger I hired my driver. Even despite a steep price it was a good choice, because during a few hours long drive to Cape Coast Ben was supplying me with interesting information about his homeland. For instance – it is very remarkable, that in Ghana beside English are spoken more than 70 local dialects. The most spread is Ga spoken in Area of the Capital, others are Twi, Akan and in a north Hausa. Right away I learned two the most important expressions in Ga language. The common greetings sounds “Akwabaa” (welcome) and draught beer is named poetically “Bubra”. I used a knowledge of my driver and I asked him about some health risks in that tropical climate. In Ghana occurs variety of tropical diseases and the worse of all is malaria. There is no effective vaccination against this malady, which e.g. killed hundreds of workers during construction of Panama Canal. It is recommended to take some antimalaria drugs a few days before arrival to danger area as a prevention. I was carrying all the way from my home 10 pills of expensive medicine Lariam, but according Ben was using these pills unnecessary, because the occurrence of malaria in cities is low and beside this – Lariam doesn't agree too well with alcohol. So I took the decision not to take it.

Little town Cape Coast used to be a point of importance for British colonial rule. So called “Golden Coast” was dotted by a quantity of forts and castles, some of which were built as early as in 16 century and for almost 300 years they played a vital role in slave trade. Ships coming from Europe were supplying employees in remote place of work with provision, their crew then loaded freshly caught slaves and sailed away to direction of Caribbean, where this live cargo was finally traded for spices, timber or tropical fruits. Such voyage from England or Denmark via Africa to Central America took about 9 months considering good wind and calm sea, but often was extended up to two years. For ill-fated African natives after crossing so called “point of no return” - in this case a gate of fort started a hopeless life in a slavery, but more often meant a slow dying in horrible conditioned inside ship depot during a voyage.

In Hotel Savoy close to Cape Coast I could not tune any channel on TV, although an advertising leaflet featured satellite reception. I complained at a purser's desk. In about 15 minutes my room entered two young guys, they started to tune my TV and approximately after next 20 minutes of flashing abstract shapes and polyphonic noise on a TV screen appeared elongated face of popular American reporter Jim Clancy.

"Look! CNN!" shouted one of repairmen. After a while could be heard in white noise British English.

"BBC", exclaimed the other one, "for a moment, Sir, We've tuned up for you two the most important channels. The rest we'll do tomorrow."

Hakuma matata. Mañana. Close to the equator there is plenty time for everything. Next day my TV channels selection remained the same, but on the other hand there were a few water and electricity shortages. You know – Africa.

In hotel garden was constructed small bar, where I spotted for me till this moment unknown beer label – Castle Milk Stout. It was a dark south African beer brewed under the license in Ghana, brew of velvet texture with full 6,6% of alcohol. In warm evening with rustling crickets I kept enjoying large bottles of dark liquid and I was talking to one of the employees of hotel resort, whose name was Malik Abdul. Malik was forbidden to drink a beer by Allah himself, so he was just sipping Coke and he was vividly describing his recurring malaria attacks. When I objected, that there is not this malignant disease in the cities, he resolutely claimed: "In Ghana malaria is everywhere!"

I reflexively shooed away an imaginary mosquito and adjusted a safe distance between me and a potential source of infection.

Castle Milk Stout was working as a reliable sedatives and was calming down my intrusive thoughts of tropical diseases, later as a soporific drug, when I was falling asleep in my hotel room while watching a grainy news on CNN channel. After had finished 6 stouts I immersed to a reign of dreams half naked and uncovered with blanket, so I was not too much surprised in a morning when I touched on my back to tiny itching rashes. Here we go, I said to myself, insidious mosquito Anopheles exploited my temporary powerlessness and attacked with all his malignancy. It's too late for the pills. It's necessary to be ready for the worse! If I am infected by the most serious form of malaria, the first attack I can expect as soon as in one week. This time I already might be at home. Or just in the airplane? My African guidebook did not mention a malaria attack during an intercontinental flight, so it did not advice any kind of possible treatment. I've been hypochondriac since my childhood, but here in a coast of Bay of Guinea the danger seemed to be very real. There was left nothing than to let the disease it's own run and to try to weaken virus by the booze.

This day we had a lunch in an open restaurant built on the wooden pillars on a bank of small lake teemed by crocodiles. It was an attraction for the tourist, the animals during the time were losing their shyness and there was possible to take a picture of them while drinking Star or Club. Within next 24 hours the full prices were suppose to rise by 100%, which could be detectable by extremely long lines in front of gas-stations and all around nervousity. However, Ben was evidently well pre-supplied, so we did not take part in this shopping madness and

we continued our journey to next destination – a historic town Kumasi. Ghana's roads are in a very poor conditions and the people are driving on them horribly, which can be proved by plenty of overturned car wrecks in the ditches. In the outskirts of the villages some people are pouring a sand and dirt into the big holes and ruptures trying to get some tips from passing drivers.

About 50 km from Kumasi out Toyota was stopped by highway patrol. The guards armed with machine guns resembled rather anti-terrorist squad than the traffic police and they ordered Ben to get off the car. Then followed a thorough check of all his documents, which took almost 15 minutes and original calm conversation was sharply evolving into emotional argument. Of course, I had no notion what was going about, but when I saw policeman squeezing firmly a handle of his weapon I was thinking how I get out of this place without shot driver all by myself somewhere back to civilization. However, the last word in this fierce argument surprisingly had my driver, who at the end barked on guards a few for me absolutely obscure words and then, still very angry he sat back behind a steering wheel of his vehicle. I learned, that the policemen wanted to fine him because he had not carry his technical license and they dismissed the idea when he told the name of his uncle, who was at that time a deputy of commander of Ghana's air force. An argument strong enough in a country where a general of the same army had ruled this state for 20 years without a break.

In Kumasi I learned interesting information about famous Ashant empire and it's well-known king, who in mid 30's returned back to his homeland to help his beloved country to get away from the bondage of British colonial rule, which finally happened in 1957 when Ghana announced it's independence. Tired after a journey I went to bed early. Before I fell asleep, it had seemed to me I had a little fever. Is it possible, that malaria might start so soon?

In a national park Kakum I've seen instead of expected lions, elephants or rhinos just many interesting trees and a few kinds of wild ants. I needed a touch with Africa's wilderness, that's why I decided to visit lake Bosumtwi. Vast natural water reserve is surrounded by many forests, sand banks and classical indigenous villages. Ben was having a chat with his colleagues and I was seized by young half naked Ashant who offered me an accompany on the outskirts of the lake. He notified me at advance, that every single village on the way charges a tourist 5 USD for entry its territory.

Walk through the genuine African village was a really life experience. I felt like a famous traveler when I was strolling with my black accompaniment among the ramshackle shacks, waiving to curious natives and posing for the pictures of my photoalbum in a siege of local emaciated children. In front of the most upscale dwelling in a village which looked like mid size stable there was a man sitting in a wooden chair. My guide introduced him to me as a leader of a village. Alleged tribal chief looked pretty civic and if there had not been two kids fanning him with huge palm leaves, I would not have believed in his position. After short negotiation with a help of young interpreter I was offered a chance to see a local sacred place for just two dollars. But municipal shrine was a little disappointing. Honestly, I was expecting something more respectful than simple space trimmed by stones highlighting pale antelope skull, which apparently serve as an offering to a local god Twi – the highest ruler of the lake. Taking the pictures was included in a price. The natives liked my camera Panasonic

and they would enjoy to play with it until dusk, but I was already thinking of return. There was a time to pay for the service and commercially gifted young man charged me whole 22 USD. One of the items was a financial support of three aged baobab tree and despite I objected, that we had walked through just one village I was explained, that this particular village is in a fact split into two parts. Five bucks each. The rest of the money was my guide's fee. I did not find any beer in a lake area, so I asked Ben for a fast ride to nearest pub. When we were descending a hill from a lake Bosumtwi my driver suddenly stopped the car on a spot. The reason was two small children selling a palm wine right on a side of terribly maintained road. This fermented palm sap, which is called toddy in India and tuak in Bali was poured by young vendors from plastic bottles to coconut shells and despite a dissimilarity with a real beer the beverage was drinkable and refreshing. However, after a consumption of about 0,5 l I felt a little intoxicated.

My flight back to Europe was scheduled for a midnight of the next day. However, Ben picked me up from the hotel as early as at 3 PM to show me around local pubs for a last time. A would-be Irish pub served Club on tap and even Castle Milk Stout. There was hard to think about all airport procedures I would have to go through in upcoming midnight. This time Ben also brought his lady friend Charity, with whom after a few pints started to plan a beer trip to Czech Republic.

"As soon as you arrive home, send me a postcard" said Ben. He was very excited after he had learned that there is almost 100 breweries in a Czech territory.

"You bet!" I agreed, "and if you don't hear from me for a long time, that means I probably died of malaria."

I tried to make a black humor joke. Ben for a while did not say anything, then he exhaled:

"OK...."

Local people don't cheer a foreign tourist even upon his departure.

We visited some more pubs, where we were eating with the beer local sausages and soon came the time to say goodbye. For short remembrance Ben gave me a PET bottle of real Ghanian homemade beer called "pito" Production of this exotic beverage is very simple. Ground millet or corn is mixed with a water and under technically trivial and non-sterile conditions is boiled. Then this brew is spontaneously fermented, if possible somehow strained and finally is ready for courageous consumption. My slush, which I was out of curiosity sipping already in the airplane tasted like stale vinegar water in which was macerated a pair of for years not washed socks and because of continuous fermentation this brew was becoming more and more disgusting. At home all my friends resolutely declined offered tasting right after the opened bottle with pito got to distance of one meter from their smell organs. Only one of my ex girlfriends, a former pub owner who considered herself to be open minded person with deep taste fantasy took from me about 0,5 l of this malignant liquid. 36 hours later I was almost paralyzed by diarrhea of immense intensity, which by the way lasted for two hours. However, there was not pain, vomiting or fever, so I ruled out a possibility of malaria attack and ascribed this bowels overreaction right to incriminated pito. On the other side my brave ex girlfriend who was not apparently because of her insufficient

microflora or microfauna immune enough against an African home fermented brews was suffering for a few days and she even kept a sample of pito for possible analyses in a lab in a hospital for treatment of tropical diseases.

I was at home already for a few weeks and I was constantly reminded of pitoresq West Africa by piles of regular or electronic mail. I regretted to late that I had been giving away my address to so many local people. A couple of my Ghanian friends were asking me for sending official invitation which could help them to obtain necessary visa and to come to dreamed Europe. The most active person was Ben's ex girlfriend Charity, who kept dreaming about a marriage with a white man (in this particular case evidently with me) and about comfortable life in Old Continent (despite the fact, that Africa itself is much older). However, after short counseling with certain authorities over phone I definitely abandoned all my charitable plans. Any kind of such invitation does include acceptance of total responsibility for arriving person, obligation of financial support, medical coverage and expenses for possible repatriation.

"But you don't have to be worried ,you would't get rid of them," one of the official tried to calm me down, "in most cases they even don't arrive to their final destination and they spread all over Europe. On your responsibility, of course..."

You've got a bad luck, Charity. I don't gamble. Thanks to our strict laws I am not endangered by mixed marriage, half-breed offspring, not even by black beer mates crawling with me the pubs in a region. The only person who has a chance to come is my African driver Ben who can be brought to Czech Republic onboard Ghana's army aircraft under a command of his military uncle.

## CHAPTER 2

### BROADCAST OF THE RADIO YEREVAN (Armenia 2003)

Q.: „Good morning. Will it be a meat in Moscow?

A.: „Yes, of course. There will be a meat.“

Q.: „And will it be a meat in Leningrad?“

A.: „Yes. There will be a meat in Leningrad.“

Q.: „And will it be a meat in Prague?“

A. „Yes, an exhibition will arrive to Prague as well...“

This old joke I heard in 7th grade of elementary school, when we learned about the capital of Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. If my life was imprinted to internet, I could under the keyword „Armenia“ find other references.

One year later I won a musical school's competition playing on a piano a piece from Aram Khachaturian – an Armenian composer. Other link would drive an internet surfer to the year 1982, when thanks to unpredictable movement of fate I appeared on a stage in City Theater of Ostrava standing in front of decorative bar counter in which's other side stood well-known actor acting as an American bartender who was asking me: „Would you like a beer, sir?“

Oh, gosh. How I hate this scene! According the stupid script I must not accept a beer and I should say modestly : „ No, sir. I'd like to talk to you“. Because I am some negro boy looking for a job in a bar. The story of the theater play takes place in 1938 in the premises of some anonymus pub in San Francisco. Finally I get a job as a piano player (like in a real life) and during my breaks I am even allowed to stand by a counter, sip a lukewarm bottle beer and listen to laments of bartender – esteemed actor Mr. Vochoc, who was at those times cast by theater management in a crazy socialist realism play and was lucky to seize a role of the author himself – comrade Breznev.

This performance, despite all positives, had also many hardships. The beer we used as a stage prop was always stale and warm, because it was poured from it's original 16 fl.oz bottles to 12 fl.oz bottles provided with fake labels Pilsner Urquell. To be an African – American I usually received my make-up about 20 minutes before my entry to a stage, so thanks to high humidity with dark dots on my face I rather reminded a miner after a morning shift than colored citizen of pre-war USA.

Important fact was, that this play was written by famous American writer William Saroyan, whose ancestors had come to USA also from Armenia.

In the end of the year 1988 Armenia was struck by cataclysmatic earthquake and because a few years back in this region had started a territory dispute over Nahorny Karabach with neighboring Azerbaidjan, there was the unfounded rumors, that this seismic phenomenon had been deliberately caused by Gorbachov's government to send a clear message to the rebel republic to abandon its separatist intentions. Unrest in Karabakh lead to full scale war in which died many people on the both sides of the conflict.

Even an adventurous man after learning these disturbing facts would think at least twice about visiting such country. But I after numerous meetings with Armenian people living in my home town got an obsessive idea. How about to make some trip to Armenia? Right away I started to look for some cheap airline tickets. The cheapest was a Russian airline company Aeroflot. But I did not trust this firm too much, because I heard the stories about frequent delays, traveling mafia bosses, drunk pilots and even a safety record of Aeroflot was not too positive. I remembered, that after a tragic plane crash of one of the local liner of this fleet was discovered a black box with recorded voice of about ten years old pilot's daughter: „Daddy, can I play with this lever?“

I made a final decision in 2003, when there was established a direct flight from Prague to Yerevan. Discount price was only about 900 \$, so I decided to use this offer. Formally I called to Czech Foreign Ministry for additional information. And from this institution I received a cold shower.

“Armenia is not a suitable country for individual tourism,” instructed me a strict voice on the other side of the wire, “after a Kharabakh war there remained lot of military groups and even the cities are not too safe.”

Understandably! We have an Armenian mafia even in our country, to more so in Yerevan! I must admit, that this phone call shook a little my resolute decision. My drive of self-preservation voted categorically against, but my alternative wisdom started to create the new supportive arguments. When I had been arriving nine years ago to Cape Town, there had been some gun battles in a suburb. And despite this during my stay I had not seen a single machine gun. Four years later in Thailand I bought a trip to a Golden Triangle – the place that allegedly teems with drug dealers and in a border with Myanmar also with armed insurgents. Even this excursion I had survived without scratch. In Nepal after the dusk we passed a spot, where two days earlier the rebels had shot to death 26 policemen and just recently in Ghana I had overcome without any consequences double mosquito bite and also drinking spontaneously fermented beer Pito.

The danger should not to be underestimated, but in Ostrava we say: “The main thing is not to shit to a pants in advance!” If I had until now obeyed my meticulous caution, in my life I would not have tasted hundreds of exotic beer kinds and I would be permanently sitting in the nearest pub in my hometown, where I would be with a group of similar mates growling about harmful pollution of a nearby aniline factory and slumping quality of once tasty Czech beers.

I did not find any guide book about Armenia, so in the airplane I was revising briefly picked facts about this for me almost unknown state. Armenia is the oldest Christian community in the world, which is perhaps mentioned even in Old Testament and in which’s territory is situated a bible’s mountain Ararat, where, according to a legend docked Noe with his animals. Armenian writing is more than 1000 years older than Cyrillic and in 1915 over 1,5 million Armenians became a victim of Turkish genocide.

A wise saying asserts: “After a battle everybody is a general.” I must admit, that sometime somebody become this military rank even before this battle. When I found myself at 3 AM in not-so-cozy terminal of Armenian capital’s airport, my traveler’s enthusiasm dropped to a negative territory and I was too late regretting I had not better go for a beer trip to South Bohemia. Dark haired locals looked much more bloodthirsty that their countrymen in Czech Republic and in the pockets of their coats they were definitely hiding traditional stabbing weapons. I also spotted a few soldiers with feared “LP records” on a top of their heads. Immigration procedure was surprisingly smooth (they evidently had no intention to repatriate rich foreigner, whose potential physical destruction might later improve a financial situation of some poor Armenians) and I received for just 35 USD a permission to enter Armenian soil.

It was pretty encouraging, that taxi cabs had their own dispatcher. This positive reality was nevertheless overshadowed by a young dispatcher with a loud tie, who passed me automatically glass of water with the words: “In Armenia we share everything...” I expected him to further say: “And now you share with me your dollars...”

But the plan might be even more insidious. The water might be contaminated with poison, or at least some soporific drug, so his accomplice has an easier job, when he would be dumping my paralyzed body to a rubbish heap or handling to the abductors, who would later try to extort some money from my poor mother or indifferent Czech government. This kind of organized crime is undoubtedly more profitable than occasional profit of phony taxi drivers. Fortunately, suspicious dispatcher drank out of the same bottle of which he was pouring me a water, so I selfishly quenched a last bud of hatching thirst with for me a very unconventional beverage and I enter a car.

In hotel, where we had arrived in about 5 AM I settled comfortably on a bed. On one patriotic TV channel they were playing local ethnic songs together with pictures of beautiful Armenian landscape.

What's a shame, that my timetable does not enable me a longer stay in this country! However, I've come here in business, so I most likely would not have a time to get to the nature. What to do? This is the fate of a chairman of beer club Brotherhood of Hops, if he intends to be serious about his job. I opened a fridge and I carried out preliminary tasting of a local beer. However, there were only thoroughly pasteurized bottles, so the real inspection should start during the day, when the pubs in Yerevan will be opened.

Around 10 AM I picked up the city plan in a hotel reception and I left for a town. The map was pretty well arranged, but there was a little problem, because apparently in euphoria of liberation Armenia from the bondage of Soviet Union in early 90's, local authorities canceled most of names of the street in azbuka, so many signs on important crossroads were written just in Armenian. This specific writing for sure of traditional and historical importance is for an average European absolutely illegible, so I had to ask the local residents. In a difference of for example people living in Baltic republics, Armenian folks does not have any disgust towards Russian language, so I could use in this exotic country at least remnants of my knowledge drawn during ten years of study Russian and crowned by graduation in 1980.

During my short stay I learned, that Armenia had become a czar's gubernia in 1828, so in its history does not play a great role an expansion of Stalin's regime, which had culminated in a verge of Second World War by the legendary activities of comrade Molotov. Much stronger aversion Armenian have against their Turkish neighbor because of sour historical experience and in a last ten years also against nearby Azerbajdzan. The capital itself has a relatively charming and quite atmosphere, but it is almost impossible to ignore the Soviet elements of recent times. The Russian influence was mostly reminded by broad streets, megaloman monuments commemorating Great Patriotic War and unsavory interiors of some of the city houses. In Yerevan there is plenty of bars and restaurants, so I just needed to find the right one with a draft beer.

Beer has a long tradition in Armenia. Ancient Greek traveler Xenophon ( father of today's xenophobia) during his journey through old Armenia describes a beer of antique Armenians, which use to be sipped through the straws right from the vessel, on which sides were floating the grains of barley or wheat.

I entered one restaurant, which was dominated by smart beer tap with a sign KOTAYK. I decided to start a tasting right in that place. Thoughtful waitress brought me a menu and after she had learned I was a foreigner she recommended me to try on of a local special called cinkali. It was a tiny dough cakes filled with a minced meat and served in a tasty gravy. Little bit worse quality was a draught beer Kotayk. The brew itself did not have to be too bad, but there was evident, that cleaning of beer pipes still has not become customary in this region, that's why the traces of old remaining beer in pipes turned sour and added to fresh served beer unpleasant flavor.

A few blocks further I noticed a little basement pub, which was advertising a beer KILIKIA. At this time it was a good choice. Product of the competition, which is located in outskirts of Yerevan and was founded during a Stalin's rule in 1952 agreed with my choosy tongue. Beer was very bitter, it did not have remarkable hop's or yeasty overtones, but it would definitely satisfy spoiled European beer pundit. Beside a skillful bartender was filling the pints with an evident knack, so a dewy glass was fringed by thick ring of straight foam. After the second piece, which finally splashed down a funny taste of awkward Kotayk I became hungry again, so I ordered a plate of special soup "spas". This yogurt soup spiced by local herbs with boiled-to-mush wheat is really excellent and it is possible to use it as a morning remedy after a wild Kilikia night.

In hotel bar I discovered an alternative product of Kotayk brewery – bottled 15° beer Eribuni named after a ruin of ancient fortress, which had a significant sweet taste and full 6,5% of alcohol. But much more interesting in this environment was to become familiar with a genuine Armenian brandy produced more than 100 years in a local distillery situated close to downtown. Young bartender told me a brief story of this alcoholic gem and consequently he recommended me to taste a shot of brandy older than 20 years. Despite I am not a liquor expert and I even sometime call the selected single malt whisky a “soap water”, this aged cognac I liked very much. Bartender also presented a principal of local method how to enjoy this particular drink to the core. This system is similar with ceremonial drinking of tequila. On a top of a palm is poured a little granulated coffee or chocolate, which is moister with a few drops of lemon. This dissimilar mixture is licked during Armenian brandy drinking. This method is called “Nikolayoshka” as a remembrance of the last Russian czar, who invented this style in his childhood.

Allegedly there exists a local cognac even older than 100 years, but such vintage drink is available for politicians and VIPs.

Over an aromatic glass I remembered one Armenian sailor, who I had met in 1988 in German city Stralsund. In accordance with Armenian national traditions his father buried in his garden in a day of birth of his son a bottle (or a firkin) of Armenian brandy, which was supposed to be exhumed in a day of his wedding. But unruly descendant was not in hurry to get married, he preferred to seize a life and travel, so it was a real chance, that the buried beverage would get a very matured.

From a talkative bartender I also learn how many celebrities have Armenia origin. I randomly name a singer Cher and tennis player Agassi. Real Armenian can be identified by the ending -ian in his surname. And how’s about my ex schoolmate Ivan Myslikovjan? Waiter was thinking for a while, but finally concluded, that this is probably not Armenian name. I thought the same way. Ivan is blond and he is not too religious.

In a local magazine I found an announcement advertising a restaurant, where, apart from serving some special north territory cuisine was offering also a draft beer called Gyumri. You see! Another Armenian beer brand! I was excited., so by Yerevan’s underground I got all the way to the city district, where the announced pub was located. Because I held a city map and a town was full of helpful people willing to show me the right direction, not even a whole hour later I was sitting in a restaurant waiting for a pint of Gyumri. Right after the very first gulp my body was shaken by association to famous (infamous) and by a few generations of beer drinkers cursed Ukraine’s beer Zhygulivskoye . Gyumri beer was impertinently warm with no hint of foam and if I called it hardly consumable slush, I would not be much wrong. However, after a bowl of spas and roaster lamb leg Gyumri started to complete the atmosphere of the pub and all this situation itself, so I drank up another four pieces. Besides, the beer price in this pub was around 30 cents for a pint, so a few days later I repeated my visit there.

In Armenia the bus transport is functioning on a lightly different principals than in Europe, namely as for paying a fare. When I was boarding a bus, I had not seen any driver or guard collecting a fare. Surprisingly the other passengers were calmly taking the seats inside the aged bus nobody care for a ticket, even it seemed, that nobody is afraid to be caught as a stowaway. Nevertheless, each of these passengers poured a handful of change to the palm of driver when he was getting off. This system is nice, but I decided to travel to my next destination – lake Sevan by taxi cap.

My Armenian taxi driver, who except his mother tongue and Russian did not speak any other language first thought, that I am a spoiled American tourist, but after a while, when I addressed him in a language of our former liberators and self-proclaimed brothers at once he befriended with me

and when he had learned, that I was still single he was offering me one of his daughters. Because in Armenia they share everything.

Lake Sevan lies in elevation of about 2000 meters, is surrounded by mountains and it serves to the Armenian people as a vast recreation area. Hotels there are for regular people too expensive, therefore the banks of the lake are full of camping lots. The landscape looked nice, but my hotel room for about 60 USD for night was a little boring, so in the afternoon I decided to explore a town Sevan located about 2 km from the lake. My plan was simple. I would buy some postcards, souvenirs and I would stop by in a local pub to drink some Kilikia with the locals. But as early as I was living a highway taking a turn leading to the town I got a feeling, that something is going terribly wrong. Near a dusty road was a cracky gas station, 500 meters further towered over city big rusty ferris-wheel, in old days maybe popular fair attraction, but now just a reminder of a Soviet colonial rule.

I found myself on a side of a settlement, which resembled ghost towns from sci-fi books or war movies. Ramshackle a few floors high houses were in very poor condition, somewhere was a missing glass in a window replaced by newspaper, somewhere by the clotheslines. Streets and sidewalks were dotted by holes and hollows, in a certain places was possible to trace some residues of concrete, but mostly were filled by sand and gravel. It made an impression, that feared Red Army had abandoned this place just a few weeks ago. Even the Sevan residents did not look too happy and they were seizing me up with distrustful look.

I just ran through Sevan without a searching any pub, with my camera hidden deep in a bag and with a steady pace I resolutely headed to my boring, but safe and civilized hotel.

I needed to splash down that depressive scene, so I bought in a local grocery my favor Kilikia – this time wrapped in a plastic bottle reminding a hand grenade. Maybe it was a nostalgic memory of Russian troops, or strategic aid in recent Karabakh war, however, the content tasted excellently. I learned, that as a difference of regular bottles this beer is fresh and not pasteurized.

In the evening there was a ballroom dancing in our hotel, in where to this occasion gathered a lot of guests, probably from all over Armenia. I judged from expensive car makes and, of course, of the hotel prices, that this crowd belonged to the high Armenian society. And an opulent feast could begin. As soon as started a live music, the representatives of at least three generation of guest left their tables full of painstakingly selected delicacies with variety of expensive beverages, jumped to the dance floor and started to dance. In a few minutes the whole atmosphere supported by exotic music caused in my brain an euphoric state, in which I was able to embrace all Armenian guests, dance with them their ethnic dances and drink with them their fermented drinks till early morning hours.

When I returned from a restroom, I spotted on my table friendly looking bottle of Kotayk. Waiter explained to me, that some guest had noticed my relative loneliness and he had decided to cheer me up with a help of cool beer. In Armenia they share everything. In this particular moment when I was splashing down a shot of vodka with donated beer I finally comprehended the beauty and the wisdom of this splendid national tradition.

Last two days of my Yerevan stay I dedicated to a constant tasting of all basic kinds of Armenian beer, so I could their tastes imprint to an appropriate center of my beer-encyclopedic brain. I learnt, that Armenian expression for beer is “garijur”, which means literally “grain water”. How simple! In addition I know, how to write in Armenian “post office”. It looks little like “fnus”, but I have no idea how to pronounce it.

In a street stalls and groceries in Yerevan is even possible to get some beer from Russia. So, the last evening before my departure I devoted to Russian tasting and I bought 6 pieces of bottle samples. After a professional analysis I split these beers in two categories. The first category represented the products of so called European or global type distinct by computer control blending of semisynthetic ingredients and burning of final brew by devastating pasteurization. The second was copying brewing in a style of beer spook Zhygulivskoye which's outcome was hardly definable – typical east slush with a flavor of stale manure. It is difficult to judge which of these two styles is more drinkable. Only a lager Solodov from fertile Kuban had, despite its excessive sweetness something positively “silageous”, which I for a first time had discovered in Latvian beer Uzavas and I, for a while distracted from my Russian beer lethargy, could vividly imagine drinking this beer together with domestic Cossacks.

My digital alarm clock was merciless. Considering the fact, that my direct flight to Prague had been scheduled for 3 AM, there was necessary to leave for the airport not later than at 1 AM. Huge round building of central airport constructed in 80's resembled postmodern nerve center of rocket traffic in a remote planet Gromyko built between two star wars. My sleep deprivation this time show its possible destruction. During a search of entrance to a glassy lounge I suddenly and loudly bumped with my left knee and central face to a strong glass wall. It must have been an interesting look to this bizarre incident, especially from inside this lounge, which was evident by surprised and scare looks of disturbed passengers. Nothing serious happened to me. So, I had found an automatic door and I had merged with a crowd sooner than they managed to call an ambulance.

On board the aircraft I was thinking of my nearest plans at home. I will have to compensate my over week long absence in Czech pubs by more zealous consumption and also tell to my ex schoolmate Myslikovjan, that his ancestors probably did not come from Armenia.

## CHAPTER 3

### BEER VARIATIONS ON A CARIBBEAN THEME (Caribbean zone 1989-2004)

Famous sea captain J. Teach better known as Blackbeard, who was raging in Caribbean territory in 17. Century knew beer very well. When beer was missing on board his ship, the crew was lazy, grumpy often trying to plot a mutiny. But when the beer was lavishly flowing out of the barrel, all felt much more able to attack and rob other ships and long tropical nights with the cheerful pirates were much happier.

Together with a breakdown of colonial relationships in Caribbean, especially in 60's, a beer production was transformed in this region as well. The descendants of African slaves, that had been brought by force to West Indian in their freshly obtained freedom swiftly adopted all necessary

brewing skills and they continued a brewing tradition of their former exploiters. Today each larger Caribbean island has its own brewery and a local beer is thanks to stable tourist influx on a high demand. Tropical climate supports a constant feeling of thirst and metal notes of calypso steel bands are challenging visitors to scrupulous drinking.

Archipelago Bahamas is one of the busiest destination in Central America. The capital Nassau still bears the signs of British colonial civilization, which can be seen on the streets, offices, but mainly in the pubs. Bahamas are tourist and tax paradise, and when I spotted there a luxury Rolls Royce or Aston Martin I expected, that somewhere close was walking some famous Czech trickster, who back home robbed people of money and fled to this area.

Bahama's beer Kalik is pretty washy and even its 7% version does not render any nice beer experience. The beer prices follow the local living standard, they are rising from year to year and about 10 years ago they reached an average level of 7 USD for a pint.

In the Island of freedom Cuba they brew a beer too. The most well-known is a traditional lager Hatuey, which's history is dated back to 1928. That means to the golden times, when the prominent American millionaires was frequently visiting this most famous "Sugar basin of America", so they could be properly sugar coated. Today is Hatuey brewed under the license in Florida, while Castro's regime comes to a domestic, even to foreign markets with the new labels.

For a rich Czech traveler is apparently the most popular Caribbean destination Dominican Republic, which has been for long time producing commercially successful brand Presidente. This beer is well-known in Central, and partly also in North America, although its taste is more less neutral.

There is another country on the island of Hispaniola. Perhaps the most mysterious in the continent. Haiti – French speaking country is considered to be the very first black republic in western hemisphere. In Haiti, which is also the poorest country in the same hemisphere is practiced a very obscure religion Woodoo especially known for living corps called zombie. Recent scientific findings proved possible poisoning by a special poison called tetratoxin, which is capable to paralyze partly human body. Poisoned person can perceive, but cannot move or talk. However, there was found no evidence of burying of poisoned people and their consequent leaving their graves as the zombies.

Haiti is often shaken by frequent unrest, military coups, hurricanes earthquakes and criminality, so any fearless traveler to this troubled country should be awarded by some prize for the bravery. On the other hand, in safe beaches owned by the cruise line companies you can for a few colour American magazines or regular apples get a six-pack of a real Haitian beer Prestige, which is, by the way, much more attractive because of its exotic origin than for its dull taste. Despite its conventional 5% alcohol a careless drinker, who enjoys Prestige too much can be gradually turned into a proverbial zombie and then just hope, there is not digged for him a makeshift grave right in a pub's courtyard.

Next popular paradise of a Caribbean is the island Barbados. Shortly after declaration of independence in 1965 there was founded a brewery Banks, which is functioning until today. Pale lager in 12fl.oz bottles with red-white logo probably does not attract a sophisticated beer drinker at all. In a capital Bridgetown is occasionally possible to buy local dark beer Stallion and lately also a special lager brewed in an occasion of 40. Anniversary of founding Banks – Legend.

The island Saint Vincent is not so largely visited, but as for the beer it is probably one of the most interesting country in a vast region. In 80's local brewery was dedicated to licensed production of German beer EKU, today successfully brews its own brand Tillman. This beer is, compared to neutral

products from neighbor islands expressively outstanding and despite its lightness can pleasantly surprise inquisitive beer lover by its unexpected malty aftertaste. It is also worthy to try another St. Vincent's beer Haroun.

The philatelists surely remember beautiful colorful stamps from Antigua and Barbuda. This tiny state brags, that in its territory can be found 365 beaches – one for each day of the year. My personal view is, that just a few days is enough, especially if you make a sight-seeing tour around a pretty specific capital of Antigua St. John. I would not believe, that in 20<sup>th</sup> Century somewhere still can be a sewage system visible directly on the streets. Apart from the beaches, Antigua owns one national brewery called Wadadli. Antigua's beer is far more bitter than the products of many other Caribbean islands and the most of all it reminded me German beer Beck's in 90's, but its striking emptiness reveals brutal pasteurization, which kills all good yeasts, that had originally good will to turn fresh Wadadli to a tasty beer.

The dominant of the island St. Lucia are two volcanos called Pitons. Piton is also a name of a beer brewed in St. Lucia, which is patriotically recommended to foreign tourists. The island has a beautiful nature and looks unusually civilized. But the more pitoresque is a landscape, the more intrusive are its residents. Their aggression is on a rise and they more and more often turn from verbal annoying of tourists to violence. Fortunately, most of the local pubs are still relatively safe.

Opposite to historical building of post office, from where goes a postcard to Europe just 4-6 weeks is situated pseudo British pub even dominated by 3 well-polished beer taps. Sadly, they are just the non-functioning dummies in a style of Potemkin's village and the pub is offering only Piton bottles for a little higher price.

Island Dominica is sometimes confused by the geographic illiterates with Dominican Republic. But a small state with a colorful parrot in its flag has absolutely nothing to do with those Hispanic country. There was a long fighting for Dominica between Britain and France, so today is in this island beside the English also spoken a sort of broken French dialect called Patois. A capital Rousseau reminds a disgusting slum on a bank of cesspool, but it is easily possible to find there a bottle of the local beer Kubuli. Once with one of my colleagues we hiked to a local attraction – the Trafalgar Falls. November is usually one of the hottest months in Dominica, so even a distance of 5 km all the way uphill became an effective greenhouse for cultivating of reliable thirst, which we were at least trying partly to quench in a shack, which was a combination of grocery store, pub, dark chamber and a hen's house.

Close to the waterfalls we were joined by local dark skin youngster, who offered us his services for a little fee. Well instructed by a numerous guidebooks I was trying to avoid any eye contact, so I succeeded to ignore his presence. I thought, I was able to find some waterfalls without his assistance and for free. When I stood on a concrete horizon with a nice view on an opposite forested slope, I got petrified. There was a huge metal pipe leading down of the steep hill, which undoubtedly was hiding a wild waterfall inside. Astonished by adroitness of the civilized human, who is able this way to tame natural phenomenon I almost misheard a malicious laugh of rejected native.

“You see,” he was teasing me, “next time you listen, what I say!”

I started to talk to him trying to explain to him, that I was not a regular tourist, but hardworking cruise ship crewmember and that those rapacious imperialists are our common enemy. For one bottle of Guinness the promising young guide took me all the way to the authentic waterfalls.

On the way back we were surprised by a strong downpour, which in this longitude usually does not last longer than a few minutes. However, we found a shelter under a roof of indigent bar, which was

constructed just out of bamboo and palm leaves. We drank a bottled Kubuli and we tried a domestic special -the spice. A procedure how to make this hard liquor is easy. A fresh cinnamon bark is macerated in 100% spirit, then this liquid is diluted to a gravity of about 60% and – cheers!

In a fall of 1983a tiny island of Grenada became a subject of interest of whole world. In its territory landed US Navy and communist media commented this move as a further escalation of the imperialist evil in Cold War era. In a fact in Grenada, which got independence as late as in 1974 hired Cuban builders allegedly suddenly had change their original plans and instead of designed hospital they started to build a military airport. These activities did not comply with opinion of many other countries, especially US, which could not afford another Cuba in their vicinity. Soviet project of socialization of this Caribbean island collapsed and Grenada stayed opened for a tourist industry. One of the pretexts for US invasion was reportedly a protection of American students of Grenada's Medical University. How would you imagine an American student in Grenada?

“You were not admitted to Yale, not even to state university. You were expelled from Military Medical School. But I can guarantee you – you will become a doctor!!”

My visit of Grenada and my personal experiences are not too pleasant. Right in a port of Castries a nifty street vendor sold me a regular curcuma for a price of saffron. Then I was stubbornly followed by an intrusive native, who had been providing me with unrequested information about the island and in the end he charged me 6 USD. Because of safety reasons then I started my jogging on a road leading out of town, where I collided with a homeless moldy dog, who was just coming from a minor road and did not give me a right of way. He was so stressed out, that he was trying to bite me for about half minute and it would not take too much to bring back to the ship a genuine Grenada rabies. Because of these evident dangers there is not worthy to leave a safe ship and go to search for some pub. In 1997 I found on this island just local Guinness Export (7,5% alc.) brewed under the license and I assume, that devastating hurricane Ivan, which swept that area in 2004 destroyed also a small Grenada brewery.

Jamaica is for average European a sunny eden, where only the best rum is drunk, the best crack is smoked and only most genuine reggae is played. This image is fueled by strong propaganda painting pictures of this kind, same as Czech Republic can be, thanks to similar advertising perceived as a green valley under the Prague Castle, where are dancing together Franz Kafka with Good Soldier Svejk on a sound of a pipe played by grinning plaster dwarf. Jamaica declared independence in 1962 and its today's condition just supports opinions of reform colonialists, that for some third world countries may be their own self-governing a real havoc. More than 17 years ago in a little town of Ocho Rios I was shocked of cracky Russian cars on the streets and the lines of ugly worn hookers close to the port, who were offering an unforgettable experience of oral sex – Jamaican style for only one dollar. There is a great misery on the island and security situation is getting worse every single year. A living standard is low, in a hot climate, which tortures Jamaica almost all year round people is reluctant to work, so the biggest income of local citizens comes from foreign tourists. Unsuspicious visitors are becoming the victims of intrusive Jamaican as early as in a safe port area. Beside the ubiquitous taxi drivers also other self-proclaimed entrepreneurs of various professions attack the foreigners. Without any sign of sanity they offer to short-trimmed, or even half-bald man a hairbreeding, to 80 years old gramma adrenalin rafting on a wild river in Blue Mountains and to everybody else tons of souvenirs and other junk. If you are lucky enough to get to the town alone, stay away from market places and if you have to take some pictures, do it only at the time when no resident is around. It is customary, that you might be addressed by some intoxicated rastaman with a popular phrase:

“Hey, man. You've taken picture of my car. Gimme two dollars....”

Same precaution rules are applied for a way back as well. I personally witnessed a situation, when an old couple was annoyed by some taxi driver until they agreed to get on the car and to have a ride about 200 yards to the port for a fare of 25 cents.

A national beer Red Stipe produced in Kingstone by the company Benson & Geddes maybe does not worth a risky trip to the town. It is washy, generically bitter beverage, which is available in many American countries including USA. A consumption of Red Stripe on the island is supported by strong patriotic feeling of its inhabitants. Same as Jamaica is the best country in the world and Bob Marley is the best musician, Red Stripe does not any competition in the world of beer. Today Jamaicans do not know, that their musical idol did not talk about his island in a most favorable way and that he wanted to move to Africa, where were the roots of his family. Despite all of this, Jamaican authorities at least have a sense of humor. In the island, where giant hemp leaves are creating thick woods and where a marihuana is a necessary part of the life of each Jamaican from the cradle to the grave there is a sign close to the customs in a port: "Is strictly prohibited to bring any kind of illegal drugs to Jamaican soil....."

In very south of Caribbean islands is situated a republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Just there is produced another strong brew of this region -Carib, which together with Red Stripe and President represents a mighty triumvirate in Caribbean zone. Carib is an average brew, which thanks to the white glassed bottles looks like the organic urine.

Dutch island of Aruba a few years ago stopped production of a beer brand Ancla and freshly got involved into brewing a new beer on a local market – pale lager Balashi. This beer has a fair distribution and advertising and you can find it along with a pretty good choice of Dutch and Belgian beers all around the island in bottles, can and even on a tap. In one pub in outskirts of Wilhelmstaat I even noticed almost complete microbrewery device. This project failed, but let's believe that freshly released swallow makes soon a spring.

Neighbor island Curacao famous for its production of the liquor of the same name brews a Dutch beer Amstel out of unsalted sea water. I think, that even this method cannot help this corrupted trademark.

To the Dutch territory belongs also a half of the island Sint Maarten. The other half is French, but I guess, that the beer selection on the both sides is very similar. Stella Artois and gradually worse and worse Carlsberg is the most common, what you can for a steep price get there, if I do not mention by all decent people cursed Heineken. But, at least you can shy away a thirst with a can or half bottle of also unattractive beer, but for a price just of one dollar.

In Sint Maarten there was many years back a brewery brewing a local beer Sint, but it was closed down without any replacement and according the information these days nobody brews a beer on the island. Certain compensation is production of sweet liquor guavaberry to which is added a forest fruit resembling our cranberries, which grow only in a few islands of this geographic area.

Cayman Islands are located to West Caribbean, close to the coast of Cuba. For the centuries it belonged to British Commonwealth, then became a part of nearby Jamaica. For couple of years they were even enjoying an independence before they returned back under a protection of British crown. That's why, unlike other Caribbean islands this British colony is thriving. The rich tourist can find in a capital plenty of expensive shops with luxurious clothes or jewelry and also bunch of majestic banks. Cayman Islands are decorated by sandy beaches and marvelous geological formations. One of the local attraction is called Hell. My popular answer to the annoying taxi drivers, who kept asking me if I want to go to hell was:

“I will go to hell after I die!”

Cayman Islands are popular also for their crystal clear water and rich sea life, which every year attracts thousands of tourists eager to snorkel or scuba diving. Characteristic animal there is stingray, who can be found in surrounding sea in large numbers. No wonder, that in 1996 when was starting its production a new microbrewery on the Islands, they named its beer just after this popular creature. Lager Stingray was looking for its own distinctive taste, till it have found it and nowadays it offers to thirsty beer connoisseurs light but tasty brew, which in its prevailing yeasty bitterness is embracing hint of overtones of some Czech lagers from 80's. A brewery produced also a little dark ale, which is available in local Hardrock Café, but costs about 8 dollars a pint.

When in spring of 2002 I was struggling with lingering eye infection I got help from an Indian doctor Krishna Mani, whose private practice was set on these Islands. My illness was a pretty frustrating but, anyway, I was doing much better than my beer mate Jakub, who suffered of severe sty, so a part of his prescribed diet was to drink only wheat beers ( in Czech we call sty “barley grain”). My eye finally stopped to shed the tears and I was happy to be able again with a help of my sharp sight to disclose the new pubs or evaluate the color and spark of tested beer, eventually an optical impression of thickness of the foam. In the same time I suffered of partly hearing problem on my left ear, which a ship doctor resolved by splashing this ear with a huge syringe. Do we need a hearing sense for a beer-drinking? Not in the first plan. But it is always practical to be able to listen to any new information about new breweries or good beer. So, I listened closely to the positive news about one more brewery in Cayman Islands. Focused on the target, after about 20 minutes of hard walk, passing restaurants, beaches, hotels, even a local cemetery, I really found a small, nice looking microbrewery Old Dutch. But the brewpub was still under construction and among wheel-barrows loaded with bricks and mixer was napping some Creole bricklayer, who instructed me, that it would be opened in a beginning of the summer season.

I was patient and shortly after an official start of business I visited this place again. The premises were designed rather like a decent restaurant than noisy, busy tap room, however at the bar counter were located six beer taps provided with the different signs. A flagship of Old Dutch was a light wheat beer suitable even for my sty- friend. Its stronger 7% version tasted similar, Pale Ale and Red AI were also very good. But on a top of my list was outstanding Old Dutch lager very dry with natural palate of hops, which, however did not stick out of sophisticatedly balanced taste harmony. Scottish Stout had a beautiful snowy had and seasonal Belgian White had a nice smell of orange peel and coriander. It is understandable I was visiting this quite remote but quality pub regularly, because it always gave me a pleasant excitement in otherwise beer stereotype of my Caribbean stay.

Once I spotted in this pub an older, grey-haired man, whom I definitely had seen before, but I just could not recall where or when. It seemed to me, that it must had been somewhere in this brewpub, because his face was corresponding with certain taste of beer. It took me some time, but finally I solved this riddle. In front of me was sitting a man from the beer label – the Old Dutch itself! Owner of the brewery! We started a chat, when I gave him a compliment about his outstanding beers and after a few pieces “on the house” I wished him a good luck in promotion of quality beer labels in this arid region.

But even a feared pirate Blackbeard himself was not forgotten by contemporary beer makers. On his everlasting memory in the US Virgin Islands is brewed a top fermented brown beer Blackbeard Ale.

## CHAPTER 4 ALUS, VINAS + ČESNASAS (Lithuania 2001)

Ancient Greek geographer and mathematic Pytheas of Massillia mentioned a beer of ancient Lithuanians as early as in 325 B.C. A country with antique beer traditions undoubtedly deserves a visit of cosmopolitan beer drinker, especially when is situated relatively close to Czech border. I reserved a second half of October 2001 and I bought an airline ticket. But this planned trip soon started to get complicated. When I was standing on a platform waiting for a train to Prague, from where I was supposed to, after a pleasant beer drinking night, take a plane to Vilnius, I was contacted by my travel agent, who said, that precisely on a day of my scheduled departure had been canceled direct flights to Lithuania because of lack of demands for this route. Luckily, travel agent arranged for me some back-up connection with private firm belonged to former formula one champion Niki Lauda. In Vienna airport I had a problem with my nail scissors. For a security reasons the airport staff in a counter did not want to allow me to take it to the cabin. I understood. It is very easy to slash a throat of a pilot and hijack the airplane. They enclose my scissors to special envelope and sent it separately. I was promised to get it in Vilnius.

Lauda Air was no disappointment. During a flight we were served a smoked salmon and a vast variety of beverages. In a same airplane also traveled overreproduced four generation gypsy family. All of its about 30 members were evidently having a good time with singing, dancing and fully exploiting a free bar service. Inspired by the cheerful gypsy song I felt myself in a good mood, before I noticed two about 18 years old guys how they were playing with their cellphones. Considering the fact this incident had been happening about half an hour before a scheduled landing and I was familiar with air safety regulation, where was mentioned a possibility of radar interference by a cell phone signal, I did not hesitate and I called a stewardess to put these two dangerous hooligans to the order.

Arriving hall in Vilnius was reminding rather an obsolete railway station. I did not find my scissors among the arrived baggage, so I exited a terminal to find some transport to Didlaukio – a home of my Lithuanian friend Robertas Vilcinskis. When I was looking for a taxi I met a part of gypsy group from the plane, which was just loading bulky suitcases to the van. By chance, there were also two youngsters, who I had reported to a crew.

“Are you always so clever?” asked me one of them in surprisingly fluent English, “you pushed it too far. But for sure – We’ll meet again!”

Again, I disclosed my rare ability to make myself the enemies in foreign country even before a landing of the plane.

I came by taxi to Robertas’s place and I was introduced to his family. Robertas’s wife Mila was a Russian woman, who he had met in a band playing in a cruise ship. In a time I had not seen them, the family was extended by a little girl. Mila was cooking some Russian-Lithuanian special, which was correctly tuning up the thirst and I splashed down a tasty meal with my first Lithuanian bottle beer. I was already preparing my kidneys for an intensive inspection’s flow, when I was suddenly disturbed by Robertas’s daughter, who wanted me to read her some Russian fairy-tales. Maybe she was fascinated by my strange accent, because she did not want to let me go after the story of the elephant’s chocolate cravings and despite my dry tongue I had to continue to read about a little Russian rabbit.

I was imaging the rest of the day spent in a cozy taproom, but my music loving friend booked three tickets to a local jazz club. He assured me, that even there was beer available. In a crowded club was very relaxed atmosphere and a long bar counter, where we had been finally seated was furnished with three working taps, that represented the most known Lithuanian beer brands. I started a party with a lager Švyturys, about which the logo revealed, that this brewery was founded in 1784. Beer was thick, a little sweeter, and certainly strong in alcohol. But my spoiled taste cells remained unconvinced. Next beer Utenos was significantly more bitter, but again – rather neutral. Similar impression made also the third beer Kalnapilis. However, all tested samples had one interesting common denominator: They were insufficiently quenching a thirst. While for satisfying moister of dry mouth, especially in relatively cold weather would be enough two pints of an average lager, not even 2,5 liters of Lithuanian brew was capable to perform this honorable duty. So, I had to ask in Robertas’s apartment for an additional bottle before I laid down on bed with a hope, that the next day would be better. And it was!

In second largest Lithuanian town Kaunas I was much more lucky and shortly after accommodation in hotel in a center of the city I discovered on the same street a building o microbrewery Avylis. Basement restaurant looked very stylish, interior was tastefully decorated by brewing kettles and also by remarkable collection of African and Asian beer cans exposed in the glass shelves. Brewery was offering two kinds of home draft beer. Pale unfiltered 12 Plato was delicious and very interesting was also a little stronger (13 Plato) Honey Lager Medas. Local garlic soup prepared on a red base

(tomatoes, peppers, beet) had an indisputable nutrition value and was very different than Czech fast garlic broth, which usually serves as a supporting prop for morning hair-of-the dog.

Written Lithuanian language with its diacritic (hooks and slashes above the letters) looks optically almost like a Czech. In a fact, this is not a Slavic language at all and for Czech people is absolutely not understandable. However, some words sound similar, only a suffix -as is added. Vínas – vinas (wine), česnek – česnakas (garlic), medas – medas (honey). But the word “beer” is different and is pronounced in Lithuanian “alus”.

Basturma is a deeply smoked and well spiced sliced meat, which flavored by a few drops of lemon juice creates a solid arid surface for actual beer melioration. Then Avylis flows fast! This day I was really lucky, because I met in person the owner of the pub. He was modest, about 45 years old guy with the glasses. He looked very helpful, but he apologized, that his English is not good enough, so he would rather describe me all brewing device in German. As for me, in the opposite way, I probably would not to be able to understand German terms for “bottom fermentation”, “fermenting wort”, “mashing” or “malt grinder”, so we set as a communicative language Russian. However, before he started to test my knowledge of this panslavic tongue I got an idea.

“Do you speak Polish”, I asked.

The brewer and I got lucky one more time. Vilnius belonged until 1940 to Poland and was named Vilno. Even more than 60 years after a Stalin – Hitler gambling game a local people still remember a language of their ancestors.

Refreshed by unfiltered beer and with a feel of beer brotherhood I started a walk around a town. Till the end of the day I did not experience any other good brewery. A brewery Gubernia was founded in 1786, but its products was pretty insipid similarly as another Lithuanian brew Taurus. Moreover, my shoe started to get soaked in rainy weather, so I finished my day in well-tested pub Avylis. In a morning I found out, that Lithuanian beer, apart from their often neutral taste are almost harmless. Despite last night I had lot of these and even I was mixing different brands, screws inside my head remained well fastened (no headache), my judgment was sober and my well-balanced organism was dominated by yearning to try other Baltic beers.

After my experiences with Tallin and Riga I knew, that the best pubs in this region do not look like the pubs at all. That’s why my attention was attracted by a modest little house provided with logo of local brewery Kauno. Inside there were just a few tables and chairs, but most important was a nice bar counter with six different kinds of Draft beer. There was Sunday around 11 AM and pub was occupied just by a few lonely gentlemen watching some kid’s program on TV. A glass of 12 Plato beer Kauno gave me exactly, what I had been looking for – beautifully balanced bitter lager served in a right temperature with a fair foam – shortly - beer which is not pretending anything. I decided to stay in these premises a little longer and I succumbed a temptation to buy a strong 8% alc. porter. This beer was really strong, but on the other hand it was hollow, sweet and there was lot of caramel, so evidently its only purpose was to ambush consumer’s surprised metabolism, especially on empty stomach. Relatively pleasantly dazed I went to the nearest tap room, where I neutralized a black molasses with a washy 8 Plato. About one hour I devoted to sightseeing tour on my own, before I considered, that was a time for lunch. Restaurant close to the park was little bit out of my imagination of inexpensive beer and tasty snacks, but the menu looked tempting, so finally I sat at a replica of the historic table to try an eel prepared in old Lithuanian style. I did not have high expectations about beer selection in this restaurant, in Czech Republic in similar places is traditionally served Pilsner Urquell, therefor I was surprised, when waiter offered me, beside the obligatory Švyturys and Utenos a product of a small local brewery Vilkmérge, and at this occasion he noticed

me to its unpredictable 7% alcohol strength. So, then it occurs my best beer experience in this Baltic country. Despite a taste of Vilkmėrges could be detected far in a sweet zone, its delicacy and unexpected nice smell was literally gushing out of the glass at the distance of 20 cm and was lingering on a palate almost the whole minute. The same beer I later found in a cheaper pub and I was caressing it till the evening, when came the time to leave some unoccupied space in my stomach for a couple soporific beers in my hotel room.

The next day afternoon when I returned to Vilnius close to the bus station I noticed a small building with an interesting beer logo. Pub looked cozy, shortly after noon time I was there almost alone. The beer Biržu was an amber lager of a pleasant palate and I transformed myself in my mind a few years back to the Vancouver's pub Cambie, where I had been sipping a traditional Canadian product of local brewery Kootonay out of a stylish mug surrounded by Canadian beer brothers.

The lounge started to get filled by the guests. Majority of them were apparently the students of Vilnius university. As the real representatives of the people of this kind they during their break were indulging a liquid mana as an inspiring mean for a rest of a school day.

The same way there were spending their school days students of University of Ostrava in former Czechoslovakia. In a pub "Golden Lion" one evening in 1984 I met there evidently dementing young drinker, who was called by his schoolmates Einstein. This non-stop imbibing beer notorious was performing on a request very complicated math operations, when he was able to count the third root of 8 digits number faster than a pocket calculator. In academic soil of the university he was in a scientific dispute with one of the professors about a curve of the Universe and later he was expelled from the school for his poor attendance (most of his studying time he spent in Golden Lion) and bad studying results. Who knows? Maybe even here in Vilnius is sitting some future genius.

In a tap-room there was a relaxing atmosphere, but after the second pint I had to leave for another revising stroll. The city center of Vilnius reminded me the New Town of Prague. This district seemed to me very friendly, because it looked, that it was intended also for the locals, not just for the foreigners. Just stopped raining, uneven sidewalks were full of puddles and my old shoes with the holes were making the splashing sounds. I was thinking about shoe store, but suddenly entered to my path an Art Nouveau house with a sign "Beer University". Finally, I found, by chance the headquarters of similar beer organization like our Brotherhood of Hops. These premises, for sure are teeming with regional microbreweries brands and I would be finally able to strike up conversation with some representative of national movement for maintaining ancient traditions of Lithuanian brewing, I thought. But in a basement bar I did not find any expected happy beer friends enjoying Kauno, Biržu or Vilmėrges singing some antiheineken songs, but only a few bored guests and sluggish bartender behind bar counter, which was presenting just the beer taps with the notoriously known brands. The walls were full of pictures of special promotions, diplomas and certificates, but evidently it was only an attraction for the foreigners residing in Vilnius for some time. This purposed was documented by higher beer prices as well. I was thinking how to translate to Russian a Czech saying: "This path is not leading to the right direction" and I was wondering, whether this metaphor would be even understood by an indifferent staff.

So what? If I am here, I will have some beer. Luckily, among the not likable taps was installed one tap in a shape of a lighthouse with a real light and a sign Ragitis. OK.

"One Ragitis, please!"

Ouch! What is it? Such nice tap and such suds! It might be maybe because the beer professors did not clean the pipes. I do not to study here. Better I will be drinking uneducated. Fortunately, bar was offering also a wide rank of bottle beers, so I choose a Belarus monastery beer Lidskoye. This lager

from Lukasenko's kingdom cheered me a bit up and I was ready to have an authentic Lithuanian dinner with Robertas in his favor restaurant. I was afraid, I would not find a civilized beer there. Therefore I was impressed, when a waiter offered us a honey (medas) beer from home brewery Čižo. Unfortunately, in this case a brewer, apparently a passionate amateur in training had underestimated proverbial unpredictability of beer yeasts or other potential bacteria, so beer turned sour.

In the end of my stay I found in a local magazine a large advertisement of microbrewery "Busi Trejčas". Aware of the fact, that most likely it might be my last beer stall, which I could manage, I came to three story building. A brewpub was brewing just one kind of beer – filtered pale lager and I must honestly admit I was not much impressed. Prevailing sweetness of Busi Trejčas was significantly subdominant than in Vilmėrges, but this beer did not display any kind of bold individuality, maybe apart from light piece-of-rag infusion, by what it reminded me a little an Ostrava's lager in 80's. Much more positive fact was, than in upper part of the house was established a permanent exhibition of Lithuanian brewing. During the excursions was allegedly possible to try the sample from about 40 Lithuanian breweries. In Lithuania a beer lover definitely does not get bored. Unfortunately, a group of at least five people must make a booking a few days in advance.

Robertas came to Busi Trejčas to say good-bye and he brought with him a bunch of friends, who worked in nearby office. I recalled a story, when in 1995 in Prague I had been trying in Russian, English and Polish to explain to Robertas what was a tripe soup all about and I remembered his sour face when he had been trying to pull out of unsavory red soup pieces of tripe resembling clipped froteau towel. I tried to translate this funny story to Russian, but Rob's friends did not want to communicate in this language. Fucking politics!

During a trip to airport I saw a logo of beer Kvetens on some remote pub. This unpasteurized lager is king of all Lithuanian brews. So what? This year I won't make it. Fortunately, Vilnius is not too far after all.

In the airport after I had submitted my passport, a young female official was looking closely on a monitor of computer. All similar actions performed by the employees of certain institutions predict some problems. Delay of the aircraft, expiration of airline ticket, international warrant followed by swift raid of anti-terrorist squad. But in this case the employee just gave me a large envelope. I was very delighted, when I found inside my missing nail scissors. I was about to cut my overgrown nails, but my pure pleasure did not last too long. I realized, that if I pass with this murderer's weapon metal detector, it would be taken from me again because of the security of air travel and honestly, we would be again on a same spot, where we had been before. I confide to the clerk with my worries, but, luckily, she knew a solution. She routinely put my scissors to another envelope and she wrote there with capital letters PRAGUE. In this case the fortune was finally on my side and professionally wrapped scissors appeared among a baggage on a running belt in the Prague airport.

## CHAPTER 5      WORKING LIKE A BULGARIAN, DRINKING LIKE A CZECH (Bulgaria 1983)

A year 1983 was just one of normalization era in that time Czechoslovakia. Communist block was ruled by KGB agent Andropov, who had been actively helping to suppress anti-Soviet uprising in our country in 1968, in Poland there were a martial law, and the employees of Soviet air defense successfully shot down a civil South Korean airplane with about 200 passengers onboard. Our athletes were diligently practicing a boycott of upcoming Olympic games in Los Angeles and a mood level of Czechoslovak population dropped to the point of 3B.

But one of the events of this year should be mentioned. In early 80's there was a plenty of guaranteed rumors, what would happen in a near future. These rumors had mostly something to do with topple down of hated socialist system and broad political changes. The mysterious stories of the fashion of Nostradamus predictions usually began with an obscure, sloppy dressed hitchhiker, who gets a lift in some car. During a lift he told the people in a car what would happen current or next year. Beginning with a death of general secretary of Czechoslovak Communist Party Gustav Husak and finishing with imminent World War III. or devastating nature disaster. He generally ended his prophecy with a scary phrase: "...and in one hour you will have a car crash!", which really happened.

I must admit, that being an atheistic idealist I never believed these fantasy stories, considering them as a part of the modern mythology and superstitions. For instance: The government, who had risen in our country beer prices in 1984 was deposed as late as whole five years later. And that time actually it was not even the same government. Everything is should be taken with a common sense. Same as other gossip of this era, which claimed, that in September 14 1983 would be the end of the world. I recalled this scary prophecy right at this date on a bank of recreational reservoir while sipping a beer and carefully watching a clear stellar sky. However, I did not spot any trace of falling meteorite, neither it looked like we would be attacked by evil imperialists. 15 years later I learned from some magazine, that about this date in 1983 the Russian air defense radar registered a signal which matched with intensity of potential nuclear attack from the side of western enemies. Launching of nuclear missiles was not even in that era only about a single pressing a red button, however, allegedly in this situation all responsible units were put into the combat readiness. Luckily, one high ranked officer working on this base despite this stressful situation had analyzed this danger matter on more time. It showed, that no missiles were flying to hit old mother Russia and a whole problem was caused by technical glitch. In this case dire prediction might come true.

In my personal life in 1983 happened an essential change: I converted from a high school student to a working employee. As a professional musician playing all around our region I started to make a decent money and because I still resided in my parent's apartment and a pint of lager cost about 10 cents, after a few months I significantly enhanced my bank account. Therefor since the beginning of summer I was obsessed by a thought to spend a vacation abroad.

It was a good idea, but in 1983 such journey was associated with all rank of hardships and restrictions. A few state-run travel agencies of that time were offering some trips abroad, but these offers were very limited. At those times was unthinkable to simply take a passport or other kind of ID and after obtaining a visa to travel to any country of choice. Although at that time I had been for a couple of years planning a trip to Uzbekistan and UK, I decided to initiate my Traveler's carrier by visiting relatively close and friendly eastern country Bulgaria. My inspiration on this matter was my a few years younger friend nicknamed Chestnut, at that time a fresh graduate of High school. His schoolmates already for a few years had traveled to spend a couple of weeks on the beaches of Black Sea in a south of this country. Their destination was usually a little town of Sozopol, which used to be a meeting point of young pilgrims after their long and often adventurous journey all the way from their home base in Ostrava.

We agreed with Chestnut to go to Sozopol in the end of July. I thought, it was necessary to spread the glory of Czech beer and also of just recently established organization Brotherhood of Hops behind a Czech borders. My experienced colleague, despite his young age had done this trip already twice, so about one week between our departure he gave me all detailed information and advices for travel. Considering the fact we had planned a low budget student's trip, we did not count on accommodation in hotels or camps and so it was necessary to take a sleeping bag and a large plastic foil. Because the most of time would be spent outdoors, we had to pack sufficient number of warm clothing, hygienic aids, improvised first aid kit and our own stock of food. Because we wanted to be spreading a glory of Czech culture too, it was a must to take a guitar. My guide and adviser also informed me, that the way back I would have to carry out of my own, because he had decided to illegally cross the border from southern Bulgaria to the neighbor capitalist Turkey.

Our journey actually started one night before our scheduled departure with a wild party in a certain family house. Music, alcoholic orgies and dissolute sex had been performed till early morning hours, when it was necessary to leave for Ostrava main station to catch a train to Bratislava. However, in

front of the counter Chestnut found, that he had left all his documents on a crime scene. We had to return to the house and alter the plans for the first stage of our adventurous excursion.

Unwritten regulations of Sozopol traveling required, that all participants should get to destination as cheaply as possible, for the best for free. Therefore right in the first part of our journey we tried to avoid paying a fare in a train by hiding under the seats in the second class carriage. The classical compartment at that time used to have, apart from freely openable windows also comfortable leather-like seats situated in a sufficient distance from a floor, so an average human could easily fit there. The students of Chestnut's high school had proven, that this way hidden stowaway was usually unseen by a person sitting on an opposite seat neither by a train inspector in upright position. In a meticulously chosen compartment was sitting just one young girl, who after we had said "hi" and had crawled under the seats, cowardly escaped. In next station five people entered our compartment. We could see just their legs. Our low position and short distance between us even enabled us a silent conversation. My mate soon fell asleep and it was interesting, that none of passenger did not notice his loud snoring. I was absorbed to reading of Kafka's novel "The Trial" and I was analyzing this kind of budget traveling.

The underseat students in Ostrava had a friend Karel, who was unlike them a square geek. It was maybe because he did not study a Grammar School, but Chemistry School, so during some wild parties he always recalled a chemical formula for alcohol, eventually of some of its derivations, and he always finished his drinking after at most sixth beer, while his comrades only started to spray the beer surfaces in their stomach by high-proof catalyzers. Karel was also for a long time resisting an underseat traveling and he always bought a valid ticket. Of course, he looked funny in the eyes of the others, so once he decided to join underseat movement to travel under the seat to, for a beginner pretty remote destination – Prague. In this memorable day he drank up seven pints of lager, he crowned his personal record by double shot of vodka and he staggered to the railway station. Inside a night express train he got under the seat and instantly fell asleep. Thanks to alcoholic unconsciousness the journey ran smoothly for about three hours. Unluckily, he woke up just in the moment when a train was entering a tunnel and he, in sudden attack of claustrophobia, with no knowledge he was at that time in horizontal position, imprudently drew himself up. A bleeding wound on his head was necessary to dress with a cold water, therefore Karel left his hideout and on his way to toilet he became an easy prey of a merciless train inspector, who charged him a hefty fine.

Chestnut under the opposite seat woke up and we decided, that we need a little exercise. Paying passengers were a little baffled by our unexpected emerge, but they were also amused and for a rest of our underseat trip they were cooperating with us against the uniformed officials of Czechoslovak Railways.

In Košice we tested a local beer Cassovar on a tap and right behind the town we hitchhiked a bus full of Hungarian tourists on their way home from trip to Slovakia. Despite of a significant language barrier we succeeded in striking a friendly relationship with them and during the journey to Miskolc I was entertaining the passengers by playing and singing medleys of Czech, Slovak, English and gypsy songs.

Next two days in Hungary passed with no hassles. However, we failed to cross Romanian border in second day as was planned, so we spent one more night outdoors in Hungary. After a bottle of cheap fruit wine Jaryna I had a good night sleep and for a moment I was dreaming about careless life style "on the road". The next day, on the other hand, was not easy at all. Our morning hitch-hiking was a failure, so we played stone-scissors-paper for closer hitch-hiking spot after we would separate. Chestnut won and shortly he was waving me from a cabin of Romanian truck. We were supposed to meet in border crossing as soon as possible.

Red Lada took me just a few kilometers and its driver explained me, I must get to a village strangely called Biharkeresztes. So I did not forget a name of my destination, during an active hitch-hiking I kept repeating this unusual word. Biharkeresztes, Biharkresztes..... At last, some Romanian van pulled over and well humored driver opened a door. My brain stressed by unexpected success maliciously messed the letters in this five syllables long geographic name.

“Kihar....besztes...retes...birasz...”

I was stuttering desperately for the next few seconds before the driver lost his patience and continued on his solo journey. I arrived to the border crossing with about two hours delay with a help of three different lifts, while unleashing my accumulated rage by destroying the innocent plastic guard stones. Chestnut was getting impatient and I had to splash a fresh predicament with a double Hungarian palinka.

In the Romanian city Oradea we changed the tactics and we voted for railway transportation. Of course, we ignored a ticket office as usual and I was afraid, that in Romanian railway carriages the seats are located even lower than in our country. However, it seemed, that my friend Chestnut knew about this situation something more. With a striking self-confidence he took me to the first class compartment and snuggled on a comfortable seat. I followed his example with a little uncertainty. I must confess, that until that time I did not have any clue why, despite both of us were no smokers we had been carrying lot of US cigarettes – about ten packs each. But after my mate had given to train conductor, who had required from us the tickets, one pack of Marlboro and he had silently left with an official salute, again it came to my mind all absurdities of non-working socialist system. American cigarettes became not only free ticket for Romanian railways, but later also a source of our almost 100% profit, because one pack, which cost in Czechoslovakia about 25 Czech Crowns had double value in Romanian black market.

The comfort of our traveling-in-style was disrupted by train ticket inspector, whose reserved compartment we were accidentally occupying. Thanks to evident language barrier and our pretended imbecility we were able, after all to leave this hot ground in peace with no sanctions.

A night journey to Mangalia we spent in second class compartment shared with some Czech honeymooners traveling to Balkan for their wedding trip. We must have impress our countrymen so much, because they ended up sitting together in one seat and they even did not object, when Chestnut was trying to cook an instant soup on a portable petrol stove. We were passing a wild Transylvania and our train was full of strange phenomenon. From somewhere rushed some evidently insane man, for a short while he was looking around and then he tore off a window curtain with a logo of Romanian railways before he disappeared again in a darkness of night train. I was really delighted, that the sunrise came early and we arrived to our destination.

Our financial situation was precarious. We did not have even 12 lei for left luggage office. So, we set close to the recreation area in Mangalia little tobacco shop. All my life I hated illegal street vendors and I thought, I had no talent for the business. But after I had sold all my ten packs of cigarettes and my thin wallet got filled again with about 500 lei I admitted, that this kind of activity might be much more profitable than getting up every day at 5 AM and go to a morning shift to some absurd factory. I wanted to make up to myself a few days of malnutrition and a shortage of beer in my veins, but a leader of our excursion reminded me, that we were still about a half day behind our schedule and Sozopol was still far way. We crossed Bulgarian border by hitchhike and we found a place with almost fairy-tale name Durankulak. I objected, that this name bears some element of hated “kulaks” in Russia and also reminded a band Duran-Duran, which I do not like too much, moreover it brings back the memories of infamous archipelago Gulag. However, I was glad to be finally on a Bulgarian soil.

From this breaking point our trip started to run steeply downhill. Durankulak itself was a boring sea-side resort, where, maybe except a Black Sea was not anything remarkable. Our journey there was pretty of action and I did not feel like to lay down on a beach. I wanted to experience more adventure. At that time I did not have any idea, that my wish would come true for 150%.

We decided to celebrate our reach of Bulgarian territory on a terrace of the restaurant with a nice view at a sea. I was sipping some local brew Ambrosia (not good) talking to recreating Ostrava's miners, while Chestnut made an acquaintance with a long-haired Swiss tourist, who was traveling Europe with his overgrown dog. He seemed to be very generous and in about two hours he made my colleague Chestnut totally drunk. Well educated waiter then asked me to drag him somewhere out of public, where he could continue throw up without smearing restaurant's premises.

Chestnut was really drunk like a fish and it was a very difficult task to hold him in vertical position. But the most delicate on this precarious situation was, that only Chestnut was able to localize a spot in nearby forest, where we had left our rucksacks with all our belongings including travel documents. Relaxed Chestnut was making fun of our predicament, he kept blurting some nonsense, laughed and occasionally fell with his face down to Bulgarian dirt. Luckily, we found our baggage and exhausted by alcohol, stress and physical fatigue we fell asleep on a spot. Overnight the weather had changed and we woke up to constant rain in the wet sleeping bags. All our pep from last days had fizzled out and there came a depression, which deepened especially when hangovering Chestnut found out, he had lost all his money during yesterday's crazy party. Shortly we managed to get to some little town called Kavarna. After we had been kicked out of the street, were we had been trying to dry out our soaked clothes and sleeping bags by local policeman with a recommendation to go to some drying room, I clearly made up my mind: It is the time to go back home.

I had been of this trip about a week and current situation did not support any idea, that in planned destination Sozopol we could expect anything better than here. One of my girlfriends currently worked as a supervisor in a summer camp for retarded children in Velké Heraltice and I just stopped enjoying hanging out in foreign countries in personal financial situation on a verge of collapse. Sozopol does not allure me any longer! I want to go to Velké Heraltice!

I announced my fresh intention to Chestnut and he, although he had not known an exact location of this place, not even a structure of my thinking, agreed. Never oppose an insane! At a pint of a hair-of-the-dog Ambrosia we decided to travel together to Varna, from where we would continue separately. He would go to Turkish border, while I would board a train back to the west.

"We don't have the ticket yet" told us an official in a counter in Kavarna bus station when we asked him about a fare to Varna. The same answer we received about 15 minutes later. Suddenly the counter was attacked by the crowd of local people.

"There are no more tickets", nodded zealously employee of a bus station (in Bulgaria are the signs for "yes" and "no" opposite) and I was spared from a nerve breakdown just by awareness, that I am in this absurd country just a hopefully short-time visitor. Bus driver obviously was not selling the tickets, so I went back to departure lounge decided to kill the bastard behind a desk. Fortunately, finally driver showed some understanding and charge us a fare without issuing any valuable travel document and we could depart. After all what had happened in last hours even a bus ride I perceived as a nightmare. I was angry especially when a stubborn donkey dragging a cart loaded with vegetable stopped in a middle of the narrow road to Balcik and blocked the way of our bus. Balkan passengers got off the bus with a discipline and were calmly smoking their Bulgarian cigarettes welcoming this situation as a chance to have a nice socializing chat, while my heavily abused organism was bravely struggling with a brain stroke. Then my guide and advisor Chestnut said something, what I

remembered and adhered to all my life: "If you can't cope with the specifics of the life abroad, don't travel anywhere and stay home!"

In Varna I loaned Chestnut 80 leva (at that time about 35 USD) for his next travel expenses and he promised me to remit me this money through money order from a bank in Ankara. Then we said goodbye.

Hungry and thirsty I entered some garden restaurant in Varna, where I ordered some Balkan special and a draught beer. That brew had a mediocre taste, it was murky (I don't think it was officially unfiltered) and inside the glass was floating some dirt. But the beer was served in special Bulgarian glass of unusual shape and I wanted to have in my collection. I asked a waiter if it was possible to buy it. The waiter was behaving as a typical Bulgarian. He told me, that this beer mug cost 2,5 leva, but it is not officially for sale. But if I gave him this money, I would be allowed to seal it. What's a deal! I agreed and I had been waiting for about 20 minutes before the waiter made me a cover....Adventurally acquired glass is until today a part of my random collection.

Of course, a ticket back home I had not got in Varna's railway station, but I was sent to travel agency Rila somewhere in downtown. I was wandering along the streets with an address written in Cyrillic and I was asking the locals with no positive results, when I almost knocked to a young guy, who looked pretty willing to help me. He was mute, however, with a help of sign or rather body language he asked me, if I had some cigarettes. Too late, mate. I sold them all in Romania! Then he showed me some ID, which was in fact a secret agent badge! It was hard to believe! Mute agent of secret Bulgarian police was more than well-constructed combination of immortal James Bond and Czech good soldier Švejk! He blurts out nothing and he is absolutely inconspicuous. It was evident, that a rascal Todor Živkov was still holding a rein firmly.

The agent walked with me about 30 minutes trying to help me to find this travel agency. When I learn, that it was fruitless and I was not actually arrested I separated from my bizarre companion and soon I found Rila on my own.

I was looking forward train trip home. I decided after a week of relative starving to spend all my 500 lei in dining car. I was dreaming of gastronomic adventures with imported beers and half bottles of sparkling wine, which would be followed by a well-deserved sleep on a seat (no more under) in a comfortable compartment. But as early as in a platform, shortly before departure I learned only catch of my optimistic plan – a fast train to Bratislava did not have a dining car. So, during about 30 hours journey I was depended on one liter of sweet lemonade Schwepps, bottle of Bulgarian cognac Sincev Bryag, two warm Polish beers and a can of beef meat in a salty gravy.

Endless crossing of Romanian territory was made more entertaining by countless gypsy family, which had got into my originally quite compartment in a town of Cluj. In Bratislava was a tropical night with a record temperature around 25°C and I left an infernal train with an obsession to go to the nearest cemetery and my only rescue was non-stop opened buffet, where I did not find a beer, but my young life was saved by two glasses of cola and a bowl of bean soup.

After my arrival home I dedicated last few days of my vacation to recovery from my Balkan experience. Moreover, for a next couple of weeks I hated sunrise and I sabotaged a popular Bulgarian spread. My friend Chestnut returned from Sozopol approximately one week later. He had not tried to cross the border to Turkey illegally, because as a result of aggravating political situation there was a shooting on the violators from the both sides of the border line. So, Chestnut gave it up and permanently settled in Czechoslovakia. He never paid me back my 80 leva.

## CHAPTER 6 I WALKED ALONG MIAMI BEACH ( FLORIDA 1989 – 2004 )

“I have no close relatives in western countries...”

This phrase used to write my father, when he was helping me to fill out the questionnaires, that were supposed to help me to be admitted to the University or to get a decent job. He deliberately lied. Our family use to have a bunch of relatives in the wealthier part of Europe and even overseas. The closest relative of this kind was a brother of my grandmother from my father's side, technically my grand uncle Pepa. He left Czechoslovakia in 1938 and since early 40's he was fighting Germans in British Army. After the war he did not return home and he settled in Canada. I never met him in person. I remember him only because of the gifts he sent occasionally to our poverty-stricken family. I loved most a colorful t-shirt with winking flamingos, which became an envy among my kindergarten schoolmates. With this outfit I even beat a local bully Saša Dvořák, who built his image on recently undergone tonsil surgery.

Pepa almost every summer spent in sunny Florida. I collected his attractive postcards and the stamps. Pictures of Miami ZOO and dolphinarium used to ravish me even later, when my favorite uncle from time to time increased my budget by modest amount of dollars. Miami itself with its beaches and luxury hotels full of pampered millionaires I knew just from the movies (Some Likes It Hot) or magazines and I was longing to see it in the real time in person. Unfortunately, in the times of socialist paradise the trips to enemy Florida were not in a current offer of travel agencies.

When I started to play a music professionally, I met some older musicians, who had been lucky enough to visit Miami on board a cruise ship, where they had been playing in a band. In 1985 there appeared a hope to get this kind of gig under the flag of Italian company Costa Line. Their agent

Campagna liked the sound of our jazz band and offered us a contract. Unluckily, at that time our only and unavoidable state-run musical agency Pragokonzert acted very irrationally. Instead of striving to enable this gig to the four pieces band, for what they could officially, according a thief's contract charge each musician whole 50% of his salary, the officials connected firmly to a criminal communist system thwarted our contract, maybe in expectation of additional bribes. The crimes of corrupted bastards working for this enterprise remained unpunished until today and I had to wait for my next chance for a few more years.

First time I arrived in Miami in April 1989 to join a cruise ship Sun Viking. At that time it seemed to me, that there was not a great selection of different beers. According Florida law in 1989 the alcohol limit in domestic or imported beers must not exceed 3,5%, then it was considered to be different kind of beverage in different tax category. So, my first season in Miami I was mostly sipping washy German bottle beers or obligatory Budweiser.

Fortunately, in next years I discovered in a seaside park Bayside a garden restaurant Sharky's, where my attention was attracted by 20 taps of different shapes, colors and names. Among notoriously known American products there were possible to find also the taps spouting Samuel Adams, Killian's Red, Bass or Carlsberg. But it was not all. Bar was also offering a "beer menu" with a selection of about 80 beers from all over the world. During next ten years I never forgot to visit this every time I came to Miami. The pub was opening at 11 AM, so I had always a time for my 5-6 pieces. The management of Sharky's was regularly altering the offer, so I had a chance to taste almost every time the new brands. Young employees knew how to take care of beer. Often longer than an hour before opening they were devotedly cleaning the beer pipes preparing all for smooth running of draft marathon, which usually lasted till 1 AM. Beside some not too well-known American brands, I tasted in Sharky's San Miguel from Philipines, Japanese Sapporo, New Zealand's Steinlager or an exotic lager from African Togo. Remarkable was also collection of Central and South American beers, among others for instance Famoso from Guatemala, Peruvian Cusceño or Pilsner from Salvador. However, a combination of few such beers used to be sometime followed by overpressured headache, which surprisingly appeared as early as two hours after tasting. Real express hangover!

I was sitting in a Sharky's, sipping Greene King, Tucher or La Trappe, biting a spicy chicken snack "balls of fire", while talking to long-haired bartender Digger about the perspectives of US microbreweries. Unfortunately, nothing last forever. An owner of Sharky's inprudently gave this nice pub to his irresponsible son as a birthday gift and by this action he started the process of gradual burial of his, once so successful pub. The pub started to be opened in very last moment before the official business hours, not seldom even late. New management canceled meticulous maintaining of beer pipes and became to employ Cuban and Portorican waitresses, who were, admittedly, in better physical shape, but they treated beer very badly. International representation of beer brands was not extending, on a contrary, it was shrinking with gradual depletion of the stocks. Once I ordered my favor amber beer Sierra Nevada, but I was served a brew, where its characteristic nice smelling bitterness was replaced by unacceptable sourness. I had just a few sips and I noticed waitress, that the beer is bad. How was my consternation, when one week later I received ordered Sierra Nevada from the same tap totally sour! Ignorant staff even had not bothered to replace it!

I decided for a future to change a pub. I borrowed a bulky phone book of Miami and under a password "Breweries" I found a few addresses with the phone numbers. As the first there was a brewpub Gordon Birch – at that time already member of 17 pieces chain of brewpubs operating in whole USA. After my personal experience from Hawaii I knew, this company belonged to the first American Graduate of Brewing University in Weihenstephan Germany was specializing on brewing lagers of Czech type using Saaz hops. In Miami's Gordon Birch all the lagers (amber, dark and strong)

were very satisfying and as a pleasant refreshment in this pub they served interesting dark weizen Charcoal. A stay in well air conditioned restaurant was nice, but the atmosphere seemed to be a bit cold and not enough relaxed. Despite this, when I had finished my ship's contract in November 2002, I first had come by taxi to Gordon Birch with all my luggage for a light lunch and four pieces of beer "to say Goodbye" before I left for Miami airport.

After my multiple visit of Thailand I always looked for Thai restaurant in other foreign countries for spiciness, diversity and unpredictability of Thai cuisine. But restaurant Thai Orchid in a posh Miami district Coral Gables had even something more. They brewed a beer! To my first inspection I invited my fellow musician Jakub, who had showed an interest in beer tasting. The mixture of non-traditional flavor variations of Asian food with local version of ale was promising a very uncommon experience. And really - it was exactly, what I had expected. I ordered some special with exotic name, about which I knew just that was prepared of chicken meat. Some chicken ordered Jakub as well. Again, I met an inventiveness of Thai cook. My dish was hot, spicy and greasy, which evoked beautifully the sense of thirst. Semi-professional variations on theme of top fermented beer were laudable, but they did not whisper us anything more confident. Only exception of this kind-hearted triviality was a beer brewed with an addition of brown rice. This beverage really tasted "Thai" and it would satisfy even a pretty exacting beer drinker. On my next visit I learned, that Thai Orchid stopped brewing its own beer and just continued to cook Thai food.

One day my colleague, who worked in the same ship told me, that during a train ride he had spotted close to University of Miami some building with the sign indicating microbrewery Titanic. Because a fact that guy had a reputation of incorrigible joker, it took me a few days before I made up my mind and I set out for a personal inspection. I came to the city district Coral Gables again and I successfully found my destination not only for that moment, but for almost three upcoming seasons of my repeating visits of Florida's capital. While an original cruise liner Titanic had taken hundreds of ill-fated people down to the freezing depths of Atlantic, a pub of the same name was elevating its guests to above the earth's highs by its frothy tide of multicolor beer sea. Unlike Gordon Birch, Titanic was a private independent pub. I appreciated nice atmosphere of this lounge, home-like environment, tasty food served in a short time after ordering and mainly 6-8 different drafts from own brewery. What else could exacting thirster expect 500 yards from the academic soil of local University?

Whenever I had time, I always headed for well-tested Titanic. After one hour long journey from a port I always started my gourmet's afternoon with a pint of "triple screw". It was a beer brewed in a German style "Kolsch", top fermented, made of the mixture of wheat and barley malt. In a combination with fried mozzarella cheese I occasionally felt some familiar overtones reminding me a genuine Czech lager from a central north region of this country in mid- 80's. Triple screw set a taste expectation for the next grain jewel, which was a rye beer Captain Smith Rye. This dark brown, partly even worwoody bitter, but well-balanced brew, which had won twice the first prize in a prestige America's microbreweries competition always took me, in my lush, beer-stimulated fantasy to the pagan Russia among the Nestor's tribe, that had been brewing this nourishing beverage by primitive methods some 1000 years ago. Despite I knew, that rye made just about 30% of mixed malts, its taste was absolutely unreplaceable.

5,2% American Ale White Star was good, but also too perfumed by aromatic hops, so, sometimes I deleted it from my tasting plan. However, it was impossible to skip another Titanic's product - well-made imitation of classic English Bitter Britannica. In this brew the hop aroma was obediently subdued to a complex Albion's flavor, although, I would serve it to more sophisticated guest a few degrees warmer. To give a chance to opposite side of the spectrum (despite the black is basically the darkest hue of the white) I enriched my consumption by very black stout with white creamy snow-like

foam. Despite this little negro had respectable 7,5% of alcohol, it was easily coming and even accompanied by its brighter Titanic brothers, it made no harm. After I had finished stout it was usually around 2 PM and I knew, that concerning a safe return to the ship, my allowance is two more pints. The choice was 10% strong Barley Wine or a little sour weizen. At the end I customarily stimulated my endorphin level by another precious rye beer.

I am in alpha stage, but I do not understand why majority of the guests are sipping ice tea with their food. I am compelled to come to the nearest egghead and ask him:

“Fuck! Are you in a brewery or in a tea house?”

Being relaxed and pleasantly intoxicated I stay away from verbal aggression and I better talk to local brewer Steve. He is approximately in my age and he is retired US Marine. Because of malty jewels he is brewing, there is no doubt, he understands beer very well. He knows confidently a dispute between Czech and American Budweiser, he had the chance to taste Czech Budvar for numerous times, however, now he is melting out over his new beer tasting experience represented by freshly opened another Czech lager Avar.

“No, I don’t think I would be better in Baghdad”, replies resolutely when I am pulling his leg during watching an Iraq war in TV, “here maybe I have lower salary, but on the other hand, there is almost 100% guaranteed, that no terrorist throws me a hand grenade into a fermenting vessel!”

I involuntarily look around if some of present tea lovers is not wrapped with explosives. I am telling Steve, that in Iraq used to be brewed a lager Ferida. Steve brings me a sample of his experimental lager from the tank (fortunately beer tank).

“It is not ready yet,” he says, “it needs at least one more week of conditioning. I’d like so this beer tastes as Pilsner Uquell.”

Bullshit. Maybe 15 years ago!

During my countless visits of Titanic I kept thinking, how could I contribute to this nice pub. If I write an article for Czech newspaper, none of Titanic staff would understand. Luckily, music is an international language. I used a music of a popular tune from blockbuster movie Titanic sung by Celine Dion and I wrote my own lyrics. In my version a touched female beer lover glorifies selected beers from the menu of my beloved microbrewery, she describes wild gastronomy adventures as well as her staggering way back home. When I donated a CD with this song to the staff, I could enjoy whole afternoon in a pub for free.

According to one American legend a bunch of Florida’s businessmen got cravings for chicken wings and cold beer. So, there was born a chain of pubs called “Hooters”, which today has branches all over America, including Caribbean. The name itself is a pun, because the word “hoot” may mean an owl’s sound, as well as “hooters” is a slang term for women’s breasts. In Hooters work mostly young girls in tight shorts and revealing t-shirts copying their nice curves. You can find there the young women from all over the world. Colombia, Peru, Philipines, Brazil, Ukraine, even Czech Republic. As a rule, in Hooters are served a few kinds of draft beer, in Bayside Miami it was e.g. Coors, Michelob, Samuel Adams, Bass, Warsteiner and Carlsberg. In 1996 I even surprisingly found in Hooters a tap with a sign: “Staropramen – the beer from Golden Prague”. The beer is served a little below a regular temperature, which is corroborated by the fact, that they usually do not sell the beer by pints, but larger plastic pitchers. Each pitcher has a hole in a middle, which can be filled with ice, so the vessel can maintain a proper temperature of a brew for some time. I reckon, in Hooters recently happened

some innovation, because about ten years back a hyperactive waitress threw a regular ice pack directly to our beer.

Hooters menu, which allegedly cut into stripes, pasted together and played in a tape recorder backwards reveals a hidden secret of Hooter's, offers beside the traditional spicy chicken wings also hamburgers, sandwiches, fish, seafood, spicy chips (delicious) or fried onion rings in a beer baste. Giant TV screens present mostly various kinds of sport, there is a music, from time to time one of the waitress performs a hoola-hoop dance, so she can show flexible movements of her trained hips. From the register desk over the lounge leads a cloth line, on which the staff sends the order tickets fastened with special clippers to the kitchen. Can you imagine? You are drinking a cold beer, eating onion rings, sometime your eyes lay on a seducing body parts of half-naked waitress and over your head are whizzing other orders. Just to select more tasty beer brands and we can talk about beer nirvana.

There is no boredom in Miami. If the beer lover is tuned on a bass string of a conservative lager drinker he is heading to Gordon Birch, if he wants to splash his kidneys with a brew of various grains, he visits Titanic. If he feels like to have a fun with a pretty waitress, he drives his steps to Hooters and if he is in a cosmopolitan mood, he rushes to extend his beer horizon with a help of some uncommon bottle to Sharky's.

One sunny day I found myself on a crossroad of beer trails, while some consonant female voice address me in my language. My nationality was revealed by my Brotherhood of Hops t-shirt and the woman, who noticed it was Slovak bartender Dana, who had been living in southern Florida about 15 years. She worked in a bar Mambo just for medical and social insurances and the tips, but she praised hot climate and lesser mess than in her original country. I could not resist and I drank with this newly found almost countrywoman a pint of Samuel Adams.

So, I walked along Miami Beach.....

## CHAPTER 7            DEBTS FROM A HISTORY AND FROM A YOUTH (AUSTRIA + SLOVENIA 2003)

Czech writer and journalist Karel Havlíček Borovský was a wonderful visionary. As early as in 1850, when oppressed Slavic nation looked up to big brother Russia with hope and expectation, Borovsky wrote a satiric poem about Russia "The Baptism of Saint Vladimir". Approximately in the same period he also published derisive article about communism. This philosophy was at the time new, fresh and in some point even fashionable, but it could not hide from sharp sarcastic pen of this prolific literate. However, at most Borovský was fighting against Germanization of Czech nation and Austrian-Hungarian rein itself, by which he became very dangerous for the authorities of that time and he was finally forced to exile to Austrian town of Brixen. Local climate did not agree with him too much and K.H.Borovsky died there pretty soon. After his death he became a worshiped Czech national martyr and his Daughter Zdena for the next years played a role of famous "daughter of nation" with the duties to take part in almost every opposition's meetings and especially in patriotic events organized by Czech revival movement. Karel Havlíček was not forgotten by his fellow citizens and in town Havlíčkův Brod, which bears proudly his name is still brewed on his honor pale lager Rebel.

A personality of K.H. Borovsky was inspiring me since my school years and his tragic fate was inside me sporadically causing a feeling of defiance and taste for vengeance. Sacrifice of a national hero will never be forgotten! Havlíček – you did not suffer for nothing! Despite Austria was for a long time our southern neighbor and for many decades we shared the same history, I never went to this country for a visit. Maybe it was partly because of lingering bitterness over the death of martyr, but more likely because of difficult and meandering way to obtain a communist permission to travel.

After 1989 with a regime change in Czechoslovakia Vienna became suddenly a desired destination for thousands of Czech citizens, who after a long period of time got finally a chance to look behind the iron curtain, say hi to their former fellow citizens, eventually to seal something in local shop. An exchange rate of Czech crown at that time was very unfavorable, assortment of merchandise in Czech stores significantly poor and an illusion of shining western goods extremely tempting...

What did I know in 90's about Austrian beer? Above all I knew the fact, that so called "Vienna lager" is some link between very pale pilsner and darker beer of Munich type, it is made with combination of special malts, which had been dried for longer time period and in the higher temperatures to reach darker color of the brew. Austrian brewer and businessman Dreher was in 19. century as famous as German Sedlmayer and even today some beers are bearing his name. There was an occasional import of Austrian beers to the Czech market like Ottakringer, Kaiser or Zipfer in cans. The most persistent in these efforts was brewery Zwettler situated close from the Czech border. The company built its image on 200 years old history and a fact, that this brewery was originally founded by Czech brewer. In 1992 in one pub in Třeboň I noticed, that a bottle of Zwettler was even cheaper than domestic Pilsner Urquell. But even not very educated Czech drinker was able to reliably identify the difference in color and taste between Zwettler and genuine Czech lager, so this brand can be currently found in Czech market very scarcely.

I was looking forward a trip to Austria, especially when my girlfriend Mirka told me about her friend, who lived there close to the Alps mountains. I looked to the map. I thought, it would be practical to exploit a time and visit also some other country with a border with Austria. I rejected expensive Switzerland and beer-developing Italy and finally my choice was friendly and financially affordable Slovenia. This newly formed state used to be for the long years a part of Yugoslavian federation. Yugoslavia itself became during the Cold War a popular destination of Czechoslovak western oriented tourist. While to the citizens with no fantasy spending their vacation in homeland the rest of their countrymen was looking almost with a pity, tourist returning from Romania, Bulgaria or East Germany reached automatically much higher step on hierarchic pyramid. But who was lucky enough to visit dreamed Yugoslavia became almost a hero, adventure traveler and dissident in one split person. Socialist Yugoslavia at that times paradoxically was considered to be a capitalist paradise with all its virtues and advantages. Czechoslovak Bolshevik in charge was not too excited to see his citizens travel to this Balkan state. Not only because it was a reign of Anti-Soviet opponent Joseph Tito, but mostly because many of our tourists after their vacation forgot to return home and continued their journey further westbound or southbound to some capitalist state, while no Yugoslavia authorities tried to prevent them from doing that. Czechoslovak government was trying vigorously to fight these abuses, but usually failed. One of relatively successful tools was an issuing of so called "gray passports" (they were really gray), that officially valid just for Yugoslavia. When I realized, that Maltese Knights could travel with their passports almost all over the world without visa I was depressed.

I never was too eager to go to Yugoslavia. Because 100 times repeated lie becomes the truth and 100 times nothing tormented donkey to his death I never swallowed a bait and I never believed the stories about Balkan paradise and evaluating behavior of many Yugoslav workers and tourist in our territory, who, according the saying, that among the blinds is one-eyed the king, came to our poverty-stricken country to dazzle its poor citizens with their glow. I never decided to travel to this fable state. A chain of horrifying war conflicts between single nations creating whole Yugoslavia, which afflicted this idyllic land in 90's just supported my opinion about this country. These unhappy events surpassed all my skeptical expectations. For instance, I would never believe, that at the end of 20. century might be established somewhere in Europe a concentration camp.

However, Slovenia avoided this malignant war. When Serbian troops invaded its capital Ljubljana, Slovenian people used the trams as the barricades and within a few days drove them out. Nowadays Slovenia is independent state of the population of three million and I heard the rumors, there were supposed to be some microbreweries.

A Vienna's main railway station looked very hospitably. Right on the platform was situated a system of various stalls offering Gösser or Gold Fassel on tap. After a long journey they taste excellent, as well as a wurst with mustard and bread. It would be worthy to spend here a few hours waiting for our next connection, but outside there are some pubs too. Unluckily, it is too early and most of the pubs are still closed.

With Mirka we are entering a little coffee house, where draft is available, but we rather order a coffee – obviously the Vienna one. The premises of the restaurant are breathing by the atmosphere of the old times. Apparently, this coffee house looked very similar after the First War and maybe it had been visited by psychoanalytic Sigmund Freud, who had been trying over a cup of coffee to resolve some of his patient's nightmare. As a relic of these times probably remained there local waitress. Smiling, jovial, about 70 years old lady, whose harsh alto voice and thick layer of make-up on her face reminded me one almost immortal Czech actress, who was still able in the age of 75 to perform a hand stand. How's about to order something else? I am considering wine, but almost immediately I recall an affair from 80's, when there was revealed, that some Austrian wine producers were adding to their product an anti freezing agent.

Outside I was surprised by Austrian TV station staff, that asked me some question in German, out of which I understood just something about a city. I apologized in English and with a steady pace I left this spot momentarily monitored by TV camera. It is interesting. When I was in Stockholm for the very first time, the drivers asked me a way in Swedish. The same situation occurred in Puerto Rico, but in Spanish. Maybe I am turning into dreamed cosmopolitan, who looks he is at home all over the world and he inspires a people to ask him for qualified advises. I am not sure, if it is better to be in black Africa or yellow Asia a constant target of interest of locals, or to be, thanks to my cosmopolitan appearance troubled in Europe by Vienna TV staff.

About half mile from railway station we finally found an opened pub with a draught. The building is not too stylish, but it is necessary after a long walk to sit down and have a drink. I am ordering Gösser on a tap, later the bottled lager Hirter, on which's label I am fascinating by a fact, that this brewery was founded as early as in 1280. However, all tested beers are very thin, very pale and as for the taste a pretty unsatisfying. Hopefully, next time it will be better!

In a garden restaurant I enjoy well-done original wiener schnitzel. A lean calf meat is literally melting in a mouth and a positive gastronomic impression is nicely splash with Puttingamer drawn to a cute chubby mug.

Few hours later we are arriving to a little town of Judenburg, where lives Vera – our Ostrava countrywoman. But she does not like beer too much. Admittedly, her Austrian husband is a keen beer drinker, but he recently underwent a tumor surgery and chemotherapy, so he has to stay away from alcohol for some time. Damned! I will be drinking alone again! Fortunately, Vera, s 25 years old son is healthy as a beet and he seems to be a pretty well-oriented in Austrian beer industry.

A selection of beer brands in Judenburg, if I count also bottles in a grocery, is sufficient, but a quality again – nothing special. I am concluding my first Austrian evening in a pub with draught Hirter and I am desperately trying to find in this beverage at least some trace element of taste, because it seems to me unlikely, that in such traditional brewery they still have not learn to brew a decent beer for last 700 years.

The next morning we walk in outskirts of the town. Shortly we arrive to a village with grazing cows and stylish pub. I am pleasantly surprised by home-like atmosphere of a tap room, where even I – a poorly German speaking stranger am treated well, even a bartender is trying to have a chat with me. After the lunch Peter is taking us to the surrounding nature to altitude of 1800 meters. Admittedly, a landscape is beautiful, but I am searching for a pub. The closest one is unfortunately closed. What's a shame! I could taste a local beer of the same name as our Czech lager – Eggenberg. All around there are lot of shepherds, dogs and sheep. I am about to pet one cute little lamb, but grumpy shepherd prevents me from doing that. Apparently, I would mess its wool. Damned, such lamb's leg with thyme and garlic! What's a delicacy!

In the next pub they have just Gösser in bottles, but in accordance with local tradition they served with a beer a tray full of homemade sausage and cheese. Marian tells me about a pub on a side of Judenburg, where they have Stiegl on tap. On the horses!

The brewery Stiegl is located in Salzburg and considering the era when it was founded (1492) its beer could be enjoyed by famous Salzburg native W.A.Mozart and even by discoverer of American continent C. Columbus. Stiegl lager is nothing special, luckily, the pub serves also bottled weizen, so I feel I am experiencing a pretty nice evening. Our stay is accompanied by a local attraction – a slaughtering of annoying flies flying to the pub from nearby farm. For about one hour I am trying to kill with a slapstick two flies with a single stroke.

Next morning we left for Slovenia capital Ljubljana. I am trying to summarize my fresh Austrian experiences. I like these days spent in country of our southern neighbors, but with all my effort I was not able to discover a beer, which would satisfy my demanding requirements. We get off the train in a junction Villach. We have about 30 minutes of waiting time for our connection to Ljubljana, so I am more less mechanically entering station buffet. Look! They have a local brand here! I notice a likable logo Villacher Pilsner. Give me one, please! I just get a smell and the first gulp and I know! In a very last moment, thanks to remote buffet, I discovered in this country a blessed brew, which could be compared to the quality beers from my country. As I was sitting in a railway pub in Trutnov sipping a local lager Krakonoš. To your health, Havlíček! We won! Czech language stayed preserved and today we travel to the country of our former colonizers to criticize their beer. And in addition, today we do not have to whisper out anything to an old willow like your character barber Kukulin, but we can say it loudly! Do we really have to go? Can't we just wait for the next train? OK. But next time I will make it up to myself!

In Ljubljana we experience one of the negative aspects of a peak summer season. In the Slovenian capital there is no vacant bed at all. Travel agent sends us to another attractive city Bled. In Bled there is a large lake, nice nature, medieval castle and expensive hotels. Fortunately, a bit from the natural reservoir is possible to find a regular pub. On a tap is a local beer called Laško. There is a goat on a logo, beer itself is a pretty thick, even reveals some element of individual taste, but I did not like it very much. I could smell something odd in it. Maybe they have here the problems with cleaning of beer pipes. But the name is so cuddling.....

Seven o'clock – dinner time. In some garden restaurant I order bean soup and mixture of grilled meat. First, I am a little surprised by relatively steep price, but I stop thinking about it, when I see the portion. On a monster plate I can identify pieces of lamb, chicken, pork, burger – all well done and smelling nicely. Another Slovenian beer brand Union seems to be of good quality, but after devouring all this food I am not able to drink more than two pints anyway. In a hotel lounge I yet enjoy bottled Laško Zlatorog and a local dark beer.

The next morning we return by bus back to Ljubljana, where I intend to visit all 3 microbreweries in this area. The first of them is situated right opposite the railway station, so there is no trouble to find it. Brewpub Kratochwil is offering pale unfiltered lager with strong hoppy palate, which is, nevertheless too protruding out of presumed complex taste and a dark brew, which is, unfortunately already sour. A willing waiter shows us on a map a way to the next brewery Murgle. In this case the searching is much harder. Object is located somewhere out of our city map and local population is very poorly informed. Even local bartenders know just Union or Laško and it is difficult to explain to them hastily a principle of a small brewery, which brews a beer just for one single pub. I have learned, that our languages are similar, so, I am trying to communicate with the natives in my mother tongue. The most important terms sound almost the same – Pivovar, krčma, pivo (brewery, pub, beer) Just some words have a little shifted meaning e.g. "a child" is in Slovenian "otrok" (slave). Our searching gets more and more complicated. We are already on a southern tip of the town and its helpful, but ignorant inhabitants keep sending us from the devil to Satan. A middle-sized shopping center looks promising. It is full of restaurant and coffee houses, but nobody brews a beer there. One coffee shop owner claims, he knows Murgle and he shows us the way even further out of the city. We do not believe him too much, but after almost two hours of pointless seeking it is necessary to try this alternative as well. Next 15 minutes we are strolling along a narrow road fringed by trees. Have I swallowed a bait again? I am thinking, this place does not look like....but wait! Here on the right side is some concrete building, perhaps dry cleaning and next to it some workshop. That is how it looks on the end of the world. Hopelessness of the situation was disturbed by my straight look to the last object of depressive complex of buildings. Hossanah! Microbrewery Murgle. In logo it has a grinning green frog. Hopefully, she will not be sitting on a quell. Brewery brews a pale and amber beer of decent quality. It offers also relatively rich menu and prompt service. I could even two bottles with a ceramic cap. I was satisfied, although I had a little doubt about sufficient quantity of clients because of remote locality of the pub.

OK. We have made it! I was rubbing my hands until came a smoke out of my palms. It is 1 PM and we already accomplished two thirds of our plan. Now remains to discover a brewery in a village Medvože, which is allegedly located on a way to Bled. We reached this village after about half an hour of bus ride. I even sighted a billboard inviting to a local brewpub. But I did not get the address. Does not matter. Today I am warmed up sufficiently. I am going to ask somebody. In nearby gas station they showed us a muddy shortcut leading directly to Medvože. There we met an older good looking man with a little slave (child). I asked him whether he knew local brewery. Yes, of course. But in a second the man gets a solemn face and he adds, that the brewpub has burned out two weeks ago. It is not possible! Such bad luck! So, we have arrived here for nothing! OK. Let's face it. Not only the national theaters or nuclear powerhouses, but also the breweries burn out from time to time. Mirka suggests to go to see this burned place. I am not sure, I am brave enough to see burned fermenting vessels and from the ashes to rake out the remnants of destroyed brewing kettle, but I agree. Approximately 200 meters further we find a pub. There we obtain the information, that the brewpub Zlate is intact and it is working. Local informer was either chronic liar or he was mentally challenged. As always say hippies: Don't trust nobody over 50. Trust, but check!

Inside "Zlate" the fire is burning just in the oven, where a homemade bread is baked or local sausages are prepared. A selection of beers is limited for just one kind, but an unfiltered lager from Medvože is so far the best I have got during my three days stay in Slovenia. It is distinct, but on the other hand, it is not overaromatized. All important tastes – grainy, bready, hoppy and yeasty are working well together, even the name "Zlate"(golden) evokes an imagination of sunny barley fields and reminds names of some Czech lagers. Despite Slovenia is a gate to Balkan, I could say with the pleasure, that is populated by beer loving Slavs.

On the way back through Austria we visited brewery restaurant in Villach. Six kinds of beer on a tap and menu in Italian. No offense, Havlíček, but was not Austria-Hungary good at least in something?

## YAPTON TOP FERMENTED

(England 2005)

British weather is characteristic by its evident inclemency. In the old English novels or movies it is always raining, or at least drizzling and over the depressive landscape hangs an ominous foggy haze, in which insidiously lurks horrific Dog of Baskerville or wanders an orphan Oliver Twist. Thanks to global warming the climate patterns on British Isles in last few decades got a little better and from time to time is even possible to detect a sort of sunshine.

However, in May 2005 the weather in southern England was like 200 years ago. Fog, rain and temperature could not rise above 5°C. If there was a terrible weather in Southampton, in 30 miles distanced Yapton was even worse. It would never come to my mind to visit this remote uninteresting village if I did not know, that it would host a regional beer festival. There festivals in UK are organized all year round, especially in spring and summer. British organization of beer lovers CAMRA (Campaign for a Real Ale), which with its 100 000 members scares the dishonest pub keepers as well as global brewing corporations organizes in territory of UK and Northern Ireland majestic beer feasts with an abundant offer of real British ales. After I had missed many years in a row the biggest national beer event in this country I accepted an invitation from my English colleague Mark Baverstock and I traveled for a real ale at least to Yapton.

In front of Yapton's railway station there are parked the buses, which are supposed to take the participants of festival right to the place. I am cold and I have a headache. No wonder. Reunion with top fermented UK was a pretty wild. We arrived by plane together with my countryman Vojta and her daughter Jana to London on Tuesday afternoon and it took a few more hours to come to our final destination. It was already around 10PM and while in the Czech pubs the real beer drinking just starts, England, which is still struggling with restriction measures from the times of the First World

War is closing down heavy doors of popular town's and village's pubs. Don't sink your heart, I tried to encourage my companions, Mark has definitely some beer in his fridge.

When we finally came to his house, Mark proudly pulled out of the fridge four bottles of beer from my hometown Ostrava. I was really happy, especially when I recalled drinking the same beer two days ago at home. Fortunately, Mark had also some back-up beer from exotic Ethiopia, so I was falling asleep in a cozy English dwelling richer by some new beer-geographical experience.

The next day Mark took us for the pub crawl, during which he was giving us some useful information about the history and present of his town. Among a variety of pubs we had been dragged through I liked the best a pub called Hobbit and we finished our beer tour in a tap room with a proper name Waterloo.

It was pleasantly drunk day, but we still felt some itching. We realized, that between bus stop and Mark's house there are located three pubs, which, honestly, had not been recommended to us by Mark, but in which we decided to knock ourselves out. I must say, that in spite of Mark's aversion we liked these places very much. The last pub was the most stylish and it looked like an English (maybe even foreign) living room. The British pubs are designed this way, so the guests felt there like home and they did not want to leave. Sadly, we as the happy clients would be kicked out of this warm homely place at 10 PM just because of some stupid regulation without a possibility of legal defense. Shame on you, British government! That is the way you imagine freedom of drinking and pub crawling? Allegedly, there are some changes in progress in British legislation, that should extend business hours in the pubs at least to the midnight. It would be nice, because these lounges are predestined to uninterrupted operation.

However, in the living room pub we lost our countryman Vojta. Although he was 59 years old experienced beer drinker, he was already significantly under the influence and we were a little worried he might get lost in a city. He knew just one English word – a beer, which was sufficient to survive, but he would be hardly formulate a meaningful sentence to ask where lived his friend Mark. Soon we found Vojta in nearby grocery shop, where he was fluently talking in front of huge fridge with Panjabee staff. Until today I have not comprehended in what language.

Double-decker shuttle bus stopped close to the Yapton's playground. This was the place to hold beer festival in a good weather conditions. But because a heavy rain the event was moved into nearby building, which was something between a gym and local house of culture. We missed an official opening with possible show of special beer dancing, but I had a hunch the great beer event just had started. So, all kegs were supposed to be full. I noticed, that while in my country an experienced beer drinker would expect in such party a presence of young, strong, healthy and not-so-worn out consumers, in Yapton gathered mostly the representatives of middle or older generation and decent married couples. All of us paid two pounds admission fee, we received a souvenir half pint glass and for another two pounds some vouchers for buying a beer. Inside a gym the tables were put into a long row and on the top of them were placed small kegs. Each single keg (or better "cask") was provided with its own sign with a name of the brewery, a name of the particular brew and info about gravity and percentage of alcohol. All this was arranged in an alphabetical order from left to right. I grabbed a plan and my first festival tasting of real British ale could begin.

Behind the tapping tables there worked the volunteers from CAMRA, that were swiftly serving thirsty clients. It was possible to start beer tasting by alphabetical order, by a strength of the brew or just randomly. I decided for the third alternative. I commenced with a half pint of Summer Lighting, consequently I refreshed myself with Beechwood Bitter. The lounge was getting crowded, the people were creating the queues in front of beer tables, but skillful and committed bartenders had he

situation fully under control to everyone's satisfaction. I swallowed another half pint of ale and I found out, that I was getting short of vouchers. There were 25 breweries present in Yapton, each of them providing about 4 its kinds of beer. That means there was up to 100 different ales available. It is not possible to make it in one day! Mark in the middle of the beer paradise is evidently feeling like a hog in a mud. He introduces me to his friends – fat and well-screened representatives of CAMRA. Each of them holds in a hand at least half-full half pint of ale.

“What are you drinking right now?” ask me one of them and offers me a sample of his glass. I do not withhold, I do not think about hygiene and I sip out of somebody's else glass. This mutual sharing of samples proved to be a very good idea. If a man has a problem to manage the things all by himself, there are the friends to help. I meet happily drunk Vojta, who is talking to the group of CAMRA members by a mixture of broken German and a sign language. Evidently, a beer works better than Esperanto. I initiate Vojta into a new strategy. But first it is necessary to set a plan. In my schedule I have so far just 10 samples scratched. So, about next 70 or 80 still left. We must also agree with Mark and Jana, so we do not double the samples. Shortly before 3 PM I am liquidizing a new set of vouchers and I am actively trading all my new ale experiences with a group of new friends. I eat some sausage and I buy a few coasters for my collection. A lounge is full to the brim and it is difficult to hit a loo. But I do not succumb to an attack of claustrophobia, I do not mind a crowd and after a long time I feel to be a part of some great, meaningful .....

Shortly before 4 PM a cutely dazed Mark tells me, that it is the time to go. What? Why? To where? One Czech saying says, that it is the best to quit in the best, but I personally do not feel this as the best. Not yet. It still may be better! Few more samples and it can be the best! Then we can quit! However, some man dressed in historical butler's uniform is walking around a crowded lounge holding a big hand bell. With a loud clinging sound he conveys to the drinking public, that gym will be closed for next two hours for maintenance and all participants are asked to leave ASAP. It is unbelievable! Does it mean we are supposed to stand outside in a rain and wait till the taps will be opened again? While in Czech Republic such beer destroyer would be physically attacked and his bell would be used as his own funeral toll, British people are much more disciplined. Our cheerful four-leaves-clove is one of the last persons, that are leaving a lounge. The weather outside is not improving much, but at least it stops raining.

Shuttle bus takes us back to the train station, where, fortunately is located large station's beer house. I comprehend quickly, where the participants of Yapton's festival will spend next two hours of waiting time. Pub is full, many experienced beer lovers are washing their throats before an evening finale with neutral Withbread. But we are not coming back. A train takes us back to Southampton, where is planned a visit of some local pubs. But right inside the first pub I am finding out with subconscious scare, that for the first time in last 25 years I do not feel like to drink a beer. I am not able to find any logical explanation. During a train ride I have got sober, I am not tired nor filled with a lot of liquid. And I am mentally sane. But approx. 35 samples of various British ale caused a mess in respective centers of my brain. A few hours of intensive concentration to discern a fine taste nuances of different samples took its toll. I am totally degustationally satisfy and in my endorphin-stimulated organism is temporarily no space for another tasting experience. This pub does not offer a single kind of coffee, so I order a glass of tap water. Excited CAMRA members together with my countrymen are making fun and taking the pictures of me, but I cannot help myself. Luckily, my mysterious indisposition is short and in the next pub I am already tasting Spitfire Ale on a tap.

A participation on British Beer Festival is always a great experience, regardless if it is a big anniversary feast in London, or just occasional event in small village like Yapton. British ale is very different from regular Czech and also from the majority of the beer brands produced in all world by large industrial

breweries. Apart from over 100 000 ale lovers affiliated in CAMRA the Real Ale is also widely enjoyed by millions of Britons as well as inhabitants of former British colonies or nearby Belgium. On the other hand, the Real Ale has numerous base of its opponents, who often demonstratively prefer the industrially brewed insipid "lagers", usually of very inferior quality (Stella Artois, Carlsberg, Heineken). But ales make an odd impression even on conservative Czech beer drinkers, who usually do not come to like it. Because the ale is made by method of top fermentation, it ferments and conditions in higher temperatures than classic lager. That's why a final product is served in the pubs significantly warm to properly develop its palate, and also because of draft by hand pumps is almost fully CO2 bubbles free. The symbolic foam is represented by thin neutral ring in a surface. If you have a bad luck and you find in UK some ale without individual expressive taste, you may have a feeling, you are drinking a totally stale brew, which is unofficially called in Czech Republic "the goat" (I do not know why). But mostly these beers have a rich, complex and characteristic taste, by which can be discern of each other. Some ale or bitter tastes after an unusual strain of yeasts, other relatively shallowly after the fruits, other retains a special hoppy aroma. And exactly such brew should be appreciated if we consider, that in the civilized world the hops had been using for brewing currently as early as since 10. Century, in British Isles this process started about 400 years later. Even then the hop did not have an easy position in local brewing industry. The conservative hears of a proud Celtic culture, who until now drive on a wrong side of the road and irrationally count in miles and yards for a few centuries were trying to prevent adding hops to the beer. British brewers finally adopted hops sometime in 16. Century, but until now, as a difference from a vast majority of other countries where the male plants are deliberately destroyed, they use fertilized female plants with a higher content of proteins for brewing special ales. While today a classical lager (or pilsner) has its history long about 170 years, when it started to be brewed in Germany, Denmark or Austria-Hungary (Czech territory), the top fermented beer is old like a mankind itself and it deserves our respect. It is good, that the tradition is kept and that do exist the festivals as in Yapton.



## CHAPTER 9 I WOULD LIKE TO BE BORN IN MONGOLIA

No, damned!! Absolutely not! I am just quoting a title slogan from one of my funny songs. But it does not mean I have never had an intention to travel to this country for a beer. Even I bought a travel guide in English. On a page 15 I discovered a suspicious advice:

“If you get sick in Mongolian territory, rely on your personal medicine and vitamins, eventually leave the country ahead of your original plan. But in no case go to the doctor!!”

A few pages further there was a description of an etiquette inside a Mongolian jurta and warning against the local dogs:

“Some of them are lazy, but others are able to chase a car tirelessly for minutes. However, all of them have a rabies..”

A passage about the Mongolian pubs was very promising, because it revealed, that Mongolians are not abstainers at all. On a contrary:

“A majority of male Mongolian population is able to drink a beer and hard liquor till their deep unconsciousness. During the drinking they often get aggressive with the foreigners, discussing Tschingiskhan’s role in a history.”

The information about this country was not too encouraging, even when my guidebook did not mention a giant warm Olgoj Chorchoj. In spite of this I called Mongolian embassy in Prague.

“Hello. I’d like to know something about a Mongolian tourist visa.”

“Do you have a Golden Letter?” asked me a voice on the other side of the wire.

“No, I don’t. And how can I get it?”

“Do you want to travel to Mongolia in business?”

“No. As a tourist,”

“Are you planning to go here with some travel agency?”

“No. On my own.”

“Do you know anybody in Mongolia?”

“No. I’ve never been there.”

“So, you are going there for the first time...”

“Yes. What should I arrange?”

“Do you have a Golden Letter?”

“No. How can I get it?”

“I don’t know.....”

Employee of Mongolian embassy hung up without a notice. Such negative attitude did not surely experience even a legendary traveler Marco Polo in deep medieval times. In Mongolia I want neither to be born, nor to drink a beer!

## CHAPTER 10 BEER IN A COUNTRY, WHERE THE COMMUNISTS WERE SERIOUS (Albania 2006)

One color stamp with exotic flower and a writing SQIPERIA seemed to me for a long time somehow slanted. In my age of eight and my philatelist’s inexperience it took me a few weeks before I finally turned a stamp 25 degrees and found out that I had in my collection my first precious “lozenge”. Few years later I also found out, that this stamp was issued by hypersocialist Republic of Albania.

35 years later, when I was boarding a plane with a destination of Belgrade, my knowledge of this Balkan country was very scarce. This former state of socialist block sometimes in 60’s cut its official contact with Eastern European countries ruled by USSR and started its own fatal journey. Albanian officials were apparently inspired by Chinese Maoism. In Albania the communists were really serious. It used to be perhaps the only country on the world, where all kinds of religion were prohibited and its leader Enver Hodza was considered being the harshest dictator in Europe of that time. The isolation of a small socialist state with an access to Adriatic and Mediterranean Sea was enormous and next to nobody knew what was really happening there.

In early 90’s Albania followed an example of other European countries of Eastern Block and after a relatively non-violent political coup there was installed a new democratic government. At these times Albania proudly announced the new economic program, when the citizens could invest their money to some state-run game reminding a pyramid scheme. Obviously, in a few years whole project bankrupted, the people lost their funds and miserable country was jerked by large unrest again. The situation recently had calmed down and so it was advisable to visit this country before it would be ravished by insane tourism.

With an imagination of beer mission in wild but beautiful nature with some romantic stop in a seaside I started my Balkan expedition in Belgrade. There was drizzling and I was supposed to spend there a few hours of waiting for my next connection to Tirana. Belgrade, after the planned invasion of pacifist Good Soldier Švejk in 1914 was finally attacked in 1999 by NATO troops under the vague

pretext of helping the poor Kosovo Albanians. Belgrade then turned into full-time shooting range of especially US troops and bloody useless conflict culminated by absurd bombing of Chinese Embassy.

Fortunately, in summer 2006 nobody in Belgrade was harassed by my fluent English with a light US accent and I could try some Serbian beer samples. Jelen (Hart) and Weifert were standard quality, I was pleased by very refreshing local lager BIP. I almost would not notice, I was in feared Balkan. However, I was reminded this indisputable fact in Belgrade airport by light board indicated, that the departure time of airplane to Tirana was moved from 10.30 PM to 5.30AM next day. What's a mess! The Airline JAT offered me a night flight via Kosovo, but I insisted on my orderly paid original route. So, the next morning, after a short night spent in local hotel paid by JAT I finally reached my destination.

A cracky taxi cab was taking me to my reserved hotel and I had an impression, that Albania capital is still under construction. Everything was digged, trenched and all around were piles of garbage. Overloading containers with broken wheels were perhaps an evidence of general, time unlimited strike of dustmen, however, local residents were totally indifferent and they have been dumping their waste elsewhere, according to their instantaneous mental disposition.

After accommodating in nice, but little expensive hotel I left for my first Albanian beer hunt. In spite of ugliness of surroundings I soon registered a very positive fact. All local restaurants, pubs or buffets were opened since 7.30 AM. Coffee gardens on a side of fresh ditches were full of early birds sipping a coffee, even fraternizing with the morning bottle beer. I entered one dark bar with an interior of faded wood, where I met my first Albanian beer – a lager called Kaon. It was nothing special, but after a confusing Belgrade night it came very useful. The most common logo on restaurant's umbrellas was a brand of local beer Birra Tirana. It was founded in 1960, so the brewery must have to survive a few decades of communist rage. The next beer I identified the same morning was a product of private brewery Stella. Luckily, it had nothing to do with Belgian Stella Artoise, nor with Stella from Egypt. It was 100% Albanian enterprise.

An afternoon stroll through the town did not render any extraordinary aesthetic experience. All city bears the signs of recent communist architecture, but I was lucky to discover two new samples from other Albanian cities. A lager Norga was a pretty dull, but little stall serving draft beer Brumir made me happy at last. There was also necessary to test local cuisine, so I headed for one decently looked restaurant for lunch. But there I experienced something, which is defined as the "language barrier". Despite I can speak, at least partly many of most important European languages and with a good will I am able to communicate with the people in many parts of the world, in Tirana it was almost impossible. Albanian is a dialect similar to nothing. It does not belong to language branches like Anglo-Saxon, Roman, Slavic, not even Ugro-Finish. A desperate foreigner exults, when he finds in this intrigue language some internationally intelligible word. I found out nothing by reading an Albanian menu, so it was a turn for until this moment neglected upper and lower limbs in painstaking effort to order some edible food. Waitress despite an evident fact I did not absolutely speak her mother tongue talked to me in this bizarre dialect sometime reminding a coughing and when she saw, that I, being an ignorant tourist, did not understand, instinctively she was rising her voice. The meal I had ordered evidently taking the chances was satisfying after all, so after a lunch I could say good bye to the staff with the help of some expressive gestures.

In the evening in a middle of a construction place, which appeared to be Tirana downtown I was searching for a wine in various bars and restaurants. It took significantly long time till I managed it. Until that time I had been pretty sure I was able to describe clearly with the gestures a bottle of wine. Using both my hands to express its size and shape and finally putting its imaginary bottle neck to my mouth, in addition I was commenting my pantomimic performance by calling wine in several different

languages: Wine, wein, vino, vinho, anggur...I succeeded as late as in the third pub. I was already out of energy, so I did not have a strength to object, when a waiter sold me two large plastic bottles of wine instead a single glass. At least since then I know how to say "white wine" in Albanian – "vere bardh". Also, I learnt pretty soon, that if the pub door is provided by the sign "HAPUR" it is opened, in a contrary, when the sign shows another tongue twister "MBYLUR" the lounge is closed and it is necessary to search for another hapur pub.

Albanian roads are generally in bad shape, fuel is expensive, but the streets of Tirana are crowded by cars. The most popular car make in this Balkan state is Mercedes Benz. An ownership of Mercedes Benz is apparently in Albania a criterion of social prestige and does not really matter the brand or age of such vehicle. So, the roads are teeming with old types of 200, 220 D, or 300, models of 80's and 90's and there is even no shortage of most recent and luxurious models, most probably owned by mafia chiefs or drug dealers, who are, however, pretty scarce in Albania, because they are usually running their profitable business abroad. I spotted in the very first day in Tirana Czech van Škoda with a beer advertisement. You see? While other Czech breweries are still fumbling and vacillating, the brewery Ferdinand from Benešov is already on Albanian market. It is maybe only coincidence, that back in 1914 a duke Ferdinand d'Este was taking a ride in Balkan city of Sarajevo.....

Although I would prefer in next days to go through different pubs searching for new kinds of beer, finally I decided to spend couple of days in some sea resort in Durres. I rejected an idea to travel to 50 km distant destination by train after I had seen a Tirana railway station. Till that moment I thought, that something like that was possible just in Nord Korea or Central Africa. Tirana "railway station" comprised two fully manually operated booking offices, absolutely naked, gloomy and inhospitable waiting lounge, a platform with a bunch of totally rusty rails and, as an only encouraging element, a buffet with a bottled Stella, where I, after evaluating of this hopeless situation, finally ended up. Obviously, there was no info office and at the counters nobody spoke other language than Albanian with a thick Tirana's accent. So, it was clear. I will use a bus.

I did not find a bus terminal (maybe because it did not exist), however, I unmistakably identified the bus with a sign "DURRES", in front of which were bouncing two young guys shouting constantly: "Durres!! Durres!". In their others screams they maybe were disclosing a departure time for a public, but I did not understand. To me it sounded like a cough. I was watching from the inside of the bus how these passenger hunters were trying to get as much people as possible, and they sometime even had an argument (coughing to each other).

Traveling by Albanian bus is for central Europeans a little peculiar. When you board a bus, there is no official person on sight, who has an intention to charge you a fare. After about 15 minutes of bus ride suddenly stands up some plainclothes man and although he usually looks like the last person inside the bus expected to perform this demanding job, he starts to collect the fare.

The bus terminal in Durres was surprisingly neater than that imaginary and chaotic in Tirana. Advised by the local people I changed for a city transport bus heading for a seaside. After an accommodation in not-to-cheap hotel, I finally arrived to the beach. The first thought, which came to my mind while watching teeming of colorful mass of people was: "I am late!" While I was hesitating and slowly planning my trip, the others were much faster and came sooner. My dream of untouched, while sand coast with a navy blue splashing sea water was diluted in smog haze of hundreds of passing cars (especially Mercedes Benz) and in an enormous noise made by loudly romping tourists. The beach was really sandy, but thousands of visitor's feet disturbed the bottom, so the water was murky. In a sunset a tourist crowd calmed a little bit down, but just to draw an energy for a busy night life frenzy. Right opposite to my hotel was operated a big merry-go-round, which was delighting the guests with a loud Balkan music till the wee hours. Along both sides of so called main street were located dozens

of restaurants, out of which was coming noisy music of an exotic origin. For me, as for a musician interesting, but definitely not at 3 AM. In front of different bars the different sources of noise merged, making the atmosphere of busy Middle East bazaar. A sidewalk I was together with hundreds of other pedestrians walking along was in a poor shape, so after an aimless loitering around an apocalyptic landscape I sat down in one of a little better looking restaurant with a nice offer of yummy lobsters. But I needed a beer! I was surprised, when the waiter addressed me in fluent Slovak. There appeared, that I visited a family restaurant of one old Macedonian, who had worked over 10 years in Slovakia. In no time on my table landed a low flying bottle of Skopsko Pivo and the friendship was made. However, the owner did not have many information about the alternative beer brands in Albania, so still I was depended on my instinct.

After escape from a little Gypsy beggar I found exile in another, relatively expensive restaurant. There I noticed uncommon label on one of the exported beers and despite a steep price of 3 USD I got interested and I bought it. It was namely the beer Birë Pejës from demonized Kosovo. I expected pseudo-Bulgarian brew or inexpressive Euro shit, but the beer had surprisingly nice malty aroma and its tasting became my most remarkable experience of my whole Albania stay.

In the evening in my hotel room I admitted myself it would not go any further this way. I could not imagine one more day spent on a dirty beach surrounded by clusters of tourist, indigenous beggars and ubiquitous noise. So, the next morning I went to search for quitter and cleaner spot to swim. A bus took me about 20 km out of the city, I got off the road and I turned to the right to one of side roads, which, according to my dry land orientation sense should lead to the beach. The road was trimmed by many spectacular houses with Mercedes Benzes parking in front of them. But the road was just a muddy path with a lot of puddles and holes. Another feature of Albanian character. Mine is mine and I do not care, what is around!

After about 30 minutes of wading and miring in a mud and puddles, there pulled over next to me an old van and its driver politely offered me a lift. Inside a van there were five traveling old men, that had a friendly attitude toward he foreigners and they probably considered me a trailblazer of their future economic prosperity. One of them – the fisherman Eddy even invited me to his rural residence.

Eddy spoke Italian, so I, despite not to have a command of this language, exploited a similarity with Spanish, I brushed up my knowledge of Italian music terminology and finally I was capable to communicate with born Albanian. Eddy first showed me a guest room (just for case), then he showed me around his garden. In sea side soil were thriving surprisingly even the plum-trees, so an excursion was concluded by instructive plum brandy tasting. I would never say, how could this home-made liquor improve my Italian....After this Eddy boasted about his extended piece of land. It was originally a military space, on which could be found a large number of bunkers. The bunkers itself are the famous phenomenon of Albanian architecture. Even after almost 20 years since taking out a curious political system a majority of these depressive shelters is still on its places. The bunkers were supposed to protect an autocrat state against the attack of envious imperialist, but undoubtedly also against revolting local citizens ill-fated to be born there. I figured out, that Albanians were pretty reluctant to speak about the dark times of Enver Hodža, and even if they had like to, I would not have to understand them anyway. Albanian people prefer to look to the future, that might be without a direct influence of perverse communist significantly more favourable. On the other hand, the bunkers could be easily used as a beer houses, microbreweries or wine cellars.

After the lunch in Eddy's brother fish restaurant one of the guest took me back to Durres. We just made a little stop in a local gas station, where the driver had a smoke. Typical Balkan's style.

After a successful contact with locals I decided to take another trip to nowhere – this time to the other side. I did not set a clear destination, the departures of buses from terminal were hectic anyway. I boarded a bus with a sign “Berat”. Considering the level of the fare I had been charged after 20 minutes of ride by some inconspicuous untrustworthy plainclothes man, I thought, we would go a far way. And really! The journey took about two hours. A shape of landscape I was watching through the window started to change rapidly. Ubiquitous noisy mess had been gradually replaced by atmosphere of wonderful calm. Rubbish heaps and garbage were receding to green pastures and idyllic scenery was yet embellished by modest but pitoresque villages and donkey conveyances along the roads. Even if some donkey cart had stopped and blocked us the way, I would not be angry. Now I am different kind of traveler than I was in Bulgaria in 1983. Chestnut – you were right! In a far could be seen the majestic mountains. This is the real Albania, I said to myself.

The town of Berat seemed to be like from some other world. Almost all built of white stone in a summertime was glittering of cleanness. All the surroundings crowned by stone fortress on a rock was reminding rather the Greek islands, some more eastern influences were documented by mosque close to the bus station. Nearby slopes were full of grapes, but I did not find in Berat any brewery. So, I drank two pints of Stella and one bottle of sweetish brew Rozafa from Shkoder, which was necessary to neutralize with one worwood-like Brumir.

The last day I dedicated to buying the souvenirs. T-shirt and a coffee mug with the eagle and inscription Albania was exactly, what I needed. For the smokers there was a proper gift – an ashtray of the shape of classical military bunker. Let us hope, that a majority of these infamous relics will disappear and the country will move forward on its path to the better tomorrow

15 years ago one of my well-traveled friend told me, that Albanian beer is gray in color and is full of slime. After my personal visit of Albania I could say for sure, that even in his mater he situation is getting better.

## CHAPTER 11 WHAT ARE BREWING THE FORMER WAR CRIMINALS (Paraguay 2005)

Since my early traveler carrier I defend a theory, that the tourists during their stay in foreign country should learn as much as possible about the local nature, people, culture or traditions. I do not well understand the Germans, who on their trip to Far East are searching for some attractions reminding them their homeland, for instance German "bierstuben" built in a Thai island or straight forward German folk brass music played by Asians dressed in Bavarian style. It seems to me absurd to request a dumpling with sauerkraut in original Arabic restaurant, in South Pacific seek for Czech beer on a tap or in a market place in Casablanca to attach a five dollar bill to a sweaty forehead of street musician asking for Czech polka. All these Czech treasures I can enjoy at home, that's why during my expedition to the exotic destinations I am not going to care for them at all.

But on the other hand, the contact with a fragment of home far away, especially during a long stay abroad, can make a human happy.

But the same way as a Czech trace in a remote corner of the planet may look also an element of odd culture in a strange environment. The Czech communities in Romania or Ukraine speaking an ancient Czech language of the times of National Revival are similar specimen as Finish village in Alaska, Indonesian spoken tribes in Surinam or Korean factories in outskirts of my hometown in Central Europe. Various immigration waves were creating during the centuries new homes for inhabitants of many countries in the distant places.

After the II. War many German citizens left their defeated and destroyed homeland to start a new life in the areas as far as possible from damaged and revenging Europe. They were usually high ranked Nazi officials searching for the safe haven from a wrath of victorious allies and Nurnberg trial. For this purpose served ideally some countries in Central and South America, which became a promise land for war criminals, who escaped the justice and punishments for their crimes and lived their sinister lives in new world in relative calm and satisfaction. However, some of them were found even there and arrested. Well known is the case of war criminal Eichmann, who was abducted from Buenos Aires by MOSSAD, brought to Israel, prosecuted and later executed.

But where sounds a harsh German language, there is, as a rule also a tasty beer. Proud Germans are keeping ancient brewing traditions of their ancestors or distant countrymen and they pay tribute to

their national beverage. One of the countries, where the war criminals found a hiding place from untiring Nazi hunter Simon Wiesentahl is South American state of Paraguay. A very striking surname had even a local dictator Stroessner. I was fascinated by imagination of drinking strong amber bock in a company of old Teutonic drinkers singing loudly hits of the old times like Alte Kamaraden, Lilly Marlene or Horst Wessel Lied, so I started to be interested in this particular country. In addition I learned from travel guide, that in capital Asunción is a railway station right in a middle of the city and there is even a tram service. I was decided.

In 2002 in Prague existed official Paraguay Tourist Center, where I was told I would need for a visa my criminal record and verified fingertip. Three years later the situation got better and traveling to Paraguay was much easier. I opened a map of South America continent and with a knowledge I would have 16 days for a trip (according my flights reservation) I made my final plan. From Asunción is not too far to Buenos Aires where were currently whereabouts of my US friend Tim, who had lived eight years in Prague. Then is possible to cross a river Rio de la Plata to neighbor Uruguay and taste there local brands. My reservations were for flights Prague-Paris-Sao Paulo-Asunción and Montevideo-Sao Paulo-Milano-Prague. A packing of luggage after the years of travelling became a routine for me. The main thing is to leave enough space for potential beer trophy.

The flights to South America are very long. For the first time I flew with Brazilian company Varig. We arrived to Sao Paulo on time, so I had about three hours for refreshment. Draft or bottle beer brands of Brazilian provenience were pretty washy and very pale in color. The only exception was 5,6% strong dark lager Bohemia. In an airport gate, from where was scheduled the flight to Asunción gathered a colorful mixture of passengers of many different ethnic origins. Apart from Hispanic people and native Indians there were also some persons from Asia and to my pleasure German speaking representatives of Arian race as well. That is beautiful, I exulted, if I follow them from the airport in our destination, they will lead me undoubtedly to some Bavarian pub.

But in Asunción Germans disappeared from my sight and I myself was very busy. It is important to find my luggage after a long journey and then it is also necessary to get a taxi to the center of unknown city. Taxi cab I boarded is properly signed and its driver, despite his lightly exotic appearance looks like a decent man. It starts raining and I am little worried if I have not come here in a middle of rainy season. A taxi driver after a short conversation reasons me out of accommodating in booked hotel and offers me a hotel of the same category closer to the downtown. Outside can be seen a typical landscape. Close-to-the-airport slums of developing country with iconic holes on the road, half demolished houses and evidently embittered local residents. But I am surprised, that a type of landscape is not changing too much with time elapsed, only a traffic is getting more busy. With a look to approximately 30 storey skyscraper which is on a verge of collapse I am thinking if it is really worthy to stay closer to such downtown. But it is already too late for changing a mind. We pull over on seemingly one way road in front of some hotel. The place looks clean and safe, unluckily inside is unusually dark, same as in my room with a view to obscure air shaft. Fortunately, AC is working properly. I decide to taste my first Paraguayan beer in a hotel restaurant, which looks like winter garden with lush vegetation. Outside is still raining. Local pilsner tastes exactly as I have expected after my numerous experiences with the neutral South American products. Its laconic name Pilsen does not correspond with expected style. But during last decades the original "pilsner beer" has lost exclusivity of this mark and pilsners, pilsens or pils of these days even their unique flavor.

A tourist guide recommended me to try one of traditional dishes – sopa Paraguayana . That´s it! A soup never harms. This mentioned special is not on a hotel´s menu, but compliant waitress offers me other kind of soup. I wait about 40 minutes and I withhold another offer of pilsner. A soup has a liquid consistency (which is OK), however, its taste does not remind expected meal too much. But it is

necessary to appreciate a good will of the staff striving to make a spoiled foreigner pleased, best by a tip, which is called here “propina”.

Because it stops raining, I am ready to walk the gloomy streets of Asunción. I am looking over the buildings to find a logo of some other local beer. Later I am testing a different brand in a sordid family bar with noisy half-Indian kids and their also noisy parents. It is a beer with a green label and Hispanic – German name Baviera. This beverage is served in robust one liter bottles, during a normal tempo of consumption gets warm rapidly and its character is nohow inspiring. It is necessary to find a nicer lounge, have a tasty dinner and then to splash down a good food with a draft. A short distance from a bar I discover a rail on the road. Oh, dear! Now I only must find a tram stop and soon I will take a ride on a real Asunción tram! I am searching for a tram stop for about 15 minutes and I am eagerly waiting for this yellow rascal – one of few of its kind on South American continent, but pretty soon I notice, that in one curve a rail disappear inside a concrete. Such bitter disappointment must be properly splashed!

Nearby pub may be suitable for healing a depression of canceled tram line, but on a tap is Danish Carlsberg. Keep walking! Not a far way is another pub, which looks like a kind of buffet with a service. They serve Pilsen on a tap in small half-pint glasses. Beer in 3 pints pitcher comes cheaper. I ask young waitress about local culinary special. She is evidently not used to serve a foreigner, so she does not know, what to recommend. Finally, I order a pork with plums and cognac, which seems to me exotic enough. The lounge is half empty, just one table is occupied by a group of local drinkers. They are teasing one of their, the most drunk friend. I am making out the words just briefly, mostly I do not understand at all, because the language they are speaking does not sound like Spanish. In no time I realize, that in Paraguay is spoken also the second official language- an original Indian dialect Guaraní. In a difference from a majority of South American countries, where the native tongues were maintained just marginally or even vanished, in Paraguay Guaraní was acquired by a majority of non-Indian population as well. A language sounds strange, the most frequent letter is “ñ” and “cheers” they say “Ñanemba’e teete!” Naturally, I ask the waitress how to say a “beer” in Guaraní. I am little disappointed by her prompt answer. Despite the fact, that in pre-Columbus America did existed a fermented beverage made out of roots or chewed leaves, a term for “beer” made of malt and hops is like in Spanish – “cerveza”. Pilsen on draft tastes fresher than a bottle, but I do not order another pitcher and I decide to finish myself off somewhere else, best with a help of bottled Baviera.

In the night I am tormented by dry mouth because of unusual climate, jet leg and especially by cruel thirst doubled by the fact, that there is absolutely no beer in my fridge. At about 5 AM my cell phone rings. Before I manage in my half sleep to get to my device, which miraculously found a signal of T-Mobile network, other party hangs up. Later I am disturbed by a finding, that unanswered phone call does not originate in Czech Republic, but, according the number straight from Paraguay, where I know nobody and I have not given my phone number to anybody there. In Asunción and outskirts live about 60 residents of Czech nationality (most likely descendants of Gestapo accomplices), but Mrs. Carla Mrazek, allegedly a contact person of little Czech community did not answer my e-mail. Is it possible, that she somehow got my number? Or I am chased by beer police sponsored by Heineken. A kidnapper of this Dutch villain – Maier was namely hiding since early 80’s in this particular South American state. After this obscure experience I cannot fall asleep again and at about 7 o’clock I am leaving for a breakfast.

Strolling in a center of Paraguay capital definitely does not belong to unforgettable experiences of random visitor. The mess in the streets in daylight is even more visible, near main square some street vendors offer money exchange for local currency, which is called the same as an original native

language Guaraní. Even two quite parks with lush vegetation cannot beat an awkward impression of this town.

I am thinking about buying some typical souvenirs. Apart from obligatory generic T-shirts I finally buy some apparently goat's hoof specially converted into subtle little container intended for drinking special Paraguayan tea called maté. I still remember my ship's cabin mate Gonzalo from Argentina, whose parents occasionally sent to the ship a disgusting kind of mud by mail. Gonzalo always added boiling water and prepared multi-therapeutic national tea, which was consequently indulged by many of his countrymen working on the same ship. However, Gonzalo won my heart as early upon his first arrival to my cabin, when he held in one hand a massive suitcase and in the other a conical bottle of Argentinian 45% strong Fernet Branco. This beverage is smoothly bitter with a light peppermint finish, but also very treacherous, because even in small doses can cause long persisting headaches. When I come to BA, I will have to call him.

In a gift shop there is a cage with a colorful parrot Amazon. He might be significantly cheaper than in Europe, but his illegal import would be difficult to explain to the customs.

Right next to shop I discover a little café, whose 50's atmosphere attracts me to come inside. Accommodating waiter fetches me a morning coffee and I am turning pages of a local newspaper. Even after many years the nation of 5 million still bears a burden of terror of Stroessner dictatorship. One of local theaters shows a play by some contemporary writer about a suffering of political prisoners of those times. I acknowledged it might be interesting, but I prefer to spend an evening in quieter atmosphere of some pub.

Third page of a newspaper goes back to tragedy, which happened a few months ago. There was a fire in one of suburb's supermarkets and its owner aware a fact, that in an arising panic the customers might escape without paying, ordered to lock all possible exits. The result of this disaster and especially of the unprecedented acting of this greedy bastard was more than 300 people burned to death.

Following the city map I am heading to advertised railway station located right in a middle of a town. But even from the distance the architecturally interesting buildings seem to me neglected and an absolute absence of rail traffic discloses a sad reality, that a famous train station Asunción Downtown has remained in this spot just as a relic of its evaporated glory. Out of the abandoned station again lead the rails ending up in a concrete, inside are parked beautiful steam engines and a splendid specimen of a dining car, which apparently will not host any thirsty passenger anymore. But what hurts the most: A view on lonely and rusty station pub with a sign advertising a draft beer. According the locals train traffic here was canceled about 8 years ago, about which I have not got any information from my relatively fresh guide book. So, no train, no yellow tram. Another national wonder is some huge water reservoir (but we have lot of these in Czech Republic) and some mysterious plant, which is allegedly 100x sweeter than a regular sugar. Being a diabetic I leave this information unnoticed.

Therefore for the next few days in the heart of South America I will be devoted to gastronomy and beer. But already is also necessary to think about a transport to neighbor country. In a counter of travel agency Brújula a smiling employee offers me a bus ride to Buenos Aires. Either onboard a regular line or with an express, while the fare is almost equal. I presumed, that upon the distance between these two capitals the regular bus verify the theory about the convergence of two points on an abscissa always by the half of the distance, so I could arrive to Buenos Aires sometime in a morning of infinity and I decided to take the express. Even so I can expect 20 hours long journey and I am calmed only by the fact, that on board the bus is served some refreshment.

I pay about 25 USD and I submit my passport to the employee, so she can issue me a valid ticket.

“It is your surname, señor?” a woman points out to a word “Jarošek” in my travel document.

“Si”

“And this is your first name?”

Yes. Martin is fortunately international word reminding “Martini” (stirred, not shaken).

“And, please, it is your middle name?” she asks and points out to column “Place of issue”, where is distinctly printed “Prague”.

“No! This is a name of the capital of my country!” I answer proudly and with a little contempt because I despise the ignorants, who despite of working in a travel industry they do not know a capital of my historical and famous country. But on the other hand I am not convinced, that all employees of Czech traditional travel agency Čedok can name without hesitation capital of Paraguay.

After a long thinking the mucous gets dry. It is a nonsense! That is because since the morning I have not got in my mouth single drop of beer. I must do something about it! Noon – time for lunch and for some delayed pint too. I am yearning for a draft. Close to the canceled tram stop is situated a corner pub with an encouraging sign: London’s Pub. Inscription is decorated with Union Jack and the pub offers beside the beer also local special Sopa Paraguaya, which I want to try. I am thinking about pleasantly spent afternoon with a tasty food and beer and, of course, with relaxing English conversation, which helps me for a moment to forget the unpredictable Spanish irregular verbs, one of which the most irregular “tener” in one crazy short story by Woody Allen was chasing the main character along the sandy rock on the hairy legs. But the interior of London’s Pub does not remind distant UK and a culture of its pubs. Apart from Englishmen there is also missing bar counter with the beer taps, a startled family of owners knows from English just “hello” and they do not have Sopa Paraguaya. Thinking about false advertising I order just Pilsen and I decide to visit a buffet, where I was feasting a night ago.

In the afternoon I stroll along the ugly roads. I pass a few bars and I am learning, that the locals know how to have a good time. There is some emotional singing with a guitar in one garden pub, in an opposite other musician is performing touching Paraguay folk songs on harmonica. Because I am distancing from the center, the ugliness of a town is getting more expressive. From the windows of cracky houses are waving on me local hookers. I enter dirty bar with an intention to drink just one small Baviera. But a hairy bar tender is telling me politely, that the beer so far does not have a proper temperature and he recommends me the next bar. Touched by his exemplary honesty I order a shot of whisky and I leave a big tip. But what if he just does not like guests and he tries to discourage them by warm beer?

In other bar I see a warning that is not allowed to serve alcohol to the persons under the age of 20. I am lucky, they do not require my ID. Considering the life expectancy of native Indian population, an average person in Paraguay is doomed to half live sobriety. This is good to spend the time between two beers on a bench in a park among the lush green. On a little square Plaza de Independencia I am annoyed by local señora, who wants to talk to me. She says, she works in a nearby hotel and I am invited to visit her there after her shift. She offers beer, wine, DVD watching and maybe “something else”. An obscene gesture of her hand toward my fly indicates exactly what she is after. Spare your Baviera, bitch! I am not for sale and I can buy a good beer for my own money. By the way, it seems to me a little danger to follow unknown woman in this developing country.

I find a pub in a center offering a draught beer and a tasty fish soup. It is very good, but it is still not my dreamed Sopa Paraguaya.

The evening is coming with a regular question: Where to get a beer tonight? The prices in Asunción are moderate, so I do not have to be worried to visit even some “better” restaurant. I pass a pub offering Beck’s on tap. Is it finally a trace of German minority? But little further I meet much more tempting place. A restaurant, which offers “all you can eat” just for 8 dollars! I do not like overeating, but once in a time.....An experienced waiter with a bow-tie takes me to the table and immediately brings me a half pint of beer. At last! It is another Paraguay’s brand, which can satisfy me, at least a little. Inside this malt solution I discover a pleasant bitterness and even some latent vestiges of hops aroma. Beer is called Munich. So, let’s have something to eat! I am taking out from a buffet table a piece of chicken and a few leaves of coleslaw. It is not necessary, that all know I am coming from a country of popular proverb: “For free to eat and drink until you shit to your pants!”

Local waiter, however, is not just compliant employee of the restaurant, but also a person, who is taking care of his guests seriously. Therefore he strolls attentively among the tables and with his condor’s sight is watching if the clients are eating properly. He passes my table, he stops and looks to my modest plate with distrust:

“AND WHERE DO YOU HAVE A MEAT???!?”

I point out a couple of pieces of chicken breast, but waiter is not happy at all and politely, but assertively he drives me back to the buffet table. Just now I notice a huge oven and a white dressed cook surrounded by large pieces of roasted red-black muscle of death animal. Do you like a beef, señor? And how’s about some spicy sausage? Observed by investigative look of waiter I sit down at the table with a plate full of fat, tar and karciogens. If my doctor could see me to eating that! And how’s about his so called diet nurse evidently popular on diet menu in the cannibal territories? They would make me to eat just plain bread and drink bitter herb tea until the end of the year. At night I expect queasy stomach, gull bladder attack or at least some nightmares as a revenge for my gluttony, but I sleep surprisingly well.

In a morning I buy postcards and equipped with my tourist guide I am looking for a post office. According my book Paraguay post services are very efficient and main post office building in Asunción is very valuable historical sight. In a little yard is even possible to buy a beer or coffee. This shrine has just one tiny flaw. It does not ship the postcards. Till the date of publishing this book (May 2008) have not arrive 10 postcards sent from post office in Asunción in April 2005. Maybe it needs more time.

Close to the post office, which serves more like a tourist attraction than functional institution is located strangely looking port of Paraguay river. Up its stream is possible to get to remote village Philadelphia, where lives my desired German minority. This religious colony was established in early 20’s, but by my conspiracy theory later there were hiding some war criminals, because this way they could live far from civilization and moreover in Philadelphia they found easy to communicate. Maybe it would be worthy to try some German homemade beer, but a ship leaves not earlier that on Friday.

But what is happening? In a square are gathering tens of people with the billboards. Traffic is deflected and all around is a lot of armed policemen. On the improvised stage some angry speaker is yelling to the megaphone something about education and work market. Same as everywhere the regular citizens require higher wages, less work and earlier retirement. And, of course – kick out the corrupted politicians. Why don’t they invent something more original? Maybe some rally for the better beer. A beer in Asunción, except Munich on draft is nothing special. I am watching for a while a noisy, but disciplined crowd, but soon I realize, that my travel insurance does not cover death or injury caused by the presence in unrest, demonstrations or civil wars. I am in this particular country

for the first time and I really do not know, if the policemen receive the order to sprinkle protesting crowd with the bullets. So, I visit couple of pubs in safe distance from the rally.

In the evening I notice here rather untraditionally cozy pub. It is true, they have just Pilsen on a tap, but a half pint costs about 30 cents and even in a menu they have a genuine Sopa Paraguaya. I am excited to finally have a chance to try this scarce local delight in my very last evening. I cannot wait. A waiter brings me a piece of some bread, apparently as a garnish. But then, apart from the next beer nothing is coming for a long time. When I remind to the waiter my order, first he does not understand, but shortly he discovers, that it is some inter-culture misunderstanding . He explains me, that in this case “sopa” is called a local salty cake, which he has recently served to me and which I considered a bread. Soup non-soup tastes like a cake for strict diabetics, fortunately a main course - fish surubí is real fish, which is filling me without any side intentions. I swallow a few pieces of beer and I go sleep. Tomorrow I expect a long journey.

## CHAPTER 12 BEER IN A RIO DE LA PLATA (Argentina+Uruguay 2005)

As a child I used to suffer of nausea when I had a ride on the bus or car. Even a short trip on a back seat of motor vehicle was giving me a funny tickle on a sensitive part of my stomach causing defensive reaction. Until today I remember densely vomited interior of my uncle’s car during a ride to Bratislava and tormenting suffering on a school trip, when instead of sharing a good time with my

schoolmates I was struggling with my own stomach weakness. Later the symptoms got milder, but the problem remained till my adolescence.

Paradoxically, my mother at that time worked as a clerk for a transport company and I had a bus fare for free. When I was 17 I got a chance to spend for the first time two weeks at the sea resort in Romania. But I was scared by the information of traveling there by bus. As early one week before the journey I was fighting some queasiness, but right before the ride I realized, that if I do not carry out this almost two days long bus trip through the territory of three states, I would lose my chance to finally see the sea. I challenged my organism for a rough duel. I was fighting my childhood disease for about 40 hours, I won, so, in August 1979 I stood for the first time on a coast of Black Sea. I must say, that a way back passed without any complications and since then I was free of all similar medical conditions including seasick.

However, shortly after overcome nausea, I was facing a problem of a little different nature. When in my age of 18 I devoted my young life to the consumption of fermented beverages, during bus ride I was not struggling with irritated stomach anymore, but with my overactive kidneys and often filled-up-to-brink bladder. On board the train was possible to solve this temporary indisposition relatively easily, but a real predicament appeared, when I decided to travel to the destination of my next beer by bus. In the beginnings of my beer drinking I once traveled from Tábora to Písek (about 45 miles). Despite a town's brewery in Tabor was already closed down, I found some tasty Protivín beer in a train station buffet. During 90 minutes I drank four pints and experienced by the past I hit a few times a local loo. It obviously did not help too much and after a few minutes of a bus ride I felt, that the "main urination" is on the way and I cannot hold it for another hour. There was no other way, than ask a driver to pull over outside regular bus stop. Unfortunately, I did not realize, that all around was only vast field, trenches and total absence of trees of any kind. I came up to one lonely dry bush and despite my kidneys were about to explode I did not pee a single drop. I felt behind my back malicious looks of fellow passengers with a thoughts like: "So young and he has already problems with prostate.." I resigned and returned to my seat convinced that I would die because of perforation of the bladder as famous Danish stargazer Tycho de Brahe. Luckily, five minutes later a bus stopped close to some trees and my young life was saved.

But such small problems seem to be nothing compared to similar feelings on board the aircraft during transatlantic or transpacific flight. After numerous unpleasant experiences I already withhold a temptation to fill up my stomach with four pints of real ale, during the flight desperately rush between scarce and always occupied lavatories with a pressure on a bladder without perspective of quick relief.

The bus taking me from Asunción to BA was equipped with toilet and on board they served only coffee and soft drinks, so a long 20 hours journey was going smoothly without any complications. Shortly after we had left a bus station in Asunción one of the passengers stood up and started to sell some CD's. During not even one hour on board the bus there was a rotation of at least half a dozen similar entrepreneurs, mostly forcing the passengers to exchange guaraní for Argentinian peso. I intended to exchange the money in Argentina, but despite I did not know the exact exchange rate, I exchanged some money in a bus.

After a surprisingly slow procedure on Paraguay-Argentina border the journey was going easily. We passed Santa Fé at night, later Rosario—a birthplace of revolutionary outcast Che Guevara. Only disturbing elements were random police checkpoints on a road. From time to time even some uniform and heavily armed policemen got in our bus. I realized, that Argentina as a model South

American country cares for its military units very much. Same as in Chile, also here in between 1976 and 1983 the country was ruled by military dictatorship. A junta under the command of general Videla waged so called "dirty war" against left-wing terrorist for about 7 years. During this era in Argentina was killed or disappeared more than 30 000 people. Preferable method of their ecological liquidation was dropping the prisoners down from the choppers directly into the waves of Atlantic Ocean. By the way, I imagined a flying body of our last communist president Husák shortly before his fall to the ocean surface, where, apart from his own decomposition he would not be able to make any more harm.

Around 10 AM the next day our bus triumphally reached a terminal in BA. Unlike in Asunción local bus station seemed to be modern, clean and well organized. Soon I discovered my prudence, that I had exchanged some money in a bus, because I could not find in whole terminal a single exchange office.

A taxi driver was a man almost in retirement age, strongly embittered by contemporary development of political and economic situation in his country. He definitely had number of reasons for it. The foreign debt of this once the most prosperous country in South America reached such point, that IMF took the action and in the end of the year 2001 the crazy things happened. In a time span for about 12 days five different presidents rotated in the highest state office, Argentinian peso, till that time fixed to the exchange rate of USD slumped and the banks froze the accounts of their customers, enabling a possibility of just small daily withdrawals. Normally calm streets of capital swiftly turned into war zone, furious locals besieged the banks setting the fires and breaking the windows. Fortunately, a situation calmed down in a few months, but a daily life in Argentina has changed for the worse.

"Better don't go to this park" a taxi driver advised me while passing a gate to some city park, "this place is full of roller blade hooligans, who may steal from you your wallet or bag."

Oh, I see. Now I know, where I am not supposed to go.

"And if it happens, don't try to chase them, because they may attack you with the knives."

Taxi driver turned the car to some side street.

"This town used to be so safe" he dreamed for a while, "and today even the foreign tourists are scared to come here, because they might be abducted and their families are later required to pay a ransom."

I pictured a sad situation how my poor mother is canceling her modest bank account to bail me out from some Argentinian lair.

"I blame our politicians for it. It is their fault," driver got angry and he honked a horn to a car, which was outrunning us, "these rascals are just raising their wages and they don't give a shit to a fate of their homeland. Corrupted motherfuckers!"

I tried to comfort him by claim, that in my country it was the same, but he did not seem to be cooled down by this information at all.

We parked in front of hotel, which had a resemblance with the buildings built in 20,s. From the same era apparently originated a hunchbacked, about 80 years old receptionist, whose whimsical Spanish I did not understand at all. I had a bad luck. There was no vacancy. But my driver started a negotiation, when he explained to the purser, that I am a tourist from Czech Republic and he is responsible for my safety, so he intended to accommodate me in this particular hotel, where certainly some vacancies

had to be found. Purser changed his uncompromising attitude a little and offered me a room under the condition I would stay more than two nights and I pay in cash in advance.

“You see?” roared a taxi driver again, “It is exactly as I said! All society is consisted of corrupted criminals!”

However, I was happy, because it would not be easy to find in a center of the capital a hotel for just 20 USD or the night. In Europe it is impossible.

For a half an hour I was sitting in my room thinking of my next program. To go out seemed to me after a scary taxi driver’s lecture very dangerous, so it looked I would spend the next few days by watching local TV with occasional visit of hotel restaurant. But after the while of self-preserving uncertainty I got my guts back. I recalled my wandering along filthy streets of Accra, terrifying night scenes in gloomy corners in Kathmandu and a reckless alcoholic intoxication in whole-Indian pub in Mumbai. No beer is as bitter as it was brewed – I recalled a popular Czech proverb and I set out to the sunny streets of Buenos Aires.

First 15 minutes of my walk I behaved as a paranoid. I kept turning around, holding firmly my bag with a camera, watching from where could come a youngster wielding a sharp knife or group of masked kidnapers. However, relaxed atmosphere of the city calmed me down significantly, that I was even brave enough to take some shots with my movie camera.

BA is a huge and very beautiful city. I could describe it to some ignorant countryman as a bigger Prague with a lot of sights, whose population is as large as a population of whole our country. Whatever direction you take, you are still in downtown and you can always find during your planned or just aimless walk something new and interesting. Architecturally remarkable buildings must attract the attention even of a perfect layman, same as nostalgic mood of the streets. BA reminds South America just vaguely. Looks more Spanish, rather Italian, maybe it has something from Middle East or even Prague. But even a familiarizing with foreign town and admiring its charm causes a thirst, so after one hour long stroll I entered a local bar. Beer selection there was very poor, on a tap was only local, almost monopolistic Quilmes, which is mentioned in my guide book as a brew, which gives sleepless nights and vivid nightmares. However, a thirst is the best brewer, so I swallowed two half pints and I ate some chicken soup.

Well refreshed I made a phone call to my Argentinian friend Gonzalo, whose personality for the last few months had associated a menthol aftertaste of 45% Fernet Branco. Gonzalo was pretty pleased by my unexpected visit and we agreed to meet next day and go together to one of the city’s microbreweries. I was very tired after a long journey, so I spent the evening inside not too expensive hotel bar with a large bottle of beer with mafia label Palermo.

The next day at a noon time I headed to local cathedral, where was a meeting point with my Argentinian colleague. A bizarre experience of this day was a disclosure, that a bold line in my city map is in a fact the broadest road in America and by my opinion in all world as well. This road is consisted of 22 lanes and its crossways remind the starting points of car races. Fortunately, nice traffic lights allow to pedestrians enough time for respectable crossing, so, to get to the other side takes in average 3-4 minutes. Upon our national vice to favor the drivers on detriment of disciplined pedestrians by short intervals of green light, to cross such wide highway of 22 lanes would be possible in not too much probable infinity.

I learned, that sometime in 70’s in Argentina appeared a civil movement “El Movimiento Para Extender La Duración De La Luz Verde” (Movement For Extending An Interval Of A Green Light), which was fighting by legal means for the rights of neglected pedestrians on the crossings. This

organization even had its radical wing – “El Grupo Para Cortar La Duración De La Luz Roja” (Group For Cutting An Interval Of A Red Light), which, however, was pretty peaceful and was mostly dedicated to promote its activities among the young generation.

After I had crossed the biggest crossroad in my life I spotted strolling Gonzalo. This time he presented himself without characteristic bottle of Fernet, so we right away started to seek a brewery. Mentioned microbrewery with not too much Hispanic name Buller is located in a luxury city district Ricoleta full of special restaurants and bars. All around there is clean, optimistic, safe and expensive. Brewpub was constructed in American style with extended interior and partly roofed beer garden. Fully automatic brewing premises are situated behind a fat glass and inside activities could be watched directly from the restaurant. The beer served in American style pints is tasty, but about three times more expensive than a beer in bars close to the city center. From a start I ordered lager, weizen and British-like bitter. Gonzalo was sipping his beer very cautiously. He evidently was not used to drink stronger brews (apparently he was usually rinsing his mouth just with washy Quilmes) and also he would have to be ready at 7 PM in a local TV studio, where he would play drums with a band during commercial breaks of live show in channel 11. I ordered yet 7% porter and suddenly occurred to me a crazy idea:

“Let’s have a few more pints. Then, Gonzalo, I’ll get you drunk and in the evening I’ll be watching you on Channel 11!”

Fernet was laughing, but he resisted my devilish offer. After all, he liked his job. Maybe more than beer itself.

I was not watching Channel 11 that evening. I found a cozy pub close to my hotel, where I exceptionally did not consume a hop’s product, but an excellent white wine. Argentinian wine of good quality in this country can be found much easier than a good beer. Buenos Aires can boast a fact, that there is some restaurant at almost every corner. I found it out the next day morning, when I escaped from a centrum to the side streets. In a central square the crowd of demonstrators was getting ready for a giant protest march. I recalled the communist celebrations of First of May in my country, which was officially named “The Holiday of Work”, despite this particular day was always no working. Few roads of drummers, behind them demonstrators with the signs:

“Corrupted government out!!!”

“We want our money back!!!”

“Veterans of 1982 Islas Malvinas war are still waiting for receiving some damages!”

It seemed as everybody wanted to get his (or her) share. My searching for some sign with a text:

“Stop pasteurization of the beer and cancel the global brewing” was totally futile. But at least I found an inscription on a wall:

“2005 – 90. Anniversary of a massacre of 1,5 million Armenians by the hands of Turkish murders.”

In front of a small bank was standing a crowd of noise making citizens, who with a help of improvised percussion instrument apparently were requiring some compensation for their devalued savings. I recalled again my cheap, but insufficient travel insurance, which did not cover the civil war damages and I stepped outside.

Then I was indulging a sunny afternoon with a bar at every corner. After a successful Paraguay start I continued also in Argentina in consumption of unhealthy food. Argentina is famous for its beef culture, so why to look for vegetarian restaurant or sushi bar?

In the afternoon I walked to a nearby district San Telmo, which was recommended by my guide book. Even a walk there were hinting, that this excursion would give me very different experience from the center of the town. The streets were getting narrower, Italian atmosphere was receding to rather South American notion of order and maintenance. From the time to time I even discovered the traces of tram rails. Apparently another canceled tram route like in neighbor Paraguay. A little square, where I found myself little bit later, reminded me pitoresque corners of Barcelona, but I had no time to explore it closer, because my attention was drawn by the building of some pub with a bizarre effigy of beer drinker above an entrance and very meaningful sign: Cervezas Artesanas (craft beers). Here we go! Even in distant Argentina we can find microbreweries and genuine craft brews.

I started my adventure with a half pint of draft lager Gold Brick, which, admittedly did not reach a quality of our unfiltered brands, but after a few days filled mostly by insipid, bitterish castrates it came as a welcomed refreshment. Out of my natural courtesy I tried one dark Quilmes on tap, but then I became fully concentrated to a beer menu, which represented about 20 alternative local beer brands. Sweetish Tango Porteño prepared my taste cells for a dose of aromatic beer bless from Bariloche followed by surprisingly tasty Antaras. Advertised brand Beagle from the most southern point of American continent Ushuaia unfortunately ran out. At last! I am drinking a real beer again! A few more pints and I will be drunk like a fish. I want to get to my hotel before dark, because I do not know this city and as I was taught – carefulness is a mother of wisdom.

Next day at noon time I finally met my American friend Tim Gorman. According his passport he is pedigree American, but I rather mark him as a classic model of cosmopolitan citizen. After his graduation of University of Munich he worked 9 years in Prague in a movie industry and he lived in Žižkov, which pubs and offered beer brands he knew better then born beer drinker from the same region. I first met Tim in Melbourne Australia in 2001, when he was on 8 months long trip around the world .This time we met in a posh pub Buller. Tim looked happy. He was traveling around Argentina already for almost three months and he was full of impressions. Surprisingly he started to talk to me in Spanish and right away he ordered one stout. He informed me, that almost every larger city in this country has its own brewery, however, almost all Argentinian brands taste the same. Only reminiscence of beer paradise is in a south in Patagonia region and in Tierra de Fuego.

After two pints Tim began to miss some Spanish words, so he filled a vacuum in phrases by using Czech or English terms. And because he lived in Buenos Aires in a house of his ex- schoolmate from University of Munich, sometime he found the aid in German idioms. For a passing public was our conversation the constant wisecracking of linguistic riddles. Overheard fragments of their mother tongue got modified into English consonants so for the next few seconds would be carried out in intelligible phonetics of Slavic origin before this whimsical conversation was lighted up again by a group of domestic Hispanic words. It is like this! How many languages you know, so many times you are the human and you are able to properly confuse the other people.

After three pints we judge, that brew in Buller is good, but it is necessary to move to some more local pubs. Tim commented it by the words:

“Vamos a otra hospoda, kde is cerveza z microbrewery.”

But before it was necessary to fill up our stomachs prepared for the next beer storm with some proper nutrition biomatter. It is useless to say, that again I ate unhealthy and non-diet food. In one buffet we even did not resist to order some local special made of beef and pork entrails. We just split one portion, but we did not finish it by far. Again I reclaim my conviction, that I do not have to have or eat all.

“Conoces San Thelmo?” asked me Tim, when we were boarding a taxi, “encontré tam eine kneippe, donde es cerveza...zapomněl jsem, como se llama. Ale je very good!”

So we found ourselves in my favor San Thelmo, which was actually much larger than I originally had thought. On a way we passed a garden pub, where I was attracted by a beer bottle with a picture of black eagle and the name Soproni on a label. It was a product of a little brewery from the outskirts of Buenos Aires, whose name associated with a name of Hungarian town, where is, by chance, also a brewery. Available was Pale and 7% strong Amber Ale. After satisfying tasting we arrived to stylish beer bar, where we were going to spend the rest of fast shortening autumn day. A few independent brews on a tap, a kitchen offering among others also Thai cuisine and atmosphere resembling rather pub in the British Isles, than a bar in South America capitol. I started tasting of the new brands with a pint of lager with numeric name 1420, which is allegedly some important year in Hispanic history. By the way, I recalled Maltese beer 1561, our special 1680 and French diluter Kronenbourg 1664. By in this particular pub we could find only products of quality. I tried Acorazado and Schneider (other than German one) and I had a bowl of Thai soup as a snack together with a plate of local sausages, which I shared with a local dog. On the other side of the bar counter was sitting a young tall beer drinker, who started to chat with us. Despite his Spanish was fluent, he could not hide a foreign accent. It showed, that it was a British journalist on a long stay in Argentina. Such meeting must be properly splashed! After another two pints I recalled, that tomorrow I would have to be up before 6 AM because I had already bought a ferry ticket to Montevideo (until early 70's Monteaudio).

Shortly after we had left a hospitable pub, despite a late hour we hit a little bar, where they had 8% Antaras Stout on a tap. It was absolutely necessary to get a heavy final stroke by iron club to beer-soaked skull. In lightly elevated mental state I arrived to my hotel, where I said good bye to my friend Tim:

“Mucho gusto! Pivo bylo výborné. When you come home, zavolej. Que te vaya bien...”

I woke up to twilight of my hotel room and lighted up my digital watch. There was still plenty of time to departure of the ship, but I worried, I might oversleep. Yesterday's pub crawl left a light feeling of pressure on my head, but otherwise I felt good. I was expected by another country and another exotic, for me till that time unknown beer brands. I was warned by my travel guide, that in Uruguay is next to nothing interesting to see, so I cut my stay for just four days.

In accordance with a good tradition in 70's Uruguay was ruled by despotic military government. The opponents of military regime, especially the members of illegal Socialist Party were fluently fleeing the country for abroad to avoid repressions and some of them even appeared in a territory of communist Czechoslovakia. In 1976 – 1980 attended one of Czechoslovak high school former Uruguayan citizen Mauricio Manuel (his other four middle names I already have forgotten). Although he started his studies at the age of 16, at that time he was behind two killings of Uruguayan policemen. After graduation he was admitted to Veterinary School in Brno, where in second semester he had an accident. During a blood test performed on a cow he pricked her vein so unskillfully, that poor cattle bled to death. As a descendant of South American gauchos he felt apparently to be closer to the steak than to a live creature.

On board the ferry boat was situated a buffet, so three hours long voyage passed relatively smoothly. On a first look the city of Montevideo did not impress me too much. Everything seemed to be slow and sleepy, in addition I was nervous because of absence of beer logos and pubs. I found some architecture sights, but it was only fracture of what had been offered in Buenos Aires. Some alleys were alluring to closer look, because they might be hiding some latent pubs, but there were not many places like this in this town. In some pubs there were no taps, some of them looked like impersonal

buffets combined with candy stores. After 45 long minutes I discovered row of houses with a small arcade and build-in pub with a sausage eating guy in a logo. The pub was called “La Pasiva”, but a rush inside was revealing a relative activity of the patrons and the staff as well. A little earlier I had found, that an exchange rate of Uruguay Peso is almost equal to Czech crown. It simplified all calculations of converting the currencies during potential shopping. This fridge magnet for 30 crowns is worthy to buy, but that gaucho leather outfit for 1800 seems to me a little expensive. A pint of beer was not too cheap, but once a beer drinker finds himself in a foreign country, he should set himself for some spending spree. Moreover, one our wise proverb says:

“You never spare the money on a beer!”

A waiter obviously recommends me as a local special the most expensive meal in a menu. It costs 150 crowns (in 2005 a lot), but the size of the plate convinces me, the price is right. However, in this case I evidently gamble with my physical health. A large well-done steak nests on a lavishing portion of partly burned French fries and is decorated by immodest dose of mayonnaise and stripes of greasy dried bacon. Extended cholesterol field is margined by a few pieces of hard boiled eggs end one pouched egg. The only reminder of plant agriculture is a few beads of pickled olives put into yellow matter of killer mayonnaise. I am feasting again with a perspective of the next two weeks tied to mineral water and diet crackers.

Red muscles of death animals, however wakes a beast inside me. How’s about to talk to some other radical carnivorous persons and set some wild meat feast somewhere in vicinity of Hare Krishna camp? Fortunately, my pacific conviction beats my obsessive thoughts. OK. I will continue to absorb the toxins and you can keep your marinated sea weed.

The first Uruguayan beer I drink is named Pilsen again and even it has a similar logo as a beer from Paraguay. Outside in a square Zabala I verify again a fact, that each human has somewhere in a world his double. This gray-haired, bearded man looks exactly like Ostrava’s rock Nestor Horror. And he even strums a guitar! Out of near bus runs a group of German tourist to take a picture with him. A pedestrian zone in Montevideo looks like in most other countries. Street vendors, clowns, singers, artists. I find out with displeasure, that La Pasiva is a chain of pubs. Everything here is commercial and impersonal.

Another Uruguayan beer has a freshly green label and it called Zielertal, which is some glacier in Austria. It is produced in the same brewery as Pilsen and has also almost identical taste (no-taste). The lager Patricia is interesting just because it comes from different brewery from the town of Minas.

The next day I walk the meander streets of Montevideo trying to enjoy the atmosphere of Sunday afternoon. In one pub I am watching for a while some important match of national soccer league, in the other he entertainment is provided by old drunk woman, who staggers between the tables and tries to get some money from the guests. Such characters are the same all over the world. I try a special grape spirit grappa and a large bottle of Pilsen I accompany with sweet black pudding “chorizo dulce” filled with raisins and sweet fruit. While in Europe it is full-scaled spring, here on a southern hemisphere far away from the equator starts a dank autumn. It rains, it is getting colder significantly and sidewalks are full of fallen leaves. It is about the time to go home.

In Montevideo airport I look suspiciously to a local security, so they search my luggage and ask the common questions:

“Did you pack yourself?”

“No. With a help of three masked man!”

Bad luck, guys! You will not find any drugs on me. And carrying beer across the border is still legal.

In the aircraft during the endless night flight I experience an unpleasant surprise. A stewardess, whom I ask for a beer tells me, that alcohol beverages were served just with a dinner. She offers me some soft drinks, which I refuse. I want to make a fuss, but I would hate to be accused of distress of air traffic. The same way I resisted in the last moment a temptation to ask a stewardess on board KLM flight from New York to Amsterdam how to say in Dutch “hands up and shut up, bastard” – the important phrases I needed for my musical *The kidnapping of Heineken*. By chance, I am just studying from my text book how to make a complaint in Portuguese, so I am thinking of sending the letter to Varig to express my frustration.

Long live the trip! Beer is drunk up, hardly earned money is spent. A few months later I meet on board the ship, where I work a young waitress from Uruguay and I brag, I have been to Montevideo. South American girls looks at me indifferently and says:

“Such a boredom, isn’t it?”

## CHAPTER 13      BEAN SOUP WITH A CARCASS    (Cabo Verde 2007)

“Eu nao sou o banco, por isso eu nau vou a prestarte nenhum dineiro!”

My voice, despite a little awkward Portuguese sounded decisively, so maybe it was the reason why my black party stopped to insist. The Angolese guy Miguel, who looked like a younger version of the actress Whoopie Goldberg I met for the very first time, however, he had the guts to ask me for a loan of 400 USD. This idea did not come out of his head, but it was instill there by his countryman, my Portuguese teacher Santos.

From the very beginning of my Portuguese lessons I had a feeling, that these studies were taking awry direction. While my ex-Spanish teacher – Nicaragua’s communist guerilla Daniel Villa Lobos, even despite my objections to his teaching methods familiarized me successfully with the basics knowledge of Spanish language, in Portuguese I was not making a significant progress. Santos easily agreed with suggested fee – 200 crowns per hour, but since second lesson he started to ask me to pay him for a couple lessons in advance. Later he told me, that he was on pretty tight budget and he asked me for some financial help. I refused to play a role in this evident scheme and I decided to have a real conversations in some of Lusofonic (Portuguese speaking ) countries. Portugal itself seemed to me a little boring, on the other hand, after the potential return from East Timor, where Portuguese is also spoken I could ask my former scout chief to award me a Proof of Courage. As for Brazil, I was discouraged by totally different accent (sotaco) than I was used to listen from my CD, in Sao Tomé e Príncipe was currently raging an epidemic of cholera. After a closer familiarizing with Angola’s minority in Ostrava it seemed to me a little absurd to leave for practical language course to Luanda and I was not too much interested to go to Mosambic, which country I remember as for a safeheaven of certain Czech guy, who moved there to avoid paying child support.

So, (if I do not count Guinea Bissau ) there left only archipelago Cabo Verde . The Republic of Cabo Verde is situated in Atlantic Ocean about 600 km from Senegal and it is created by nine small islands. Before my first visit I knew about this country just a fact, that official language is Portuguese. My first Portuguese conversation was supposed to take place right in the airport in capital Praia on a topic – “missing luggage”. But being lazy and tired I exploited the basic English language skills of an airport official and for start I decided to communicate in language I master much better. I had no idea about GNP in this state, not even about an average pay of local citizens, but when a travel agent, who was waiting me in the airport offered me a half day island tour for 125 EUR my pupils rolled over.

Seaside resort approx. 1 km from the airport was making impression even during a night accommodation was expensive, but at least this place was relatively clean and safe. Because of

constant care for Portuguese I almost forgot, that in Cabo Verde they also brew the beer. I came to hotel restaurant. The buffet tables were full of tempting food, but the consumption charge was unbelievable 17 USD. Half pint of a local beer cost another 3, but at least I could mark to my private beer map another miniature mug – this time with Cabo Verde lager Strela (star). The stars in the names of beers are pretty frequent. For instance: There is the Star beer in Ghana and Nepal, in Indonesia it is Bintang and a red star decorates also a global slush Heineken. In Spain a product of the company Damm is called Estrella Dorada (Golden Star). Strela from Cabo Verde was drinkable, but it was all I could say about this nondescript average industrial lager.

The next day I discovered in Praia another beer from the same brewery. Coral was almost identical to Strela, only it had a lower percentage of alcohol. Pretty common were the beers from Portugal, especially Sagrez (pale and dark) and Superbock (not super at all). Unlike in my hotel, in a town the food and beer could be found for acceptable prices. So I decided to spend there the whole afternoon. I found an European-looking café with Sagrez on a tap. But in the garden I did not stay calm for a long time, because I was spotted there by about 12 years old boy with bandage on his knee. He jumped on me and he was begging some money for a soup. I was disturbed from writing the postcards, but I pulled out from my pocket some change and for some moments I got rid of young beggar. I finished my beer and with a steady pace I left for the streets again.

The next pub was equipped with a public phone. I needed information about my missing luggage, so I decided to drink one beer there. It was a combination of small licensed buffet and a sweet shop. Bartender – sweet shop attendant was also phone operator, he opened for me from the bar backstage a line, so I could dial a number of airport left luggage office. This time I was double lucky. My luggage already had arrived from Lisbon and the official I was talking to spoke just Portuguese, so I carried out my first Portuguese phone call. Outside a bar a limping boy was waiting for me again and I was not able to escape. Despite of his handicap of wound knee he caught me easily and he wheedle away from me another tip.

In the evening I got the idea to try a local wine. One bottle cost about 20 dollars, but I was aware, that this kind of wine was not currently available in Europe and I bought one. It was surprisingly delicious beverage, little bit sweeter with whole 14% of alcohol and it had a nice smell of grapes. These grapes were cultivated on a neighbor island Fogo, which was dominated by 3000 meters high volcano. Beside a wine also the coffee beans thrived in this subtropical climate island. For a while I had been thinking about visiting this island before I realized, that my stay in Cabo Verde is limited and in Fogo is not a single brewery.

The next day morning I met a taxi driver, who was offering a tour in his car. For half day trip he was charging 70 USD, which was a little steep, but compared to the price of the travel agency I had met upon my arrival it was a decent offer. 35 years old Creole man Luis spoke only Portuguese, which complied with a purpose of my trip. After a short formal warm-up we started to talk about our countries and shortly we agreed, that despite some significantly different historical and cultural background, in both states is almost comparable mess, especially as for the politics. Luis parked his car in Cidade Velho, which is officially the oldest settlement in Cabo Verde established in 1460. The ruins of original port are preserved until today. Buildings from 16. century, representative pillory in the middle of an imaginary square, a historical fort protecting a town against the attack from the sea. Newly were installed to this panorama some lamp posts, souvenirs shops and external bar counter with Strela on a tap. I ordered two beers and we were chatting with Luis about a local school system. Luis confessed, he had finished just five grades of elementary school, because his father had had in total 16 children with different women and he was a gambler and alcoholic, so not too much funds had left for the education of his offspring. So Luis never learned English. Beside Portuguese he spoke

yet Creole, which is characteristic dialect of the descendants of former slaves, which was preserved in some African and Caribbean islands. Because in our journey we met about five Luis's siblings, so I could personally listen how this language sounded like.

Moving apart the sea side, the style of the landscape was changing rapidly. A dullness of uniformity of arranged beaches and arid messy shanty towns was slowly disappearing. A surface of the island started to surge and slowly got converted to the hills and high mountains, the highest of which had over 2000 meters. Luis told me, that momentarily there was a dry season, but the most beautiful nature could be seen right after rainy season. In altitude for about 1500 meters the air temperature dropped significantly and even cooler was a gusty wind. In one of our photo stops our car got surrounded by the local children asking for some alms. For a moment I even wanted to replace a boring accommodation in a sea resort by a new nights in a middle of the wild nature, but shortly I judged, that such brief encounter, in addition documented by some pictures and shots was sufficient and I would rather go back to the relative civilization.

Although I hated a hotel restaurant and I preferred to have my dinner in some local pub, where I shared my meal with a skinny dog, the last evening I made a decision to dine right in a place of my stay. In a menu my attention was drawn by "cachupa", what was briefly described as a local nutritious soup containing whatsoever, a kind of Creole "Eintopf". The price of 13 USD seemed to me a little steep and I waited for cachupa for about 30 minutes. Finally I received a large bowl with a dense solution. Cachupa was based on white and red beans, which I like. It was going well with soggy potatoes. Furthermore, the soup was embellished by the pieces of meat and sausages. I eagerly started to eat, but soon I learned an unpleasant fact, that apart from a few negligible pieces of chicken, the soup is almost exclusively made of the fattest pork, which I dislike since my childhood. Moreover, when I bit a slice of presumed sausage, my smell and taste were infested by some cadaverous stench. In a no time I pictured by thirst tormented or by car run over cats or dogs slowly decomposing in subtropical heat along the roads. I tried to pull the crumbles of carcass out of my plate, but its irritating odor already had contaminated all soup. Destroying a tasty bean soup with a pig's slime and a meat in active process of decomposing is a gastronomic crime not even matched with a bad habit of our cuisine to "improve" soup by the shreds of eggs or semolina. Because I could not go on eating cachupa, I filled myself just with a few pieces of bread and for the better good night sleep, in which I expected some stomach or intestine troubles, I swallowed three more Strelas. In the opposite bar I tried some cold grog and local liquor Pontsche made of sugar can.

So I survived and boarded a plane back home. At that time took effect a new air travel regulation. A prohibition of carrying in cabin luggage any bottle of liquid larger than 100 ml practically canceled a possibility to bring home by air any souvenir bottle of exotic beer (inside the luggage space could get broken). Do you remember, mates, how often I brought you some beers from Tasmania, Chile or Nepal? Once even a plastic bottle of Spruce Tip Ale from distant Alaska? Unfortunately, these days are gone. Irreversibly. Since that moment I will be just able to tell you my beer stories defying the motto of our famous "teacher of nations" J. A. Komenský: "If you are talking about a horse – bring him to the classroom!"

The world got crazy and its mental illness is deteriorating every single year. Now they restrict us in carrying a beer, in a future they will X-ray us in the airport to search for swallowed explosions. It reminds me a quotation of certain Czech writer in a literature summit in 1967:

"We hold a bull by the horns and somebody is kicking our ass....."

Traveling is more and more difficult, but I am not done yet! There are still many countries, I would like to visit and nice and beer-interesting places could be found also in Europe and definitely in my

homeland. For me the traveling is a simple move from one pub to another even providing the theoretic presumption, that a straight line is not the shortest distance between two points. Until my liver, pancreas and kidneys are OK, I will not let go my beer!

So, have a nice trip and cheers!!!

## SECOND BOOK

### “ LONG LIVE THE BEER!”

What do you picture, when I say “tree”?

A beer....

And how's about “shoe lace”?

Beer.....

Doll?

Beer....

Saw?

Beer....

How can you always picture a beer?

Because I think only about a beer!

## CHAPTER 1      A SUSPICIOUS BEER DRINKER

“Excuse me, please. Am I well here among the Orderly Citizens? Don’t be mad on me if I am troubling you, but I’ve been watching you for a while and I can say, you look very orderly. You have the nice pants and even you are wearing a tie. I am an Orderly Citizen too. I pay taxes, I separate a trash and I support European Union. But look at that bum over there in this garden pub. I’ve been watching him and I think, he is now drinking his fourth pint of beer. He looks pretty sloppy and evidently he is up to do something....A while ago he spoke to some other hooligan and they both had dangerous anti-European and anti-global talks. Moreover, that guy is drinking a beer of some unknown brand and he referred to our national beer treasure Pilsner Urquell as the, excuse me my harsh language, South African shit, which he should never put into his mouth. My dear Orderly Citizen. Don’t you have, by chance any information about any terrorist attack, burglary, or brutal rape in a neighborhood? No? So, at least about some robbed book stall? Really? It is not possible, that this suspicious buffet drinker is innocent! The best will be to call the police as a preventive measure and let him to be checked....”

It is really wonderful, that a person, who dedicated his thirst to the consumption of a divine hop’s beverage must all his life struggle with zealous enemies of this brew, prejudices and superstitions. Since an early age of evolving beer drinker is suspicious first to bar staff thanks to his youngster’s appearance, unluckily also to older beer lovers, who are openly jealous of his youth and so far efficient and non-intoxicated liver, but mainly he is suspicious to a vast non-beer public, he has to face every day on his way from the pub. Moralistic lemonaders maliciously comment his staggering pace, fellow passenger in a tram are strikingly getting away from his lightly malty breath. Teachers, professors and other educational freaks are preaching, prophesying the growth under the gallows, suggesting the worse grades and in an uncontrolled panic they sometime are even annoying the parents of promising beer sinner. But the most suspiciously a young beer lover looks to the law enforcement.

While in 80’s a glass of wine in “more classy” restaurant cost about 15 crowns, the pint of beer was possible to buy just for the quarter of this price. Therefor the followers of illegal underground movement were gathering in cheap pubs, which became a frequent target of police raids. The feared policemen in green uniforms first checked IDs of suspicious beer drinkers, then they often arrested some of them, transported them to the detox ward of the hospital and occasionally they beat them with the batons (so called “rubber cure”). Beside the regular police at that time there were also a lot of plain clothes agents of secret police, who sometime joined a hypothetical villain in a pub and tried to make them talk about politics. When they succeeded, they presented themselves with the badges.....

I used to be a suspicious person pretty often. In my age about 20 I already had the numerous experiences with the encounters with the law enforcement, because its employees were on my heels

almost every single week. In that time I was even fined a few times, the most curious of which was a fine for pressing a four-cloves-leave in my ID (in 80's Czech ID was a little red booklet of about 25 pages).

In March 1984 around midnight I was detained by police patrol and I was almost fined for contamination of the city. It was difficult to explain to overactive cops with a help of my heavy tongue, that all available public toilets in neighborhood had been already closed and my overloaded kidneys and bladder might get out of control. Luckily, one of the policemen found in my ID a printed day of my birthday, which matched with an actual date, so I was peacefully dismissed with just a reprimand.

It says, that all drunkards have a good luck and surely all suspicious beer drinkers are involved too. Where were the cops, when I was taking a ride in a trash container pushed by my fellow drunkard with 0,3% of alcohol in blood system I was running in rubber boots over the car roofs and during a meandering way home I was stealing the car mirrors. At that time I should have been swallowed by the feared while-yellow cop's car, which could take me straight to the police station or to some hospital for detox. But when these crimes, or at least misdemeanors were committed, the cops on the other end of the street were checking some innocent beer lovers!

Every moment I was collecting the experiences, I was perfecting myself in avoiding maneuvers and I was absorbing the basic rules of beer safety, which, for instance said, that a beer drinker is always the most vulnerable under influence in a night time in front of some low-category pub. However, it is not always true.

In October 8 1985 was a sunny autumn day. Around a noon time, by a twist of the fate, I found myself on a road between Ivanovice and Nezamyslice (the little towns in Czechoslovakia). A few days ago I had started a gig with a band in a Grand Hotel in nearby Přerov and a couple weeks earlier I had spotted during the way a chimney of malt house, which I considered an inseparable part of some, for me still unknown brewery. So with a steady pace I was heading to explore this object, when suddenly my plans were interfered by infamous white-yellow police car. In times of communist rule every single adult person had to be employed. If not, he (or she) could end up in jail. As a proof of having a job there was supposed to be a stamp of employer in pages 17-20 in that red ID booklet. Policeman in a car asked me to present my ID. Despite I had been already officially working for a few days, a stamp was still missing. A cop with no hesitation brought me to near police station, where I was supposed to explain my innocent, but for a law enforcement extremely suspicious behavior. I even still had a train ticket from Přerov, but every time I objected their allegations, I was labeled a liar and subversive individual without a regular job. During a routine search of my ragged bag they found a bottle of beer, alarm clock, Czech-English dictionary and one piece of sugar beet, which posted my personality to even more obscure position. When I suggested them to call to Grand Hotel to verify my employment there, they snubbed me down with model phrase:

“Don't tell us, what to do!”

After a necessary finger printing a conversation was dying and my case started to linger. I was definitely an enemy of socialist society, but cops, unfortunately were not able to accuse me of any wrongdoing. For a few days there was some soldier on a loose, but there was no resemblance between him and me. They just were about to let me go, but after they had called to neighbor police station in Kojetín, the situation changed. In nearby village it had been a grocery shop robbery two weeks ago and they still did not have a culprit. This position was evidently fitted to me. While the cops in Ivanovice were rather not-too-capable clerks, two policemen, that came to take me to Kojetín were unmistakably showing, they belonged to infamous communist terror.

“Is it this musician?” asked one of them ironically, “OK, we’re gonna step him to his toes and he starts to sing...”

I felt like in a cheap criminal movie.

“How big shoes you have...”told me friendly the other cop.

Yes, I thought, it is because I could this way puzzle my footprints. In addition, in my pocket I have a little bag with a pepper for disorienting sniffing dogs. I already saw myself serving a few years jail sentence for a grocery I had not robbed. Another failure of justice.

Luckily, a policeman in Kojetín was a practical man. Although he desperately needed the offender, he found the number and he called to Grand Hotel:

“Hallo, here is police station Kojetín. Does, by chance work in your hotel somebody called Jarošek? As a musician? Yes? Are you sure? OK. Thank you...”

He hung up. This round he lost. He fixed a long look at me.

“But you have not a clean conscience anyway,” he said after a while, “you are pretty foxy. But one day we’re gonna bust you!”

He was not a bad man. To say good bye he even recommended me some pub, where I later quench my fresh criminal experience by nice pint of draft.

However, I was not suspicious just to the authorities, but also to my potential co-workers. For instance, a skillful Ostrava’s organist Hamřík was more than for his music well-known for his perfect knowledge of the laws of that time and he was a famous chronic complainer. No person who, by chance crossed the path of the self-proclaimed prosecutor, or who dared to approach him closer than 5 meters could be confident of his (her) future innocence or impunity. Hamřík in 1986 got a gig to the band, which was scheduled to play in Canada. But bandleader soon replaced Hamřík and gave this position to me. The true was, that Hamřík was not just dangerous because of his perverse judge-like mania, but beside of that he allegedly would not make a nice impression on a stage, because in his age of just 45 he looked like Santa Claus. Spurned musician than wrote a formal complain to musician agency in Ostrava, where he stated, that he was kicked out of the band with no reason and his spot was stolen by an alcoholic (me) especially because his father is a director and communist. Let’s love our self-proclaimed enemies and wish them a success. Hamřík lately graduated from correspondence law courses, received his law degree and today he hopefully make enough money to afford to travel to his dreamed Canada on his own.

The biggest handicap of suspicious beer drinker is usually his own drunkenness. I recall a story of certain young man, who after finishing 15 pints of beer, without any personal documents tried to enter some public fountain in a center of city of Brno. On a top of all, his name was by accident Karel Marx. During the police check-up because of his pure honesty he gave the police a blatant pretext for physical attack.

Other irresponsible drinker – a famous local musician to avoid a police action climbed up to a top of street lamp pole and he was ordered to come back down by the words:

“Citizen, leave the pole of public illumination immediately!”

But Czech beer lover does not only cause an outrage, but he can also attract a well- deserved attention, sometime even far away from Czech borders. Long time ago our four pieces band on board a PanAm flight to Miami was trying to do its best and it was swallowing the contents of German and

American beer cans in a remarkable tempo. Shortly before the landing a flight attendant brought us six more cans and when we objected, we had not ordered anything she said, that it was the last six-pack and that we had drunk up all stocks of Boeing 737. I hope, this event did not help company PanAm to bankrupt a few years later.

Central European beer drinker is suspicious mostly in “dry” countries, especially in states, where Islam is practiced. However, the attitude of population varies from country to country. While in Lybia or Saudi Arabia the unwary beer lover is beheaded immediately after his inquiry, where is the nearest tap room, in Iran he is handed to regular Sharia court. In moderate Moslem communities he can survive and even get a beer – about 12 dollars a pint, which is typical non-Christian price.

In March 2001 I was returning from Nepal, where I had survived a local pub culture and despite of all the exotic I was looking forward to have some genuine Czech draught. In Prague airport I was unexpectedly detained by anti-drugs agents and I was submitted to thorough luggage and body search. The agents were searching through all my personal belongings, every single sock individually, shaking my shirts in seeking some secret pocket with a white powder. For a while they put the victorious faces, when they discovered two small objects reminding the Easter eggs, which were hollow. These were Tibetan salt and pepper pots, but the agents considered them cocaine in gift package. During a search he agents asked me some questions and they still wanted to know something about “the other one”, whose identity they did not specify. A little bit later I learned, that they are talking about some other Czech traveler, who just arrived from Nepal in the same plane. The agents were trying to connect me with him somehow, because evidently it could not be coincidence. Finally they asked me to undergo urine test. At this point I stopped to control myself:

“I prefer a beer,” I said expressively, “but if I smoke or snort in my spare time it is my private matter!”

“Yes, you are right, sir,” agreed the agents, “but if the test turn out positive, we’ll have to X-ray you...”

In front of the office I finally met “that another one”. He was about 55 year old man called Mach, who lived in Prague. I suggested to split a taxi, but Mach told me, he probably would not go anywhere, because the agents just had found inside his boots about 2 kg of hashish. Golden beer! God save the Beer!! I will not be detained or even prosecuted because a beer anywhere in whole civilized world. But on the other hand an unlucky smuggler was lucky, he had not get busted in Nepal. The next evening I was watching TV news about an anti-drug raid in the Airport completed with a picture of Mach’s ripped boots with illegal contain.

Surprisingly, a beer is not always drink of choice of certain persons, that allegedly used to belong to the bohemian revolt in our past and I need to say, even for them the genuine beer drinker was sometime highly suspicious. In opened air folk music festival in 1982 I just ran from one refreshment stall with a plastic pint in my hand back to the auditorium to make it for a beginning of concert of my favorite singer, when I was stopped by one local music manager in charge to organize this event. I remember, his name was Kaplan – the same as a name of turbine inventor.

“Where is this beer from?” he asked me officially.

I pointed out to a nearby refreshment tent and Kaplan said victoriously:

“Liar! There is no beer for sale there! You’ve just brought it from the outside, which is illegal! It seems, you are in trouble!”

I expected to be attacked by a crowd of folk music fans, that would start to beat me with their acoustic instruments while yelling some environmental spells. Nothing like that happened and Kaplan

left the stage, apparently after he had figured out, that pints of beer were carried around even by his bluegrass friends.

A beer lover is also not trusted and socially absolutely unacceptable for snobs and so called “fast-fermented” wise guys, that call him a drunkard and rank him to the lowest rungs of hierarchy ladder. Intolerant wives and mothers-in-law give often a hard time to a beer drinker too. The family dispute starts generally by the obligatory reproach:

“You love your drunk friends and beer more than me!”

And it may escalate to unwise ultimatum like:

“So, make your choice! Either beer or me!!”

Beer lover’s ripe decision then as a rule concludes a pointless marriage.

While a beer drinker is frequently suspicious to the individuals, that hate this divine beverage, the same way such non-beer characters are very suspicious to beer drinker himself. A hop’s drink lover with his pint on a table mostly thinks about the next dose or innocently recalls a recent beer storm in his favorite pub, occasionally he may in his euphoric alpha state invent some interesting things. Randomly named: Archimedes law, Newton law, an array of Murphy’s laws or relativity theory of half-empty and half-full glass. Let us remember, that even the great Greek mathematician and philosopher Diogenes lived in a cask.

Unlike the inventive and prolific beer drinkers, an individual sipping his sticky, synthetic Coca-Cola is full of shit and is able to think just about all-nuisances. A majority of all bloody wars in history of mankind was started and raged by beer-deprived politicians, who were just thinking of screwing something because of their sour frustration.

My ex-schoolmate Klimánek was about 30 minutes older than me. We studied in local Conservatory of Music the same subjects, so thanks to common curriculum and similar interests we were spending a lot of time together. A situation started to change about a year before our graduation, when I came into liking frothy nectar and I began to be interested in chicks, while Klimánek still remained ascetic and abstinent. When I succeeded for a few times to drag him to my favorite pub for beer chat, he was widely irritating me and all beer surrounding by red or yellow lemonade.

Right after a graduation Klimánek was admitted to Academy of Music. I was a little surprised. In communist era the children of “politically unreliable” persons had a big problem to reach a higher education. And Klimánek’s father was expelled from Communist Party in 1968 (the year of Soviet invasion). Of course, I wished my friend the best and I was secretly hoping, that in Academy soil he would learn something about “bohemian” life (Carpe Diem etc.) and he would start at last to drink a beer.

Klimánek visited me about two years later and asked me for a loan of 1000 crown (at that time around 50 USD, but Czech average salary used to be about 100 USD). I loaned him this money with a hope, he would go somewhere to get orderly drunk. But it had not happened and dishonest Klimánek with a help of my 1000 crowns in 1983 illegally left his socialist homeland for neighbor capitalist Austria, where he applied for exile. From Austria it is close to Bavaria, I told to myself with a satisfaction, and in this region Klimánek as an abstainer would be socially non-viable.

In one February morning in 1984 when I was sleeping off a big hangover a phone in my apartment rang. Tired, nervous and exhausted Klimánek apologies me for defrauding my money and implored me to give him an address of one countryman, who lived in Germany. He was rapidly running out of

change for public phone, so his call was shortly cut off. Some 18 months later, when we, with our jazz band were trying hard to get a contract for a cruise ship Klimánek called for the second time. This time he sounded much calmer, he bragged, he had graduated German language course and he found some apartment to live. He asked me how was I and if I was not planning any trip to the West. He did not mention my 1000 crowns loan at all.

In 1986 I finally succeeded to use an influence of my communist father and I intruded the band with a contract to Canada (this band recently had fired an almost-lawyer Hamřík). About six weeks before our planned departure Klimánek phoned again. This time in his voice was no trace of nervousness, he sounded self-confidently, he was describing vividly his current music teaching job and his recent gig with the band in Swiss Alps. Again, no mention of beer and my loan.

“And how’s about you?” he asked suddenly, “are you going somewhere abroad?”

I needed to show off a little, so I told him about my projected Canadian contract. Klimánek was evidently happy.

“And don’t you want to deflect?”

This question abruptly changed a structure of our conversation. In one second in my mind passed a picture of the agents of State Secret Police that were recording all phone calls with the West on the large tape recorder spools. In 80’s in Czechoslovakia all telecommunications were analog and phones were tapped. In no time I came into self-defense and I changed a subject. I asked Klimánek about my still defaulting loan. He just mumbled something and hung up. That day I spoke to him for a very last time.

For some time I was thinking about suspicious circumstances of Klimánek’s phone calls and a few years later I met my former professor of composing from Conservatory in whose class studied also Klimánek. Over the bottles of beer we were remembering the good old days in our favorite school and we also recalled our longtime colleague. At that time I had not seen Klimánek for more than 12 years. Professor told me, that once in a spring of 1981 during his class (normally there were just two or three students present), when he was openly criticizing a communist regime in front of his disciples, Klimánek gave him a straight question:

“Do you thing, that the life today is worse than during Hitler’s rule?”

Normally calm and kind professor, who had studied in Paris, London in New York and was in a constant fight with Czech Bolsheviks, that were prohibiting his symphonies to be performed in a public for more than 15 years (by the way, he composed also dodecaphonic Beer Symphony) stood up, with his straighten hand holding an imaginary flaming sword he pointed to the door and roared:

“You fuckin’sneach! Out of my class!”

It was his last encounter with Klimánek.

After this conversation I was 100% sure. I pictured almost spy-movie scene, which might take place sometime in 1980 inside a milk bar on a Civil Guard Square in Ostrava: Klimánek, who is sipping strawberry milk shake is joined by mysterious, but friendly softly speaking man in a long becoming coat with elastic lapels. He orders Klimánek another drink and he pulls out of his bag a pile of papers.

“Our socialist state will enable you, comrade, in spite of the political sins of your father the studies in Academy of Music free of charge, but it requires one single signature. Of course, it doesn’t have to be signed by your own blood, a regular pen will do. What are we asking from you? Nothing special. Just a little favor. You surely have a lot of schoolmates or other friend with, let’s say, a little radical views.

So, from time to time you will give us some report about their activities. And focus especially on those, who often drink a beer...”

Klimánek had been apparently performing a good job for several years, so later he got promoted and he was sent to the post in enemy country (Austria). Even there was possible to find a plenty of emigrants and trustful tourists.

Klimánek returned to Czechoslovakia in 1990 and allegedly he is in healthy nutrition business (I judged from it, he finally has started to drink a beer). He probably lost his job in State Secret Police (officially dismantled in 1990), but maybe he is working today for other institution. He might be still spying on people and listening who says, that George W. Bush is an Idiot and we are going to lose a war in Iraq. I learned, that today the citizens of Czech Republic can look to the files, which were gathering about them by secret police and its direct agents. Maybe even I would disclose there a name of my personal spy with a nickname “Coca-coler”. This institution has its headquarters in town of Pardubice. But I know, if I go there, I will not be interested in slimy Klimánek, but I will visit a local Brewery, which is always more useful. Even today, when I have an urge to poke through our infamous national or personal past, I better go to have some good beer. In a pub alone or joined by my beer friends I can resolve all irrelevant problems and sourness of contingent of negative experiences I rinse with a bitterness of tasty brew. Beer lover’s life is full of traps and hindrances, but cold pint of beer of good mark is always able to fully compensate all his sorrows.

## CHAPTER 2 THE WOMEN + BEER = ???

In theory our society is more less tolerant and in this matter it is going through the process of evolution. We have got used to the wild roller blade riders, prickly punkers or more and more aggressive youngsters, today wary of fact, that according our legal system they are immune criminally until the age of 15. Likewise, nowadays we are not surprised to see a woman on a position traditionally occupied by men. While in 18. or 19. century was outraging to become a female writer, teacher or even a researcher, today the women work in labs, hospitals, army, they are parachute jumpers, they play soccer and even more and more often they pursue a political carrier. Unfortunately, still does exist one place, which keeps its ancient discriminating tradition, where a woman alone with no proper male accompaniment is not welcomed – and it is the pub!

This innocent, straightforward and profitable institution mostly respects as its real clients only men and despite a fact, that all kinds of blatant segregation is strictly prohibited by law in most of countries, a single woman holding a pint of draft is in the premises of a taproom usually considered as an element breaching a spontaneous atmosphere of an orderly pub. Presented males with a traditional right to stand near the tap share their views on female intruder and they explain her physical presence in a pub by using several categories of definition:

1. She is an alcoholic, who does not care, what she is drinking. After a few beers she will run out of money and she will leave for home to tune up her drunkenness by some cleaning agent or perfume.
2. She is an active member of feminist movement, who is demonstrating inside a pub her emancipation opinions.
3. She is a mentally challenged person, who after all cannot be blamed for her actions, same as for instance walking naked through the town or frivolous jumping under a tram in motion.
4. She is a cheap hooker, who came to the pub to search for the clients.

After such critical assets a female beer drinker is being constantly annoyed and attacked by males of right sexual orientation, who, despite all their objections are trying to use this situation for their own sake.

What is a cause of such conservative attitude of our otherwise pretty liberal society? In ancient Rome alcohol drinking women were under the threat of death sentence, nowadays the beer is strictly forbidden also to Moslem women, maybe so they would not smear their becoming burkas. In our country, even despite of an absence of such preposterous laws play its role the remnants of traditional prejudices and relationships inside patriarchal community. The same way as a male today reserve himself the right to decide a course or termination of woman's pregnancy, by slightly different methods he infiltrates an environment by his biased opinions and involuntarily he tries to decree a woman the category of a pub.

However, the women themselves have a little different attitude toward the beer, when they have been listening since the early age, that "mummies do not drink the beer" or "if you drink a beer, you will end up like your father!" Last, but not least thing is, that the beer seems to them taste bitter comparing to some unhealthy sweet beverages, which is, nevertheless a tiny obstacle, which can be, with a help of proper training easily overcome. Generally is possible to say, that girl, woman or crone, who loves the beer is maybe a little more buxom, because beside all health benefits a beer is not typical diet sustenance, but she is definitely healthier and with a reasonable dosage also better psychically balanced. During the centuries expecting women during their pregnancy were sipping dark beer for stronger fetus and healthier baby.

However, woman's organism copes with the beer and especially with its alcohol content little harder than men's body, because her different metabolism processes ethanol more slowly. One of my high school female schoolmate used to experience some dizziness after she drank just single pint of beer and, unfortunately, this ailment has lingered until today. That's why she was not attracted to me and I did not make any intimate relationship with her. On a contrary, my other female schoolmate heeded the doctor's recommendation, and when she had been in age of 16 diagnosed with urinal (kidney) stones, she started, in spite of primary disgust to drink two beers a day to prevent their formation. She was gradually increasing the doses, in two years she got healthy, later, unluckily, she ended up in rehab.

Shortly after dizziness there comes a stomach, which often does not handle enormous quantity of unusual liquid and reacts irritatingly. Each man, who woke up in the middle of the night next to his drunk snoring fiancé with his smeared-vomited pyjamas sleeve knows, what I am talking about.

Beer also increases a courage and nullifies some inhibitions, consequently then blocks the memories. Even a sexually passive lady with a signs of frigidity may after several pints disclose her hidden nymphoman's desires. There was joke about a woman, who got drunk by the beer in a pub and then became an easy prey of five sex-thirsty patrons. Next day when she was sitting in the same pub sipping a black coffee a bartender asked her, if she rather would not have one beer to recover. She refused with an exclamation, that beer makes her vagina sore.

A woman after beer is mostly cute, tender and pleasantly talkative. It is a nice intimate moment to hold a pint in one hand while caressing a palm of beloved person and with extended mind to listen to her secret declarations. The kisses in a close vicinity of the generous tap are honest and hot and a woman herself in the eyes of her counterpart, proportionally to a quantity of consumed alcohol miraculously changing her appearance and is becoming more beautiful and attractive. Good girl in a pub wants also to have a fun and it is almost unbelievable, what is she able while drinking beer to invent. One of my ex-girlfriends, despite of being strict no smoker used to set the fires in ashtrays and loved to play with somebody's else ID card, which she was systematically destroying.

The environmental activists would grumble, if they learned the story, how this beer drinkeress in some interspecies solidarity attack on a pub table made drunk a rambling slug, who later, after evident euphoria died as a consequence of involuntarily absorbed beer.

Even more hilarious was my ex-girlfriend Ivana, who in a pub "Lonely Willy" after finishing her third beer started to convert from serious journalist into capricious mischief maker, against whose practical jokes could nobody feel safe. First she judged, that a local plant in a flower pot is inside this pub unhappy, and she was convincing a busy waiter to donate it to her. Then she was inquiring, if a local waitress wore the underwear. Four pints of beer accomplished their mission even after her return home, when she forced her mounty rotweiler to run over some official tax related documents and in the end of this jolly evening, to the consternation of her teenage daughter she sang a lullaby to her sock.

About my other lady friend I used to think, she had no sense of beer humor. In a pub "U pošty" she proofed me wrong. After she had finished her fifth pint she stood up and with all her force she threw empty mug against a wall close to, fortunately empty table. Not earlier than after this action she burst into honest laugh and she blatantly marked an impression, she intended to go on with this kind of entertainment. Unluckily, angry restaurant staff did not share her pleasure over well broken glass and refused to serve us another beer. Later in a night tram I experienced my longest kiss, which lasted full four stops and which was reminding me for next few days by my bloody broken lip. Actually, from her I also learnt many years later, that in a brewery town Velké Popovice is built a rehab center.

It is scientifically proved, that woman uses rather her right brain hemisphere and so she is more emotional than rational. This fact may explain, why during stronger beer drinking a female in a mostly left-hemisphere world loses a control over her behavior, when all her logic and rationality is dissolved in a consumed beer. Such lady gets easily ironic, sarcastic and often aggressive as well. In restaurant she entertains herself by terrorizing the waiters, that become thanks to their work and social status an easy target of her, often unsavory attacks. She repeatedly orders the drinks, which are not in an offer of the pub, she is choosing a food for long minutes, when simultaneously asking staff about the details of its preparation, she has constant objections to the quality of meals, temperature of the beer, even density of the rum. Beer is (according to her) thinned with water, fernet stock comes from different distillery than is advertised. Intoxicated woman enjoys a pastime like this especially when she is accompanied by her partner, from whom she requires a full support. If he does not do it to her maximal satisfaction, she turns the feared spear of her aggression right against him. Furious Amazon has in her estrogen driven repertoire wide arsenal of various attacks, against which is all possible logical defense doomed to fail. The most used reproach is, that her boyfriend (husband, lover) does not like her anymore, because he drags her only to cheap pubs, so he can spare a money on her. On the other hand in more expensive restaurant she complains, he is spending too much and so he is not the right person for family life. The most sophisticated part of a plan how to snub her male counterpart is a jealousy outbreak, creating of which is no problem for even only partly drunk female. The attacks like: "You are watching a waitress' boobs" can be hardly avoided, because the woman has her remotely controlled third eye, infallible animal instinct, two-dimensional, but very efficient fantasy and mainly the will to create conflict situations based on presumption of guilt. If there is no

suitable part of hypothetical lover's triangle on a sight, she starts aim on her partner's ex-girlfriends, schoolmates or female co-workers. Jealousy nurtured by alcohol is a strong emotion, therefore a situation may be worsen even by innocent phone call and consequently can lead to open argument, or even violent scene in a public. In most cases these events are followed by sweet reconciliation and a sober aligning of derailed circumstances back to the trail of logic. But there are no guarantees, the unpleasant event could not be repeated in some other pub next day.

In longer relationships exited woman may start picking even into parents and friends.

"Your father doesn't like me," told me once my beloved girlfriend, "he thinks, I am stupid!" What to say? My father has a classic education and his own imagination of intelligence minimum of individual. When he asked you last week, which number of sport lottery you would advise him to bet (1 – 49) and you said without hesitation "67" his reaction was maybe undiplomatic, but it fully matched the situation.

"Josef doesn't like me either!" complained once in different pub on my play mate from the band. When Josef himself passed our table, she jumped on him so fiercely, that she overturned almost full pint of beer.

"Josef! Why you don't like me?"

Surprisingly, despite of all her effort to set this relationship to the bearable level, Josef did not like her anyway.

Drunken women often remain silent for long time and motives of their attack are of very obscure nature. If it comes to the stage of expressive exchange of opinions, often neither side of the dispute knows exactly, what was its cause. Isolating things out of context and mosaic filling of thoughts in leaping order is one of proved tactics of irrational offensive confrontation.

Long time ago with one of my serious girlfriends, with whom we even share an apartment, we were sitting in a pub and during drinking beer we were carrying out normal conversation. My topic was my love to animals, so I said, that I would like to have a dog. Shortly after this my blond fairy got silent, she replaced a sweet smile on her face by indifferent grin and next ten minutes she was providing me just with one-syllable responses. In wide environment there was no potential female rival at the time, our relationship was pretty stable, so I asked her modestly, what is the cause of her latent anger. For a while my girlfriend was reluctant, but then she outburst:

"You are a selfish!" she shouted on a verge of crying, "you want a dog and when we will have a baby, he might bite him (or her)!"

It took a moment to deduct, who may bite whom, but then I admitted, she had been right. It is true. And similarly: If we buy a Papin-pot (the pressurized one) and its vent get plugged by the carrot peel, it might explode and our baby can get burned. Today I know- we will be living without electricity. What if? Bartender, hurry!! One more beer and a huge rum! A sober male does not have a chance to comprehend such pervert logic.

However, beer does not influence just individuals, but also intimate partner relationship. One wing of the public has a pretty high evaluation of beer as an afrodisiac beverage, after which even an average sexually potential male miraculously turns into uncompromising unrival sex

machine capable to satisfy even the most exacting female, who does not take a refuge in a milk bar. Opposite group uses dry chemical formulas, eventually quotes from would-be-scientific literature and claims, that beer drinking leads to impotency, produced the mongoloid babies and helps families to break up. To complete these theses it is necessary to mention the third group of the public, whose supporters maybe because their aversion to beer and sex as well do not have an expressive opinion on this matter.

The truth may be somewhere in a middle. Honestly brewed lager or ale contains a whole rank of vitamins and minerals, which have a positive effect on sexual drive of beer drinkers, moreover, the trace elements of alcohol annul the complexes of inferiority or redundant inhibitions and simplify communication with an object of sexual desire. But after unproportional consumption the beer has a stifling effect and such drunk person is loosing interest and sexual appetite.

One upon the time of humble beginnings of my Brotherhood Of Hops I used to ask a specific question, when I talked to BOH aspirants:

“If you were visited in your apartment by attractive, young, half-naked girl with the bottle of good beer in her hands, what would you choose as first? Girl or beer?” A correct answer here (most of the eager aspirants would choose a beer)is not either...or, but should be:

“Everything depends on a temperature of the brew. If the beer has a proper temperature (7-10° C), there is nothing to discuss and we can ask a beautiful girl for patience and possible opener. But if beer is warm, nothing can prevent us from making love to new sexual partner until the bottle is cooled down to the required temperature.” A duration of erotic games depends on type and adjustment of a fridge. But we cannot neglect the fact, that in a case of top fermenting product (higher serving temperature)we have grater possibility of our natural selection (beer always come first). The average beer lover after ten pints has a balanced life opinion, however, he is rather loosing the ability to precisely define a taste of served brew, he sees his nearest future in an embrace of beneficial slumber, which would enable him the next day to have a new, pleasantly quenchable thirst and he is not in the mood for close encounters of third kind with the opposite sex. All violent attempts to reverse this natural course are always counterproductive and the best in such situation is o realize, that the sun will rise tomorrow and although a merciful veil of darkness cannot longer conceal the features of not-to-handsome partner, a fresh morning sexual exercise would be much better than night unfair fight with a malicious nature.

The beer also extend a duration of the sexual act, which is obviously good news for a men having a problem with a premature ejaculation. On the other hand an extremely long copulation may develop some side effects like receding erection and tiredness. In such case is always more practical to perform so called “Chinese sex”, which is usually not concluded by the climax. This can be postponed for later.

The worse variant of sex under the influence is falling asleep on a top of a sexual counterpart, which may hurt the feelings of a woman and it is very embarrassing. A certain aid may be to perform so called “dogie style”, when the woman registers her sleeping lover a bit later, nevertheless, it is much more considered solution to get one more beer before

going to bed and to leave sex for a morning. But the women do not decorate interiors of the pub only as the clients, but we can see them in a position directly related to beer. A female brewer is not as rare as used to be some 30 years ago and she can surely make a good beer. Some examples we can even see in our region. First I want to mention Mrs. Alena Hajníková, who works partly for a microbrewery Avar Hlučín with a very good results and about six months of the year she spends as a master brewer in Japan and Philippines. I was pleasantly surprised by my ex-schoolmate from conservatory of music, who was working for the long years in bunch of theaters as an actress. I met her in one beer bar, when she was just instructing a staff how to draft a Belgian beer Stella Artoise. So what? Nothing special – might say a beer skeptic, but I think otherwise. My ex-schoolmate, in a past a woman of the bad reputation is now heading the right direction. She has found her path and in a future we can meet her somewhere in microbrewery business.

However, most often we can see the woman behind the beer counter wearing her waitress' uniform rushing among the tables full of thirsty customers. Such woman is becoming a real embellishment of a taproom and she gives to the lounge, where she works a human touch and an illusion of hospitable home. The male guest perceive subconsciously a warmth of home fireplace and often they even do not feel like to return to their legitimate apartments, where they are expected by their gloomy wives wielding the rolling pins. The physical proportions of lady bar tenders are much closer to the baroque ideals than to distorted visions of emaciated "beauties" of today, but the buxom shapes of their body are usually caused by responsible attitude toward the tap-profession, in which it is necessary from time to time to prove a quality of served beer in own throat. A corpulent waitress during the centuries represents a confidence and respect, which in a mild modification remains till today.

A female inn-keeper, who combines love to beer with an assertion and pragmatic relationships with their guests can run a pub better than many males.

But sometime woman acts in accordance with her genetically inherited inferiority towards the representatives of patriarchate and she lets them to control her.

"Hey, Mary! Switch this refrigeration off! This beer is so cold, that my teeth get frozen!" Once I overheard a lamenting barytone in some village's pub. Female bartender obeyed her master's voice and in one hour a nice cold beer turned into almost undrinkable warm slush – evidently to make this low-culture beer swallower happy. Wrong, Mary! Next time, please, quote to this blockhead a regulation for beer drafting, especially a column about an official range of temperature, eventually send him to some antique store, where he may buy some immerse beer heater. Or send him directly to hell!

However, is necessary to admit, that even among the women working in a beer industry is possible to find the negative examples, that hate their jobs and their irresponsible and careless beer-related activities are their revenge to beer lovers and to beer itself. One of my friend used to call such lazy and reckless ladies "the seamstress behind the bar counter". According his theory the seamstress cannot tap a good beer, does not clean the beer pipes properly, sells an under-the-gauge beers and even she does not return a right change. One of the most horrifying examples of such attitude my friend experienced in one unnamed pub,

where one tap with a dark beer was dripping and this dripped beer was collected into a glass under this tap. But the stale beer was not finally wasted, but was poured into a fresh pint and mixed with a regular brew! Presented beer fighter, who stood up for an unknown client, who had order this pint, objected loudly and fiercely and after an unstimulating argument a staff refused to serve him anymore.

Crooked attitude toward a beer-tapping profession however starts in a time of study of this subject at school, where the young girl apprentices, even not in a drinking age (18) have often loath to beer. While the bottle of synthetic Coca-Cola is opened by them with an evident fancy and thinking of the night disco, a shiny beer tap is for them only mere necessary nuisance. Unluckily, they often take this kind of attitude to their later carrier. Once I said about one real seamstress, who made me a suite, which I was scare to wear in public, that she would better work in a cheap pub. Today, after many years of pub practice I am taking it back, because I know, that there she would cause a much larger damage.

A palpable difference between two young ladies in drafting business I registered in early 90's in one restaurant in South Moravia. With a delayed consternation I learned shortly after my arrival, that the restaurant serves as a working place for the students of some vocational school, which was relevantly documented by beer glasses with from the sight absolutely unsavory contain. I was not looking forward the beer I had ordered, especially when I was watching a bored girl apprentice, who just had come to the tap and was going to draft me a beer. Suddenly from somewhere appeared a young female supervisor, who drove the student out of tap room and to my pleasure she created me with a help of both her hands and by knacky angling of pint to tap-faucet a dewy, Brussel-laced beer crowned by thick snow white foam. So, the problem is not definitely in the age or even gender, but in the attitude.

Oscar Wilde once wrote, that the women are here to be loved and not to be understood. For this reason let us to be nice and tolerant when we meet a woman in a beer cellar, behind a bar counter or just inside the pub with a pint of beer in her hand. Even they can be thirsty and after all - they are after a dog and book the best friend of the human.

This bizarre story happened in early 80's, which was a time of Cold War and Iron curtain. An average man from Prague – let us call him Henry, took one weekend a family trip to his in-laws, who lived in a south of Czechoslovakia. In the afternoon was very hot, so Henry decided to moisten his throat in a local pub. He started with a local beer, which he did not enjoy too much, so he soon switched to hard liquor. After countless shots of rum and plum brandy his pub friends gave him some samples of homemade wine. A few minutes before midnight the men from the pub dragged a heavily drunk Henry out and aimed him to the direction of his in-laws' house. Then the beer confusion happened....

A morning chill found a devastated Henry in a grassy ditch. He opened his eyes trying to remember, what had happened with him in a last few hours. His freshest recollections were a smokey pub, dirty table cloth, where he had occasionally laid his heavy head and an acid beverage, which he had been trying to put into his stormy stomach. He got up and he staggered toward a road. But the road had change since yesterday significantly. It was in unusually good shape, and the unintelligible inscription on a road sign of a different color, which later kept recurring in his nightmares ended with a German syllable – dorf. A confused drinker during a wild night had drunk himself into the capitalist Austria! And all this happened at the time of barbed-wired border lines and heavily armed guards. Henry panicked and despite he had got easily to the other side, compared to the people, who had been trying it hard way by avoiding shooting and cutting the wires, he gave up himself in the nearest police station. Austrian policemen thought, he was some kind of double agent or idiot. Even worse was an encounter with the authorities back in Czechoslovakia. Nobody wanted to believe him this absurd story and Henry found himself in a very deep shit.

Yes. It is like this. The beer apart from elevating its drinkers to the heaven highs, it makes them drunk too. And when makes them drunk it also confuses. Each and every individual has his (her) own borderline, on one side of which is a smiling tap-room, a delicious brew sliding easily to the eager throat and pub's horse play. After crossing the imaginary line the beer drinker is suddenly surrounded by unpredictable virtual reality, he is falling through an elastic sieve of multidimensional ethanol world and he is mercilessly drawn by alcohol tentacles into the incalculable underworld. But he does not have to fall all the way to the bottom, he may hold himself on some rung of a gloomy trap door. Maybe on such, which brings a ticklish feelings in midriff, causeless joy and relaxing laughter. So, once, about 30 years ago I honestly laughed in some train station buffet, when the miners were spilling their mild beers, travelers were eating sausages and even some retired man was saving a sausage peels for his dog or for himself for the supper. Ha,ha,ha! And that time I had just a few beers... Oh, no... Hold on! I forgot, I had taken also some pain killers, because I had had a severe toothache and I was scared of dentist. Also, I had been more and more depressed in a quandary of the world of bolshevik's despotism.

Sometime a beer-confused person may even look orderly and intelligent. But the energizing liquid, which attacks his veins from inside gives him a hazardous courage to make the decisions or perform the deeds, that he would avoid being sober.

The building of Conservatory of Music in a town of Ostrava, which I had been attending for full six years had its own janitor, actually, as every other school. In that case it was old,

dwarfed, mentally retarded and squinting midget named Baran with the IQ of concrete pidgeon and verbal ability of 5 years old Dawn-syndromed child. This dangerous spook was a menace just to freshmen, maybe sophomores, who were getting scared meeting him on the schools hallways, because Baran often forced them to manual work, for which the school would have to pay to any regular contractor. Older students, however, were immune to Baran. They were making fun of him, sometime they even locked him inside a school cellar. Baran surprisingly lived trough a retiring age, school was still employing him as an occasional trouble-shooter and his wife kept her work in a school reception. To his original flat moved a new janitor with his family. It was really an abrupt change. New janitor Garge was 33, he had an athletic figure, Italian features and the energy to change a long-running course of the matters and to demolish the fossile traditions. During his stay started to function a school club, disco and his apartment became a sanctuary or meeting point of selected students, who used to gather there to discuss from time to time a current dissatisfying situation on a soil of this school. Understandably, George soon became "a hair in a pint" for management of Conservatory, which did not like him at all.

In Halloween Day in 1981 at 9 AM I knocked on a door of janitor's flat. I left my home without the breakfast, I had a few hours of spare time before I was supposed to meet some friends to go with to the pub, so I was very grateful for a bottle beer, George offered me. Janitor was sipping black coffee. He complained. He had the problems. A school management does not understand him and baits against him the professors and external authorities. At that time a beer Radegast had a square logo and pleasant bready aftertaste. I opened a next piece. I learned, that last week it had been a disciplinary action with a janitor, which was noted down to the piece of paper. What? A monster Baran was terrorizing maybe whole two generations of students of music and they will stone a savior? No! I have just eight months till graduation, but I am going to do something with it! After third beer on an empty stomach I finally got it! I select from a meeting's minute a page, where a headmaster explicitly prohibits a janitor from using students for manual work. I must be hallucinating! For two years I was experiencing a slavery under Baran's whip and nobody stood up for me. And in a difference – George would pay for it. Fuckin' hypocrites! Every single decent student must know that! I agree with George, that I will place this particular page to a board close to the cloakroom. I am doing so, but George is a little worried and he asks me to watch closely this important piece of paper, because it absolutely must not get to the hands of the institution, which has created it. For about an hour I am standing close to the board and with a satisfaction I am watching how are the students learning who leads our school. But there is some traitor among us. Suddenly comes out a Baran's wife from the reception and removed a paper from the board. A consumed beer makes me defiant and aware of my honor duty I am stepping this woman to her way asking her politely to return the document and finally I am trying to take it from her by force and I catch her hand. The situation gets more dramatic, the professors, furious Baran and George himself are entering the scene and I finally find a refuge from the raging crowd inside a Janitor's apartment. I feel like a criminal. I attacked a powerless old lady!

In a headmaster's office is hastily assembled a disciplinary board and I am submitted to interrogation. Did you drink any alcohol? Yes. Three beers from Radegast brewery. Any other

illegal substances? Don't lie to us! There will be a police investigation and you will go through the blood test. Allegedly I caused to Mrs. Baran some bruises and tore off her earring worth about 50 dollars. The Jarošek case was investigated not only in an academic soil of artistic school, but also in some municipal communist institutions, where my father used to have a lot of friends. So, I was put in some disciplinary action receiving a serious written warning, but luckily I was not expelled.

Shortly after this incident janitor George left a school. Since then I saw him just once – about 14 years later in TV in a program Czech Republic Most Wanted. He was searched by police because of crimes of blackmailing and health damages.

In spite of seriousness of my transgression I was allowed to perform my own graduation concert. Today I can hardly believe, that in 1982 I was able to conduct school orchestra playing my own little symphony. And I did not believe it even at that time, when I doubt my conducting skills. My professor of this subject, who had been trying very hard for six years to motivate me to become interested in orchestra conducting with no palpable results, shortly before my graduation left for geisha chasing to Japan. His replacement was a guy more than whole generation younger, so during our classes and orchestra rehearsals we rather were drinking together not properly chilled bottle beer than working on my conductor's achievement, so I was getting more and more frustrated and scared of my looming concert.

"Don't come to the idea to drink a beer before the concert," my father was instructing me a few days in advance. He had invited to my expected performance a wide scale of our relatives and family friends, so he could not afford any kind of fiasco. In the "D" day I was holding and resisting bravely until a dress rehearsal, when I finally realized: I can't do it sober! Right opposite to House of Culture, which was supposed to become a stage of my desperate self-demonstration of my would-be conducting skills was located a pretty disgusting house estate pub. Without any particular desire to drink a local mediocre brew, for a reason of calming down my alarmed senses and relaxing my inner tension I poured into myself six full pints. It did not matter any longer! Surprisingly – a feeling of responsibility to the mankind, or at least to its fraction invited by my father prevented me somehow to disclose my evident intoxication caused by alcohol voluntarily taken into my blood system. So, about half an hour before the performance I was strolling along the corridor of the House of Culture with a beer bottle in my hand, occasionally chatting with a people (with whom and what about I never recollected) and expecting my first (and last) public concert, where I was going to introduce myself as a conductor. When I stood up face to face to symphonic orchestra in a short episode of the beer confusion, for a while I could not find a baton. But finally, all turned out well. A nice orchestra consisted of my schoolmates played almost itself, while I was absorbed into my music wildly waving both hands. After a final cord (I paid an excessive attention to this last majestic gesture) I realized, I officially had concluded my study and I must drink on it! Unfortunately, even in closest restaurant they had on a tap only not-too-fancy local beer.

A beer confusion is a threat to all possible occupations. It can effect a barber above a cut throat of a client, a strayed miner inside a mine, a teacher lying to the pupils, Russia is full of

funny stories about drunk aircraft pilots. But the most striking examples of this phenomenon offer undoubtedly the artistic professions.

In mid 80's I worked as a professional musician with a dance band in some Silesian town. Soon we discovered there a nice pub "By a Train Station", where our later friend Pavel used to draft a local brew called Zlatovar 12°. Beer was excellent, beside a surrounding landscape full of chlorophyll and photosynthesis inspired us to drink a special green liquor (Chartreuse), so we often came to stage in our bar in very good mood. Unhappy bandleader, who had not been drinking with us was always trying to persuade us not to continue with further intoxication, but try to stop an express train in motion! Then by ethanol-stimulated drummer Fanda was spraying some stinky insecticide on our too square bandleader, in no time he converted Italian lyrics of one song to badly articulated Rhetoroman, he kept dropping his drumsticks, later he was just sitting behind his drum kit with pacific face occasionally blowing his plugged nostrils into his shirt sleeve. A cheerful and relaxing atmosphere was interfered just by disgustingly sober bandleader, who was yelling out of a thick biolit cloud to so-far-alive rest of the band to switch off a red spotlight above a drunk Fanda.

One of the most well-known beer-confusers from my home town Ostrava was a saxophone player Venca, whose reputation exceeded the boundaries of our region. In sobriety a nice quite guy and a devoted musician after crossing his tolerance point turned into the legendary Mr. Hyde and he became a danger to himself and all his instantaneous environment as well. A really funny story could be narrated by one bandleader, who was once traveling by train to Prague to see his agent. In a dining car he met a drunk Venca, who was just playing on his saxophone for startled guests a medley of some demanding be-bop compositions.

"Oh, good! We've got a drummer!" exclaimed suddenly a beer-confused jazzman, he pulled him to the table and briefly explained him a structure of a next jazz song. Then he was playing his sax, while bewildered and sober drummer was banging to the table as he was playing the drums. After 20 minutes of nice jam-session drunk Venca vomited on a nicely dressed playmate and politely said: "I am sorry!"

No wonder, that Venca faced some difficulties where he was looking for some musician, that might join him to create some very unpredictable band. In 1985 I agreed to play with him in one bar in Slovakia just because I wanted to test a local beer, I was free at that time and I did not know Venca too personally. So, by my own effort I became a part of the band, which could not be possible assembled even by a virus-infested computer. I did not mean an incurable alcoholic Mencek with an appearance of overaged St. Bernard dog, who had his stomach so damaged by ethanol, than he almost could not eat and he was throwing up every single morning. However, if he had his six pack for the performance, he played his chart and there were not bigger problems with him. I ever got used to Polish Jew Ruda, who thanks to his height of 160 cm suffered of Napoleon complex, he plays his bass through a head-taller speaker box and he was always growling in Czech and Polish about everything. Venca, after three days of very relative sobriety started his routine alcoholic hurdle race and need to say, that he properly introduced himself even in that little Slovak town of Banská Bystrica. Same as in his home town Ostrava also in BB he crawled the pubs drinking bravely, later he was entering a staff premises asking for some eye drops (???) or he just wanted to chat there,

what was a pretty fruitless, because at that time next to nobody could understand his mumbling.

Upon our evening performance he usually played just a few first instrumental pieces and then he threw himself again to the stream of alcohol of any imaginable form. Later at the night his musical aptitudes were so destroyed, that we had to, in the interest to keep at least some remaining prestige of our "band" keep him out of stage. In the end of our production early morning Venca stagger on a stage as a rule without his sax. He embraced a microphone stand and with touching guilty face he sang:

"Little girl, in a moment we will break up, Little girl, we will never meet again....."

Maybe it looked like, but it was not definitely a personal confession and not at all it was renounce of future dissipating life.

After a few days Venca got lazy to commute from gig to a couple kilometers distanced hotel and he slept in a little dress room right behind the stage. In a morning he was usually woken up by a cleaning lady, or he woke up by himself and knocked the door to be let out. At 10 AM they were opening a stylish Gothic pub "Red Crayfish", where Venca normally started his drinking day.

After Saturday gig we were going to travel by train back home, so around 3 AM we walked through a sleeping time to the train station. As usually, Venca was reeling on a sidewalk and because he did not have his ubiquitous saxophone with him, he was, at least loudly singing his beloved Charlie Parker tunes embellished with some national folk song's lyrics. An uniformed policeman looking strict even from the distance were coming to our way, so I tried to calm excited Venca down. But beer-confused Bohemian seized up a policeman and barked on him:

"Show me your ID!!"

This day was Venca lucky. He was not arrested in Slovakia and he was woken up in a Czech-Polish border and made to abandon a train heading for Krakow, so he did not become a victim of the martial law imposed in Poland in early 80's.

The perfect beer confusion has even its name in medical science – either it is classic Delirium Tremens or chronic paranoid condition caused by years of heavy drinking – Korsak disease (do not confuse with N.R. Korsakov – a composer of popular "The flight of the bumble-bee). But drunk person does not necessarily have to see a myrtle-green lizards, pink elephants, white mice or spiders to realize something is going terribly wrong. It is enough to oversleep in some public transportation means and after cruel awake to analyze with difficulties a current destination. One of my colleagues fell asleep on a train and he woke up with a hangover in empty car hearing some female voices chirping in some unintelligible language. He did not find himself in a beer paradise – a place where goes a beer lover after liver failure, but in some side rail in a train station in Eastern Slovakia, about 200 miles from his hometown surrounded by Hungarian speaking maintenance ladies.

Once I had a short nap on the train, which was going through a pitoresque South Bohemia countryside. When I woke up I was frighten to watch the children running on the surface of

the pond. Even after five pints of local brew I soon figured out, that despite a sunny weather there was still very early spring and the kids were actually skating.....

My friend Pavel is a real beer gourmet. He devotes to beer tasting all his spare time, so he was doing that once in a morning of New Year's Eve sometime in late 80's, when he was waiting for a train in a famous buffet "The Wet Elbow" in Ostrava railway station. Local mild beer was fantastic, sausages well smoked, almost home-made goulash soup literally warmed the stomach- during such great time there is usually no urge to get to the poorly heated train and after this to participate in preparation of some cheesy New Year's Eve party back home. A pint was replacing a pint, the time was passing slowly, but Pavel left a sanctuary of buffet only when he needed to pee or when he wanted to look for the next train on a time table after he had missed a previous one. The buffet was scented by festive atmosphere and roughly after tenth pint a lucky Pavel was invited to the buffet kitchen, where he could be personally introduced to his icon – bartender Fanda and have a toast with the other local staff. A pure pleasure of this rare life's moment evaporated after 10 PM, in a train station in Pardubice (about 170 miles from Pavel's home), where he had to face a shortage of funds and infamous way back home, where his very delayed arrival was expected by his angry wife, who rather than roller pin was going to use some legal advice from divorce lawyer.

Once I woke up in the middle of the night in my friend's house inside a closet wrapped into a few coats, where I had to, evidently in a sleep-walking state descent from the higher floor. However, much worse was an awaking in somebody's else bed inside an unknown apartment next to loudly snoring individual resembling a male buffet drinker. In a panic I recalled scary stories, that sometime the frustrated horny homos abuse the indisposed drunk person of the same sex, but originally of opposite sex orientation to satisfy their perverse libido. Fortunately it turned out to be just some ugly woman of Greek origin, who happened to have in the same town the same ugly twin sister. A bit calmer but even more bizarre was awaking inside a strange flat, where some, about five years old kid was just watching a Sunday TV program for children.

But not all stories written by beer or other friendly spirits are so hilarious. Alcohol may become a demon. Alcohol hurts. Alcohol even kills, as commented a rooster looking on the cock-au-vin according some old anecdote. What could say a family of my ex-schoolmate, who in the age of 17 heavily drunk fell asleep in a ditch and during the night got frozen to death? And how's about some waiter from Ostrava night club, who after the unprudent January's drunkenness in -20 C freezing temperature slipped and fell early morning on a street, lost his consciousness and almost lost both of his hands?

In October 23 1987 I was supposed to have a rehearsal with the band. But it was canceled, so, so I ended up in a pub. After having a few pints I met my colleague Josef, who was always ready to drink. We agreed to perform a pub crawl in a city district, where Josef lived. In one pub a beer was warm, in the other stale. However, we kept drinking. Josef after fifth pint became hilarious, in good mood he was spitting on a floor, he was provoking local workers and on a way between the pubs he yelled on a women some dirty words. Good entertainment lingered until 11 PM, when I decided to conclude this cheerful evening and go home.

The pub “U Káňů” is still opened, they do not a draft any longer, so we drink well-cooled bottles. I realize with self-admiration, that I have already my 12. pint! I do not know a departure time of my bus, but we leave the lounge in a good spirit. About 20 meters later I notice, we are approached by some fellow drinker.

“Don’t you know, guys, what time it is?” he asks.

I give him this information and I continue to chat with Josef. But drunk pedestrian is not apparently happy with my answer. He starts to swear to us, to threat and then he opens a gate to the garden to some family house and gives a clear order:

“Betty, get them!”

Out of the twilight emerges a mighty German Shepard and throws to the middle of us. A scuffle is happening and I, against my will become a main actor of fantasmagoric war movie, in which I am on my escape from Nazi concentration camp chased by blood-thirsty dog. So I run about 100 meters. Fortunately, Betty is still big poppy and she is rather playing than attacking. But it cannot be said about her master, who catches me near a bus stop. In a following fight I do not have a chance.

My rival is stronger, more experienced, in addition he is supported by his loyal beast, who during the fight bit my shins. After a few strong punches I fall down to the pavement, where I received one more complimentary kick to my shoulder .Night city bus arrives and I am escaping the crime scene.

The next day I made a staff in a hospital’s surgery ward very happy. Numerous contusions, black eye, a finger broken in a joint, bitten shins. Why didn’t you come right after your accident at night? You bet! At night I had an alcohol level in my blood about 0,3%, somebody might have to check it and I could have been transported to detox center and considered as my own accomplice. And how’s about my insurance company then? This way I am just a poor victim of unprovoked violent and my attacker will pay. And so, in a compliance with a court decision it was. Medical expenses, sick-leave, compensation, smart money. However, in two years that hapless guy paid to his beer confusion the highest price. After one return from the pub, when his own wife refused to let him in, he entered a garage, got on his car, fell asleep, but before he had started the engine to heat.....

A few weeks after my accident I met my musical colleague Standa. By coincidence in the very same day he also became a victim of violent mugging. Three young criminals beat him up severely, robbed him of money and they even took of his jeans. I randomly checked a date October 23 in a calendar. It was a regular working day, but there was printed: A day of the employees in cultural business.

“It might be something on it,” Standa was thinking, “when they were kicking me to the kidneys it seemed to me, that one of them said – All the best!”

Often a beer does not let go its drinker to the place, where he would like to go. But this way it looks just from the layman’s perspective. In reality a beer drinker does not want to leave his beloved beverage and the beer itself as a true friend helps him to discover and later to realize his real pure intentions.

Rene was attending a high school in city of Ostrava, but he resided in about 40 miles distant Rožnov. In Ostrava he lived in rented room. One Monday morning (there was a flexible school schedule in a Conservatory that time) he grabbed his bag with a dirty clothing and left for a railway station. On the way he met a friend, so he stopped in a pub for one beer. Single one beer grew up to 15 pints and around 11 PM Rene judged, that would be more practical to stay one more night in his Ostrava shelter. In a morning Rene was suffering of pounding headache and he needed just “one beer to recover”. Rene grabbed the bag again and he visited a tap-room close to tram-stop. Not even that day he reached his hometown and he slept totally drunk in Ostrava again. The situation repeated in Wednesday as well, but that time Rene spent a night on a bench in nearby park. Same day the same plan, the same bag becoming heavier by a new dirty clothe, the same thirst and same scenario. Rene finally got home Friday evening and he spent a weekend in a care of his parents healing from the beer confusion.

Sometime even the domestic animals may play their role in the incredible stories of beer confusion-stricken drinker.

In a cozy cheap pub in village called Žimrovice a beer drinking was a real treat. My fellow beer lover Kamil knew exactly, where to take me. We already had had a few pints in different pubs and in Žimrovice we were just tuning-up our drunkenness. But properly rinsed kidneys started make a pressure t a bladder and it was necessary to visit a loo situated outside the pub in a square yard. On a yard there were strolling some local chickens and one big colorful rooster. He was prancing proudly and he was seizing me up. In no time I recalled th stories of people, who had been insidiously attacked by this kind of poultry. This rooster is definitely mean, I said to myself. He waits, till I turn back to him, so he could jump to my head, beat me with his wings and peck me vigorously! Feared chicken macho was guarding a toilet entrance, so although I was under an imminent threat of burst bladder, I returned unemptied to the taproom. Kamil meanwhile ordered another two beers and my suffering was becoming insufferable. When I started to experience a yellow vision, I regained my beer drinker’s defiance. How can you, moron be scared of some fuckin’ poultry? You are stronger, much more clever, and you are also protected by law. So, don’t you let some even-not-flying- bird to prevent you from pee! With a newly recharged energy I stepped out to yard again. A roster was still close to the toilet, but when he saw my determination, he started his slow, but significant retreat. You see – cock. Now I will have a pee, if you like it or not! The path to restroom was free. A poultry acknowledge my status of leading species of the nature. Maybe it needs a stone. No, I don’t want to hurt the defenseless animals. At least I spit to the rooster a few times. I hope, nobody was watching me that time.....

A person in a state of beer confusion makes a bizarre things, devices wonderful nonsense, without his own intentions travels to the places, that would avoid sober and sometime even risks his health or life. But sometime he achieves a trick, which is absolutely irrational.

Especially in the past in Czech pubs the waiters was drawing little commas to consumption bills indicating an amount of drank beers. Once I tested a waiter and I added two commas to the bill on my own. Despite it was drawn by different pen and my commas were little smaller,

a waiter charged me fully. I had been happy to trick him just to the moment I realized, what kind of stupid thing I had made.....

## CHAPTER 4 THE ONE WHO PLAYS IS NOT NAUGHTY

There is, what our grandmas used to say and they were right. Same as a child plays with a doll or a toy-train and today's kids are wasting time by playing computer games or face book, a beer drinker in a pub also does not annoy other people and he is capable to entertain himself all alone, eventually with a companion of a group of similarly oriented mates. Inside a tap-room is possible to play numerous gambling games, in what the final prize is the beer

itself. But with a beer you can play also the games just for a pleasure and for speeding up a tempo of consumption.

A regular match box of the past used to have a really boxy shape (not like the flat ones of today) and a colorful label on its top, which used to be an interest of some collectors (philumenists). How much joy brought such simple matchbox on a top of pub table in a vicinity of full pints of beer! Very favored game was the one called "21". The matchbox was placed on a tip of the table, so it little protruded over the surface and by hitting by two-fingers-stroke was thrown to the air. If it fell back down on its plain reverse side, there was just one point counted, the other -label side worth two points and if some more sophisticated player succeeded in landing the matchbox on a longer edge, he received five points. The top achievement was to make a matchbox land on its shorter edge, which was awarded by full ten points! The goal of this game was to reach a number of points of 22 or higher and avoid to score the multiples of number 7 (7,14, 21). Apart from a proper skills and some amount of luck, of course, there was required also some basic math knowledge. Today's games of "21" are complicated because of slim shape of matchboxes, and also it is very difficult to play it with a generic lighters.....

Another popular game was so called Bolivia, when, with the same kinds of tecnics the matchbox was being thrown over the full pint. The point of this game was a drink-punishment, especially when the matchbox landed inside a beer glass. One of my colleagues, after he had returned from La Paz complained, that he had failed to get any locals into this game, although he had been expecting, that in Bolivia everybody was a champion.

In early 80's with my friends from B. O. H we invented so called a rhythm toast, when each fresh pint was welcomed by collective drumming on a table desk. However, within the years this phenomenon was getting more and more complex, so in a pub was more banging than drinking, what was a reason of decline of popularity of this ritual, which later disappeared.

Another time in a pub we invented some simple game with a matchbox again, when who lost had to have a few minutes long chat with the strangers in a table, which we had chosen for him (her). So, one notorious game-looser was refining his rhetoric skills in a table full of tired and gloomy miners, one of which, after his third interruption of the debate about the morning shift was furiously chasing that unlucky guy around the lounge.

A regular pub-goer does not only like to play games, but is also keen on inventing some mischiefs and tricks, so he can enjoy some free beer. One of my beer-mates, who studied a law school in Brno once told me in a pub:

"Let's make a bet (stake) for one beer, that I will drink up a shot of Scotch whisky just with a help of my eyes!"

Of course, I was expecting some catch, so I was looking into some possible hidden meanings of words and puns. But my friends assured me, that there was no trick. He would be simply looking into a shot of whisky as long as the liquid inside disappears. In expectation I bought a shot of expensive whisky and I placed it in front of concentrating student. He, from the distance of about half meter started to hypnotize a glass for about 20 seconds, then he grabbed a shot and knocked it off. After he had exhaled gourmetly he said:

I've lost. I will pay you a beer."

OK. The beer cost 3 crowns, while the Scotch about 45. At that time I realized, that my friend would be a good lawyer.

No beer festival can do without beer contests and games, but not all of them meets an interest of the public. So, in 2000 totally failed my contest of throwing (hurling) a beer label and also a race, who would collect more than 20 used beer-bottle-caps. Although there were the liquid prizes, the local dustbins remained almost untouched.

Once I made a contest of distinguishing (of) seven different samples of beer, that were at least partly well-known. The contestants absolutely failed in this discipline, which, nevertheless can be ascribed to taste unification of mass produced beers.

Sometime is for the game necessary to leave a cozy tap-room and take part in some outdoor competition, which, beside an obligatory lifting the full pints also requires other physical activity. Very popular are organized pub-crawls around a chain of bars, in each of which, in accordance with the rules is mandatory to drink at last one large beer and get some private stamp or a check as a proof of presence.

Sometime in 1992 I read in some magazine an interesting article, that's author personally took part in traditional beer run in a south of the country. An hour before the race the brave journalist went through a whole route accompanied by local champion. He learnt, that it was not a race around the pubs, but around the special stations, on each of which is mandatory to drink one bottle of warm beer as fast as possible. In first turn the champion pointed out a dense bush.

"There is necessary to throw up the first beer..."

A journalist grinned despisely. He had come all the way from Prague for this business trip to drink beer, not to vomit. He decided to use his own strategy. That July afternoon a temperature climbed up to 90°F. The route of the race lead mostly along an arid asphalt road uphill, so the first dose of beer came very handy. But after a few hundreds yards, when the journalist was swallowing another warm brew, he felt inside his body a splashing stream of drunk beer and annoying bloating bubbles of CO<sub>2</sub>. The third beer on the next station was already critical and started to make him so queasy, so for a few seconds he was fighting with a temptation to fall to the ground and let some squealing ambulance to take care of him. His life was finally saved by his own finger stuck inside his throat, which caused a purifying vomit. A poor guy then finished the race in a slower tempo with watchfully planned puking. He had one of the worst time of all contestants, but he got a good feeling of a victory over himself.

The most perverse contests are about who drinks fastest or who can knock off a largest amount of beer. If you want to empty 1 liter jug of beer for just five seconds, you have to switch off your swallow muscles and pour the liquid into your body like into the toilet bowl. The champions of such disciplines are not usually good degustators. There is also a question, if a contestant attacking a three-digit-number of consumed beer in one single session still maintains some remnants of ability to perceive the basic attributes of a beverage and if he is

still aware, why he is doing that. Beer drinking is not official Olympic discipline, so potential champion cannot expect any financial compensation for his damaged health.

However, a beer drinking contest does not have to be always a matter of life and death. For instance in Ostrava's brewpub Hobbit they run already 8. season of popular competition "100 spring beers" (much more fun version of traditional sport event "100 spring kilometers". Who will drink up 100 beers inside a pub since the official beginning of spring (March 21) as the first, becomes a winner. The achievements under one week are not exception, even there are the rumors, that some beer athletes during the race are occasionally practicing at home or in other pubs....

In the same brewpub in 2004 was born an excellent idea of so called "Devilish Black League". If we divide a devilish number 666 by that day's price of black beer, which was 18.50 crowns, the result is precisely 36. This amount of beer must a team of three finish in the best possible time. Dark beer "Bernard" had Plato 13° and about 5,5% of alcohol. The philosophy of this contest was clear: Show, that beside a sitting in a pub and snobishly sipping a lager you are able to imbibe properly, to give your liver to the stake and to face a devilish black beer storm. One for all and everybody for himself! Let's everybody in a race drink as fast as possible, encourage his team mates and fight against a growing aversion or eventual kidney failure! An engaging show will attract a number of spectators and also – a gain of 666 crowns for just three people is not happening every day!

In spite of indisputable attractivity of this game, the interest of potential contestant was not to great. Every single rational beer drinker, who had not lost his drive of self-preservation yet could imagine in three dimensions what such race was all about, especially after not-too-convincing attempts of first two teams. The first team finished its 36 beers in 3 hours 5 minutes, but its members after this were suffering for a next few days of inflammation, black stool, stomach cramps and enormously hollow heads. The second team did not finish the race at all because of lost consciousness of one of its contestant. A management of Hobbit was trying to solve this stalemate situation by making the strict rules more flexible. So, in mid-February 2004 took part in this crazy and dangerous race also two women, that were counted as one drinker. So, the classic trio became a devoted quartet pleasantly enriched by female hormones. I personally attended this Saturday's event, because I was going to write an article to the local newspaper and I had a really good time. Two slim blondes were drinking bravely, each of them poured into herself self-sacrificely full six pints of strong dark beer, but the team was mostly supported by its leader – beer lover Thomas who after assessing the situation, when another male team member was struggling with 10. pint, emptied two pints more, than he had been supposed to and the goal – 36 beers was accomplished in new record – 2 hours, 46 minutes. Then Thomas was celebrating his team's achievement by a few pieces of pale brew.

Beside all belligerency of this team, I admired most a work of a team coach Zdenek, who had worked out a strategic plan, he was navigating his charges in a speed of drinking, he kept encouraging them and he was conducting all course of the race until the final result. 12 beers in two and half hour – it would kill me- I sight, but to be a coach – that I would enjoy!

By chance, a few weeks later the owner of the Hobbit pub George confessed, that he was going to create a team to beat the temporary record by the time under 2.30 and he asked me to be their coach. It was a rare chance for me, especially when I learnt, that that team would be consisted of rock musicians – guitar player Horror and drummer Martin. George himself played bass. In a “B” day I wrote The “Extended Beer Multimantra” which was supposed to stimulate my contestants. This multimantra became popular and in the first minutes of the race was read by sportsmen out of printed sheet. Because such enormous amount of beer should be drunk with a food, I bought on my expenses some cheese, bacon and salami so dry, that it almost get ignited by itself. A team met in a venue one hour earlier to elaborate a racing tactics. We all agreed, that upon this astronomical number of beer is necessary to drink at least the first pint “bottom up” style and then next two pints to finish in a time limit of six minutes, because it is obligatory to liquidate the biggest number of beers within the first hour, just before the startled organism starts to protest by various means and an unavoidable crisis would come. Next approx. 80 minutes, which would left to projected goal time were highly recommended to follow the blueprint just freely, because it was expected, that the devoted racing drinkers would suffer a lost of the touch with a reality. All three beer lovers signed on a race in good shape, two of them with painstakingly cultivated thirst, aspiring George with his stomach extended by 2 liters of water. START!!!

After a toast the first three beers are disappearing in the racer’s throats. Bottoms up!! All possible leftovers are unacceptable and against the rules! Horror knocks off his second pint as well, the others follow a recommended time limit. The team keeps a good spirit. Tiny complication appears after third fast beer. Although the beer in Hobbit is tapped properly without exceeded carbonation, CO<sub>2</sub> starts to heap in upper parts of contestant’s bodies and prevents a compulsory liquid from getting inside. Horror is resolving the situation as the first and he sends me to the drugstore for a package of a backing soda. As a beer snack this chemical is very improper, but in this particular case comes pretty handy. After a huge belching the pharynx gets free and Horror drinks intensively again.

But unfortunately, it is not possible to say about the rest of the team. They suffer, they are losing energy and soon they start to vomit – by chance about one meter from the bar counter. Drummer Martin green in face confesses, that he has been experiencing some stomach problem since his childhood. Even he conveys me a name of this strange diagnosis. And with such ailment he decided to compete? A doctor would mark it as a health hazard, but I call it a personal sacrifice to an altar of Devilish League. This team deserves to win!

A truck from Bernard Brewery brings a beer cargo and George as the manager goes to take it over. A physical activity makes him good. The next hour he is appearing in a lounge just sporadically, but he is still drinking and ordering the new pints. Horror does not need any motion and he is consuming effectively sitting on a chair. I am just worried by unlucky Martin, who, admittedly, has drunk himself through seven pints, but he does not look good at all. We cannot afford such deficit, I said to myself and as the last possible solution I drag suffering Martin to the fresh air. There, for the next five minutes he is concentrating on an intensive emptying of his screwed stomach. As a difference from the inside incident, it is not going on some isolated case, but on continuous black waterfall. It works! A contestant begins to react to verbal stimulations and he is more or less capable to keep a straight direction.

Hurry back to the tap room! This race is not lost by far! Bartender- one dark beer for the athlete!

The grand finale is ravishing. Horror has already accomplished a norm of 12 beers and out of team solidarity he is working on his 13<sup>th</sup> one. Meanwhile George is ordering his final piece, he is trying to keep his severely intoxicated brain working, he is asking me about double meaning English words and he is carrying out the phone calls, that he would never to make sober. Heavily drunk Martin knocks down a mug and spills his 11. pint and the board of judges decides to give him one more chance. If he drinks one more half-pint, a total of 11 beers will be counted. Horror grabs by his unsure hand his 14. pint. It looks like today he is drinking all the way. Close to the goal tape I try to watch his unstable pace, by Horror is getting out of my control and falls on a ground. They say, that drunk persons are lucky. In Horror's case it is maybe only half-true. He got injured by the broken glass, but it looks like just some superficial wound, moreover instantly sanitized by malt-hop extract.

Ignorant University students, that were regularly visiting this memorable place were that particular day horrified, when they saw in their quite academic environment vomited floor and almost motionless bleeding patron, who had been lifted up by a group of voluntary paramedics and he was yelling furiously: "I'm gonna kill you all!"

Martin during this dramatic moment finished his 11. beer and our team won in a beautiful time 2 hours and 26 minutes!

In the next moments I was receiving congratulations and words of thanks from the viewers, but mainly from extremely happy George, who was finishing himself by mild beer and was entertaining whole pub.

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm of victory lasted only for two weeks. A beer champion Thomas did not cope with the burden of loss, he engaged two young promising drinkers and in the end of May during the beer uragan in Hobit with them reached an unbelievable achievement – 36 beers in 1hour 40 minutes! That record could not be beaten and so I lost my desired title – The Couch Of The Year. But I did not lose my good feelings, because I had recalled the old Czech proverb: It is not important to win, but to gain the victory!

Are such contests too brutal? Maybe. In a pub you can also resolving a crossword puzzle, play spelling games or scissors, stone, paper. Or you can also perform a popular pub pastime "A frog on a spring (source)", when a group of efficient beer drinkers moves the table closer to the tap and whole pub turns beerless (the rest of the guest does not have anything to drink).

## KAPITOLA 5            MY HOLY WAR WITH RADEGAST

All that story started calmly. I was asked by editor-in-chief of one local newspaper, to which I was contributing to write some article about why the beer Radegast (a local brand) is not by far as tasty as used to be about 15 years ago. It was a beer to my mill. I sat down behind my PC and in one hour I was done. What I created came directly out of my heart and mind:

What has happen? Mr. Kvasnica is thinking in a flashing light of slot machine inside unseemly pub over the pint of neutral liquid. What happened with a beer, which bears a name of pagan god Radegast, with a beer, which once was filling us with joy by its deep bitterness and yeasty breadness lingering for the long seconds on a palate? What happened with this noble

brew, for which we used to be willing travel across the big city to find it? But something must have definitely happen, because the beer, on which I have my best memories and this, I am sipping right now simply can't be the same brand!

But it can, Mr. Kvasnica! However, for explanation we must go back against a time line to the past, long before SAB Miller invasion, before the merge with Plzeňské Pivovary a.s., even one year before our anti-communist revolution.

In 1988 the brewery Radegast was one of the first factory of its kind in Czechoslovakia newly equipped with modern technology -so called CK tanks. This particular device there and in other CS breweries as well then initiated the process, when the honest craft work is replaced by mass production and rush for a quantity and profit. Cylinder-conical tanks practically speed up the production, namely the stage of maturing and conditioning, so while in a classical fermenting vessel and a cellar the beer was conditioning for a few weeks, even months, in CK tanks is done in a few days. The exact number is the secret, but there are some rumors, that for instance during the increased demand this time can be even shorten. Such underbrewed beer is not possible compare to unfinished symphony, but rather to undercooked stew, half-raw bread, unsatisfied lover or undereducated politician.

Are you wagging your head, Mr. Kvasnica? But this is not all by far! Our traditions-abiding nation until today acknowledges so called "system or scale Plato", which describes a gravity of the beer. No wonder. Its inventor Mr. Karel. N. Balling was Czech. Although the mandatory Plato information mostly disappeared from our beer labels in mid 90's, the genuine lager should have at least 11° Plato. This is also important for the taxation. But beer known in a past as "ten" today is called "Tap Beer" or "Classic" and it has 10° Plato very rarely. Rather 9° or even 8°.

Some time ago every kind of beer was brewed separately. Today it is an anachronism too. HGB method counts on one single, for instance 16% Plato solution, of which later computer dilutes with the help of regular water 12, 10, or 8%, in a case of long war conflict, when barley is scarce even 4 or 2% (%=°), obviously if there will be the electricity for running of this device available. Contemporary experts call it "a modern standard method", but imagine if a bartender in a pub poured into your pint a tap water just to make a mild or light beer out of your originally regular lager.

As in the army is said: "Hurry to wait", a fast brewed brew baptized by extra water then absolves a thorough filtration, which, admittedly will deprive the beer of all last remnants of vitamins and natural taste, but will increase its durability to at least six months, so a "beer" can wait for some unlucky customer in any supermarket's shelf. The conservatives claim, that the beer is intended for drinking, not storing, but the progress cannot be stopped. Such prefabricated product is then ready to be enjoyed by powerless consumer. His mere illusion of pleasant taste experienced is also supported by media, that are constantly attacking potential clients with shrewd expensive ads and commercials.

For an accomplishment of Orwell's vision of a society, where all citizens are force to drink only what is advertised or recommended by Big Brother or the Great Manufacturer as the best, the only missing thing is, so far, an elimination of choice. Although a Boor manager or

third assistant of the brewer Oscar Dlu-dlu proves to us, that in accordance with the lab tests a quality of the product is stable and high, we still have an option to go to visit some brewpub which generally does not have a lab, but its beer is naturally tasty. It's a matter of personal preference. If somebody wants to the rest of his life to keep filling his poor stomach with washy synthetic shit like Radegast – it is his own choice. But I am personally pissed, that these mass-produced beers are spread almost everywhere, while a decent beer is still hard to find.

We live in a strange world, Mr. Kvasnica. The world's population is growing, beer consumption in traditional countries is going down, so in a future we will be importing millions of gallons of beer leftovers to hungry Africa, or we will be using it for irrigation. But I doubt, that there is going to grow anything usable.

Today's life is sometime more bitter than beer itself....

I expected tumultuous reaction from Radegast, eventually from whole Czech branch of SAB-Miller, but there were relative calm. Just one of secretary of Radegast CEO called to my editor-in-chief and accused her of publishing this article as a favor to the competition – namely to the corporation AB – InBev. So for the next issue of newspaper I was tasked to write about ALL destroyers of Czech beer in one single article. So, it was:

Bewildered beer drinker Mr. Kvasnica is still sitting in front of his unfinished pint meditating: Who, 20 years ago would have an idea, that once, because of the villain SAB-Miller Radegast would be standing in a same row with the beer jewels like South African "lager" Castle or legendary Slovak laxative Šariš and Pilsner Urquell itself, which had been labeled as a "family treasure" would be brewed in Poland or Russia! But South Africans are not by far the only beer rapist in our country. A systematic and malignant corrosion of Czech beer industry started as early in 1993, when British giant Burton+Bass seized a majority of shares of the company Pražské Pivovary a.s. In a few years some regional breweries were closed down and some were burdened by heavy debts. Nowadays a few remaining breweries from the Czech branch of Bass belong to American-Brasilian global company AB-InBev and some of the former local brands are still brewed under the license thanks to trademark ownership in large industrial brewery Staropramen in Prague.

But it had happened much earlier, when bitterish nice-smelled Staropramen beer started to develop traces of some almond-like taste. And do you remember, Mr. Kvasnica, when back in 80's you were standing in a long line in front of pub just to get a nice pint of Krušovice 12°? Today is the best to run away before a glass of this yellow tasteless piss land on your table.

Mr. Kvasnica absorbed into melancholy mood is thinking: This beer is full of substitutive extracts, its fermentation is sped up, various types of beers are prepared out of single solution (HGB) by adding a water and its durability is artificially extended. So, why these commercial brands are still enjoying such a large sale? Even Karl Marx in 19th century mentioned a transition of capitalism of a free competition to its more sophisticated and more malignant forms. When a simple-minded worker is addressed in a middle of TV program by nifty commercial, in which is starring a famous emperor Rudolph the II. holding a huge jug of Krušovice beer or beer-training camp leader in a fighting mood under the

Staropramen brewery flag, the message is clear: These beers are the best for you! Usually this brainwashing advertising hits a fertile soil. It obviously costs a money, but the giant corporations, unlike local or regional breweries do not suffer of shortage of it. And even if an average beer drinker was not bamboozled by these commercials, he has a bad luck anyway, because about 90% of all regional pubs have a contract with those big companies and they serve almost exclusively their unsavory products. Softly speaking dress coded dealers are traveling daily around all kinds of pub or restaurants offering the best trade conditions. An equipping a pub for free by table cloths, coasters, glasses or taping devices is today a mater of course and it could be provided even by smaller breweries. But the other issue is an expressive financial support, lavish bonuses or highly advantageous loans. If you allow us to supply you by our beer for next five years, you will receive from us as a gift a nice financial sum, with which you can do whatever you like. From time to time you will be restricted from serving the beers from different breweries and a quantity of our brands printed in a contract is for you obligatory, however we do not care, if you sale it or waste into the drain.

It is evident, that not everybody has a money for this kind of trade policy and the advantage has definitely always the richer one. A common pub owner becomes a person of interest of influential companies and inside his pub are alternating and negotiating dealers from Heineken, SAB Miller or AB-InBev and only the strongest character can withhold and out of defiance to start a pure KEG of genuine Czech unfiltered lager. Just for fun. Sometime this kind of policy gets under the scrutiny of some anti-monopoly institutions and giant companies get fined, but such money for these unscrupulous sinners are just laughable and they are nohow motivated to change their dirty practices. These anti-monopoly institutions ten years ago even gave a green light to fusion (merge) of our three major breweries. This act enabled them to control over 44% of Czech beer market. So, what are the policies of defense of retail beer traders or small breweries owners? The last time they were granted some legislative advantage was in 1995, when the Czech parliament approved a tax deduction to favor the breweries with annual production under 200 000 hl. It is curious, that one of the biggest opponent of this act was a former Czech president Václav Havel, who himself had worked in brewery.

Mr. Kvasnica stands up and leaves the pub. This pub is not worth a penny, but it is the closest one. A bit further they used to tap a beer from Loučka. This regional brewery was closed down by communists over the new project of Radegast in Nošovice (1970). Today do not brew anymore breweries in Olomouc, Vsetín, Opava or Prostějov and we cannot blame Bolshevik for it. EU thinks, that our beer is too nutritious and that we lavish the ingredients and maybe is going to order us to decrease usage of these by 20%. And what is going to happen with Budweiser – Budvar brewery?

A storm is coming and Mr. Kvasnica goes sleep. But there should not be any sleep for a people, who care about keeping a genuine Czech beer alive.

That time a hit goose started to gaggle almost immediately. Young official from Radegast asked me diplomatically over the phone why I dislike Radegast and instructed me, that in my article there was lot of inaccuracies. For example – the brew I called laxative (Šariš) received some international award in some prestigious contest (Ha, ha, ha. Really?).

However, in the end of the day I was invited to Radegast brewery to annual celebration “The Day of Radegast” as the VIP.

In that warm September day in large area of Radegast brewery I swallowed two unfiltered pints and then I found myself among well-dressed representatives of the company and adulating journalists. A general manager of Radegast -engineer K. did not know me personally, so although he was sitting right next to me, he first made an inflammatory speech of heckling libelous campaign of our newspaper against the best beer in a country, maybe in all the world. After about 15 minutes I was brought to the CEO oval office, where in a shadow of the pagan god Radegast and in a presence of other two young ambitious officials was carried out about 90 minutes long meeting aimed to convince me about the qualities of Radegast beer and to reverse my negative opinion. I was accused of the insulting the region and disrespecting the work of 200 employees, that after they had read my article they lost their motivation and so the following month the production of beer might drop.

I appreciated the fact, that engineer K. was a real, classically educated brewer (maybe one of the last in this plant) and unlike me, a qualified expert in his job, but I did not change my opinion on today's quality of Radegast. I insisted, that 20 years ago it was totally different beer. In addition, I had all my arguments supported by facts (CK, HGB) and its publicizing, which was supposed to open eyes and throttle the throats of the consumers is not classified. Engineer K. during our polemic was sometime losing his patience and he was trying to convince me, that I could not remember how had tasted Radegast in 1986 in “Staročech pub”.

“Just by 2 units of IBU scale we have decreased our bitterness!” he started to yell, “you simply CAN'T recognize it!!”

Nice try. Make it more, Mr. engineer. I do not believe, that South African owners of your company do not meddle into brewing process and that with today's ingredients and speeding technical procedures your beer is as good as sometime ago. But I do not point just on you. This is a problem of whole globalized world.

Our discussion ended in a draw. I defended my article and a freedom of having my own opinion, engineer K., on the other hand, kept his brewery without any thoughts about a changing technology in a future. Till now I feel how nicely then was slipping into my throat a microbrewed lager Arthur's in a nearby pub “Na sýpce”.

My blasphemous article raised an unrest in professional and layman's beer society and I must say, that I was marked to be “too free radical” even by many of my usual supporters. My catastrophic scenario of my assassination has not been realized yet. But about one month later I was driven out by security guard, when I was about to take a picture of Šariš brewery.

Onward beer brothers! To a Holy War against all, who produce such inferior slush and also against their loyal clients, who drink this shit and by doing so they directly support them!

## CHAPTER 6            A CRAZY TAP

*....and God gave them the Beer. Because what should drink the people,  
who cannot handle the water?*

Art is a very specific curiosity of human activities and a creative process is an absolutely undefinable matter. An inspiration comes in awakening, in dreams, in half-sleep, fever or it is possible to help it by using a certain, sometime not-too-legal substances. The most current supplier of inspiration is so called Muse. As a rule a woman, member of the Apolon's team, who occasionally kisses the artist on a forehead.

When I was sipping a beer in summer 1997 inside a hotel Golden North in Juneau, Alaska, there was no Muse around. But despite of it, I suddenly got an idea. Why me – a certified musician and composer, graduate of Conservatory of music, a person, who has been making a living by playing music for years have not yet composed something about a beer? How's about to write a beer musical? Of course, I did not mean a pompous, shiny Broadway show in Lloyd Weber style, but rather a chamber operette, which would take a place in a decent Czech pub and the main subject will be a real Czech beer from different points of view. It should be written as a comedy, but at the same time interpreting to the audience some historical facts and interesting moments from the Czech beer past. Also should not be forgotten an artistic hyperbola, improvisation and dada-humour. It was a real challenge, but a tiny seed of a future opus was already put into the soil. In the same time occurred me the lyrics of the first musical song, because I was still in American environment well-known of its merciless prohibition in 20's.

“Stupid politician brought us prohibition....”

Couple days later I decided to dedicate one whole act of my planned musical to the brewery as a central institution, which deserves beer lover's respect for its great importance and daily necessity of its existence. Of course, I will not celebrate a chemical plant as Heineken or Coors, but some unspecified Czech regional brewery, which has been brewing a genuine beer for centuries.

“It has its place in a village as the holiest temple, its chimney rises to the sky....”

Another idea I got about two months later in a train. In a lullaby-like noise of the cars and passing landscape (actually a landscape stays on a spot, just the train is passing through it) I overheard an expressive guitar hardrock riff and also a piece of new English lyrics. It reminded me, that in my musical must not be missing an analyses of the legal dispute over Budweiser trademark. But instead of dull and complicated explaining the situation I will create a half-fictional character of an unscrupulous American businessman Anheuser Busch (in one person) who in a disguise as a regular tourist will steal in a Czech pub name for his later Budweiser beer and after his successful destructive action he will sing a rock song.

After this the project got dormant for about six months. Its revival started in spring of 1998 in one Prague's pub, when I was thinking about some negative changes in Czech restaurant industry. Unified beer brands, loud radio programs, slot machines, heedless service, impersonality. In my next song an old beer drinker will be recalling the golden times of Czech pubs. When I was watching a bartender drafting a beer fast and effectively to satisfy the highest number of his clients in shortest possible time, I found a proper name for my beer musical – CRAZY TAP! At least at the stage I will build my dream pub and after such name everybody will know, what is my musical all about. Upon my next business trip to Alaska I was working hard four months to compose and record – at least in demo versions, all music of my project.

A mountain Mount Juneau is just 1300 meters high, but it is necessary to climb it right from the seaside (Gulf of Alaska) and climbing is pretty physically demanding. But exhausting journey is definitely worthy. When I stood on a top of the hill decorated with the sporadic

patches of everlasting snow, which are very practical for cooling a beer to an acceptable drinking temperature, I realized, that I had left my beer on board the ship and that I would have to start a steep descent back to town, which might take about an hour to get to the nearest pub.

“Just one beer...” I dreamed with intensive thirst. And for the first time I recited a slogan of my final song of Crazy Tap.

An exotic Hawaiian landscape evoked the various pictures and although I was almost done with my composing, I somehow got into inspirational mood again. Somewhere inside respective brain center rang a tune, when I had composed at the age of 19, but I never processed it. A frisky Muse, who was lascively munching my earlobe told me, that in my musical beside mostly entertaining tunes, that are admittedly full of hints and metaphors still was missing at least one composition, which would not be so first-planned in lyrics and which would let a receptive listener some space for own understanding of outlined meaning. A meditative song “Wet District” can be a confession of the alcoholic, as well as a vision of another, parallel world, where beer is drunk in slightly different dimension.

“With an empty keg under my head the sky is gold. Will I ever experience a beer rain? Who knows.....”

In following stage I was supposed to create a definite script of the theater performance of whole musical. In the end of 1999 I isolated myself for a few days from the rest of the world and I started to write on a paper all, what till that moment had been just in my fantasy.

A venue of this performance was clear. Inside a fairy-tale pub “Crazy Tap” will be just a few chairs and tables, perhaps some chaste decorations, but the most important stage props will be obviously a functioning tap (also it must be crazy). At one table will be seated the regulars, at another will be performed some important scene and there can be placed one more table to the stage if it fits. Because I knew from very beginning, that the human resources for my play will be rather limited, there was needed to set a number of actors. A main character must be obviously a bartender, a real professional, old-fashion style, who, unfortunately, today can be found on a list of endangered species.

Then there must be on stage couple of regular guests (guest 1 and guest 2), than not only have to look convincing, but they also have a duty to drink a lot of beer during two hours performance and still remember the text. These efficient patrons enter their favor pub for their morning gulps. They are enjoying the first pints of a new day and they are recalling a beer storm from last night. But this kind of musical also needs some guide – a narrator, who will be a part of pub scene, but in the same time he might be communicating with the audience. In the first two acts for actors will make a fast-movement excursion to the history of brewing with an emphasis on a Czech beer. In the lyrics of the first song there will be alternating ancient Egyptians, ancients Germans, Husites and other persons known from world’s and Czech history. The guests and bartender are zealously talking about a beer, a narrator cites the encyclopedia’s fact about this issue. In the end of second act a bartender sings a devoted song about the brewery.

Third act is the time for exposition of another dramatic characters. The first disturbing element is entering the bar. A young ambitious man in would-be-entrepreneur suit, who is constantly operating his cell phone. He sits down at the second table, he arrogantly refuses offered beer and he orders Coca-cola. His strange behavior arouses a mockery and despise from the patrons and while the guest No.1 is trying to drive an inexperienced blasphemer to the right track and by the rational arguments to make him drink the beer, guest No. 2 is offended by provocative abstinence of young man, he shows some element of aggression and he even attempts to attack him physically. Obviously, cola drinker does not listen, he deviously argues, that alcohol is noxious and after his monologue, when he calls the Czech nation the descendants of feeble-minded soldier Švejk after the first few gulps of synthetic shit he collapse. In a pub is a panic. A bartender is trying to call an ambulance, while the guest No. 2 refuses to give CPR to the patient (“I don’t want to kiss this asshole!”) A new character is entering the scene. This time it is Danish doctor Knut Sorensen, in this case a real person – a scientist, who in mid 90’s wrote a remarkable article: “Five pints of beer a day and you do not need to go to the doctor!” After Danish greeting he speaks, for sake of better understanding just Czech, only sometime he recite some clever proverbs in his mother tongue. In this matter originally I was thinking about some advise from abroad, but finally I did well with a Danish version of manual for CD player Panasonic. Doctor Sorensen does not use for a resuscitation and medical check-up of the patient the conventional tools, but he routinely opens a bottle of beer and let patient to take a smell, a bit later even a sip. Abstinent awakes, coughs and at no time he starts to open his heart to the trust-worthy doctor with his health problems. Considering his young age he has too many of these. He has a noise in a heart, shades on the lungs, sand on the kidneys, stones in bladder and osteoporosis. He has the troubles to see, to hear, taste and touch, he suffers of chronic fatigue syndrome and he shows all signs of progressed impotence. Sorensen listens patiently to a sicko and then, as a tonic for immunity system he prescribes and administers him a real Czech lager. At first the beer seems to collapsed abstainer a little bitter, but soon he comes into liking it. Pub staff – two guests, narrator and bartender willingly takes care of a fledgling beer drinker and invites him to regular’s table. Because how the guest No. 1 well-heartly says: “Inside a pub all people are equal. Even the bartender is not more equal.” Only an offended and embittered guest No. 2 shows his displeasure and demonstrationaly lives the stage. In this break point he turns from likable beer lover into shrewd, revengeful and, after all necessary bad guy. This act is concluded by sung confession of doctor Sorensen, who first warns a public against an imprudent consumption of synthetic beverages:

“Call the ambulance – the feast is over, get ready ER and dialysis machine, announce in autopsy room, they will be busy.....”

Later he tunes up for more cheerful note and he sings an ode about the benefits of beer to human body:

“Vitamins, minerals – the abstainers don’t have an idea.....”

Scientifically demanding act is replaced by more relaxed scene, in which is introduced the first female character – a postwoman bringing a daily pres into a pub. The guests are most interested and at the same time terrified by an article commemorating an anniversary of

imposing the prohibition in USA in 1919. Arisen stress must be splashed down upon the choir singing of ragtime song, in middle part of which a postwoman lectures about this infame chapter of American history.

A calm flow of the play is approaching the end of the first half, so is needed to implement a new dramatic plot. Strayed son – the guest No. 2 returns to his home pub, but at that time dressed in a scary uniform of communist militia decorated by Bolshevik symbols and with a machine gun over his shoulder. He refuses a beer, he requires a tea from “samovar” and he wants to play “gorodky”. He is terrorizing his ex-friends threatening them with deportation to an Archipelago Gulag. Then he carries out an inventory check and after that he announces briefly, that the pub has been nationalized. With a compliance with the mechanism of Czech spirit all actors bow their heads and they are going to decorate their pub with the attributes of communist propaganda. Only a descendant of the proud Vikings Dr. Sorensen, who is watching all scene unbelievably from a pint of staled beer becomes defiant, stands up and tries to shoo away red devil with a rosary. To the Bolshevik’s replica:

“Here I go – a folk robber with my red booklet....” he replies:

“There comes a smell of fire and sulfur out of your strange words. So, go away, devil! Maybe my faith will destroy you....”

But he does not have a chance to resist a communist despotism. A pub is embellished by the red flags and the signs with communist motto like: “This is the time, comrades, to quit an alcohol!” and an unlucky Dr. Sorensen falls down hit by bunch of bullets from militia man machine gun. Of course, it was very clear to me, that in a more less comedy I cannot afford to kill one of the main characters of this musical, in addition in the first half. That’s why to a dimmed stage dances an etheric beer Muse, who after she finishes a ballet dance around a motionless body, she sprinkles Sorensen with a few drops of stale beer from some pint. Doctor comes back to life, he grabs a nearby bottle and refreshed runs out of the stage to pleasantly spend 20 minutes break.

Because during a break the viewers and actors as well will be drinking a beer and the stage and auditorium will merge in one idyllic pub, it is necessary to exploit such rare situation and start the second half. While the actors at the scene are still chatting, a narrator is telling audience, that sometime ago everything was better. The people nicer to each other, a grass greener, and the pubs were definitely better. The guest No.1 will stand up to sing a nostalgic song about the decline of pub industry.

“Whether I’ll find a human hair inside my pint or they will sell me again a undergauged beer – so I am thinking when I am sitting down at a cold table....”

I got an idea for an instrumental interlude of this song – a simple choreographic variation performed by exalting patrons with a live beer. We’ll see.

However, a singer after his song finds out, he has no money to buy another beer and if it were not for altruistic doctor Sorensen, who loan him some Danish crowns, he would leave the lounge that evening sober.

The new trainee beer drinker jumps out and sing a defiant song about a rebellion, when he reminds people a popular theory, that a government, who increases the beer prices will soon be forced to resign.

To such upheaval environment enters again the guest No. 2, who has turned this time into rich businessman, who decided to buy this pub. But he intends to convert this cozy and cheap pub into American-style lounge – a combination of bar and gambling house. He unravels his shameless plans of serving overpriced steaks and Bud in cans by emaciated unqualified topless waitresses and he is scaring the guests by his visions of slot-machines and noisy techno discos. Although this scene does not end with a violence, it repeats a shorter version of duet of communist villain with Sorensen, of course, with an altered lyrics.

A gloomy atmosphere in endanger pub is needed to be lit up little bit with only romantic scene, when comes to the stage an attractive woman, who with a cute self-confidence orders a large beer. While the cured abstinent considers the woman some radical feminist, a narrator is so impressed by her beauty, that he breaks his inborn shyness and comes to her table. During a short dialog – strictly about geography, history and presence of the beer, they both figure out, they just have found a life-long partner and they seal the expected common happy beer future by a romantic duet Beer + Love:

“After the night of passion two thirsts are ripening, the buffet is opening at 5.30 AM.....”

After a song the new lovers run away with a few bottle-beers, apparently to the nearby hotel. A narrator might come back after a while and for sake of a little obscenity he should be zipping his fly. He phones to local brew pub to order a weekend stay for him and his fiancé.

Now it is the time for escalation of the plot, therefore Anheuser-Busch appears in a pub and buys a bottle of Budweiser- Budvar. A rock´n roll Busch aria ends with quotation of American patriotic hymn America The Beautiful, when a mean giant brewer and criminal places his hand to his heart and is waving the American flag. OK, you see – the American.....

Here comes the climax. While the pub personnel is still talking about near not-too-rosy future, to the bar runs the Beer Morana dressed in morbid outfit (the same actress, who plays also Beer Muse) and she is throwing around the leaflets of scary content. Terrified guests together with a spooky creature read the headlines of these depressive news:

“American rice in Czech Budvar..”

“Ultralight Japanese beer Geisha is the newest product of Radegast....”

“ A terrorist attack on several Czech brewpubs by Moslem extremists....”

“A chairman of Brotherhood Of Hops ended his life by suicidal jump into fermenting vessel....”

To this atmosphere a new owner of the pub runs to the stage and he emcees a tech-disco. To the computer-like rhythm and sound cliché the actors are rapping obediently the texts about synthetic production of today’s beer, the acquirement of Czech brewing industry by foreign chemical plants and the taste pasquils:

“Take a wagon of synthetic saw-dust and a little more piss, pump the bubbles into it so human’s lung get burst, your mean deeds then cover by opinions we spit on and the result of your destruction you name ‘A Real Beer ‘.....”

“A ruin of beer.....!”

The lounge gets unpeople and the apocalyptic act is finished by huge explosion, which fluently turns into thunder and purifying rain. A stage gets dim and behind one table stay just petrified ex-abstainer and doctor Sorensen.

“Hey, doc! Can you hear me?”

Sorensen sounds indescritally.

“Do you think, there has anything left?”

This replica is meant as the conservation of certain values, but the fact, that Sorensen fumbles for an unfinished bottle, may give this scene another, more streamline meaning.

Sorensen (after a few gulps): “Yes, for sure...”

Both protagonists are mutually encouraging each other with a hope, that the mankind cannot continue in this perverse trend any longer and the old good traditions must be renewed so the people could return back to genuine traditional pubs.

And it is so! All actors and singers from the musical are coming back to the stage, including a treacherous guest No. 2, but this time dressed like A Good Soldier Švejk. Excited Sorensen greets everybody with his phrase: “Five beers a day and you don’t need to go to the doctor!” and a prompt beer drinker trainee completes: “....because the doctor always will join you in a pub!” The final song is a declaration of personal freedom and it advises a mankind not to excessively dramatize their often negligible problems and to try to resolve them by a cheerful beer drinking:

“When brain is in a fire and liver is smoldering, when the Verse stands in a pillary and the Rhyme is locked in jail, when the gibber (blabber) is the law and it is forbidden to laugh – the best medicine is to get one beer....”

Right before the final bows chosen volunteers unfold a Czech flag just to demonstrate, that Anheuser-Busch is not only patriot in a house.

After I had finished my work, I read it again. I created 22 pages of manuscript. Some corrections would be needed, but basically, I was pretty satisfied. So, musical is done, the remaining question is: “What to do next?” I recalled my studies of aesthetic and an everlasting dilemma: Does the work of art have any value if it is sealed in a vault and a public is prevented from seeing it? The same way- my musical, which is currently stored in a drawer will not serve for the purpose it has been made for. I did not think much about megalomaniac plans from the side of very-would-be sponsors to stage my Crazy Tap in famous theaters and big music halls. I had my vision to show my beer play around the pubs or local breweries. Twice I had a chance to speak about my musical in regional radio station, but the things did not move forward to much.

The same way as our national showbiz. After a short era of fresh wind in early 90's, when, at least for a while it was relied on individual creativity, than on big names, the situation, paradoxally has returned to the times before our "Velvet Revolution". All former censors, spies and undercover agents met again to establish the new companies and continued to amaze their loyal listeners with very short memory. And again – everything was closely watched, difficult to access, maybe with one slight difference – if some musician during the performance said, that communists were assholes, probably he would not be arrested.

So, at that time I was thinking of establishing my own theater group, but first I tried to offer my piece to some theater agency or at least to some functioning ensemble. First I contacted an art director of some progressive theater group, which was founded in early 70's. I met Mr. C in a garden of local pub, which used to be named "Dresden", where in 80's almost was not possible to communicate with a German staff in Czech. An unfavorable fact, that in our first (and the last) appointment we drank some shitty beer from Heineken family maybe precluded a failure of potential common project. I rather spoke about the problems of Czech beer and relating matters, while my counterpart was more concentrated on dramatic arts. A reality, than for the last time I had performed in real theater more than 20 years ago caused, that I was not capable to satisfyingly react to director's sophisticated replicas and I was not even well-prepared for tricky questions like: "Do you think, that there is some philosophy in beer?"

"Sure, mate! In a good beer is a lot of well-selected philosophy, which you might absorb, if you would drink it on regular bases. Then you would hardly stay here close to the pint of this cosmopolitan shit brewed by wandering Dutches and you would move 500 yards to nearby brewpub!"

So, a cooperation with respected artistic theater did not happen. Allegedly, the group was very occupied by demanding pieces from Kafka, Becket or by works of art from Mr. C himself, who evidently after the years lost some sense of beer humor.

My next candidate for culture symbiosis was a teacher from theater school in my hometown, whose theater group also had a long tradition. Here I turned out even worse. He did not only refused my work of art, but he offered me some lecturing and consultations. My musical evidently did not comply with the rigid rules of construction of ancient drama. There is a plot, a climax and resolution in Crazy Tap, but its conception is obviously far away from classical theater piece, which can be covered by screenwriter's union. Thank you, Mr. professor. But in my age I will stick to my imperfect creations, in which I believe and about which I think, that might be found entertaining by the certain target group. And with all my respect, I doubt, that you personally would be capable to write something meaningful and funny about the beer. Maybe you do not even drink it. Or maybe you were drinking it in a past too much.....

Again, I came to the conclusion, the best way for realization of my project would be to do it on my own. I still remembered my old days in High school, when as a member of the theater group "Depeše" during our show once I had dissolved four pills in a pint of beer and then I screaming had played death (it was stated in a protocol of some secret communist agent, who had visited our performance). So, with a steady pace I headed directly for a Hobit pub.

According my theory all members of the team should have similar interests and should meet for the rehearsals in the same spot. All these requirements were met by selected visitors of Hobit. Many of local guests were devoted, at least marginally to the art and they often inspired by some tasty microbrews were joking, singing or dancing on the premises of a taproom. When I pronounced my idea in a Hobit, I did not meet any kind of disgust, but rather a genuine interest, especially when I hinted, that the basic stage property would be at least 30 litre KEG from sponsor brewery. So, I started to forge my casting plans.

A main role of guest No.1 I could not give to anybody else than to Ostrava's iconic musician and passionate beer lover Horror, who thanks to his convincing appearance would not need too much make-up or costumes. Horror seemed to be very interested by that idea, but soon he gave me my script back with the words:

"I will never be able to learn it by heart!"

It was known, that Horror had a problem with his short-term and long-term memory. There is a story about Horror searching certain street in a city of Šumperk before he learned, he was suppose to travel to about 40 miles distant Šternberk. Šumperk or Štenberk – it doesn't matter! Crazy Tap is not a refining memory with a help of memorizing Ebinghaus' three-letters clusters (wph, chg, eez, vbc, xxh...)! It is a beer musical, where after a primal investment of hard work and effort you will be harvesting a bitter fruit of glory and drink sponsorship beer. So, do we have an agreement?

There were also easy to find a proper character for a role of doctor Sorensen. This particular role I actually have written almost tailor-made for well-known Ostrava musician, Bohemian, philosopher and clandestine candidate for a post of Czech president and Danish king Mita, also because his father was also a MD.

Behind a bar counter in Hobit I discovered a fitting impersonator for healed abstinent. It is true, that the landlord of Hobit George was first a little reluctant, but after I had explained to him, that according my script he would play a hated abstinent just for about five minutes and then he can drink a beer freely together with other actors, he promised his cooperation with a pleasure.

For a role of bartender I hired a leader of competition theater group Zdenek, who brought with him his colleague Pavel (future guest No.2). But at this point the first casting problem appeared. Zdenek did not drink a beer at all, which was in an empire of Crazy Tap a huge handicap. On the other hand there was clear, that as an experienced professional could vanquish such hurdle by the means of Brecht's "alienation".

But as the hardest nut to crack remained a role of narrator. I did not find anybody fitting for this role in Hobit. I was even thinking of hiring some student of acting, but once I was introduced to Mr. Vlado, who was visiting Hobit as a frequent externist. Vlado looked at the first sight, he knows, what he speaks about(which is very important for the role of narrator) and he showed an interest. So we agreed.

The main female role of an experienced beer drinking woman, beer Muse and beer Morana I entrusted to my ex-girlfriend Ivana, with whom I had been playing amateur theater in early

80's. So she did not feel in our all-male group like the rose among the thistle, I hired one more young lady, a book keeper Pavla for an episode role of postwoman and later I charged her with one more duty of dancing beer.

A role of American villain Anheuser-Busch (do not mix it up with other villain and war criminal George W. Bush) first I was saving for myself. But finally I decided to leave it to professional – literally to one and only professional actor in our group Norbert. The fact, that whole this role was written in English became the challenge for him to show his qualities in foreign languages. The group was completed.

As I already knew from my humble theater experience, a process of learning new theater piece starts with so called reading rehearsals. In my group all the protagonists were luckily literate (in Portuguese speaking Africa the illiteracy reaches up to 60% of population), so, this stage I considered to be relatively easy. According the motto "more sweat in a training camp – less blood in a combat" the rehearsals took place inside a busy pub, so my actors got used to speak up loud. After first few weeks we moved our rehearsals to the George's apartment, which for some time simulated the real stage. Some scenes of my musical were almost static, while others more action required a lot of movements. In this phase was needed to outroot from very beginning some diletant bad habits out of inexperienced actors, like for instance speaking while facing back to the audience, overshadowing the important scenes, mumbling etc.

The most choreographically demanding was the scene with collapsed abstinent. Following my co-worker's advise I did not let a poisoned coca-cola to fall all the way to the ground, but only to a broken sitting position on a chair. I admitted, that despite of lesser morbidity of that act would be more evident a healing process of doctor Sorensen, who would save a fainted sicko by beer dose poured to his throat directly out of freshly opened bottle.

There were pretty many rehearsals, sometime I had to alternate the missing actors and from time to time I suffered of panic attacks, that we would not be able to practice it till the projected date of premiere. But the actors from my theater were making progress. The spoken texts were getting more secure, the songs were gaining expression and energy. Watching my group on its way to perfection I was finding out with a wonder, how out of almost shapeless heap of letters and notes was evolving something which started to have a sense. In replicas of meditating beer lovers, in a song of jovial bartender, or in satyric insidiousness of social-climbing guest No.2 I was retrospectively discovering something, I had put there a few years back and I learned with a joy, that my musical started to live its own life, in which I even had not believed couple months ago.

In a final stage of my work of art's evolution I was thinking about some non-traditional prompter. My imagination of the prompter box, in which is located just prompter head on a flat surface was technically impossible, so I unleashed my fantasy by a vision of stereo prompt – from two portals, echo prompt – stereo with a delay and back-up prompt of prompt. Finally I gave this job to my friend Hana – a real cured alcoholic.

The first night of Crazy Tap was scheduled for May 22 2004 directly to Hobit, where all 40 available seats were hopelessly sold out. So it would not be so easy, one week before the

premier I got sick and I totally lost my voice. Since I still had to sing a couple of songs on a stage, I was pretty worried. For a few days I could speak just very quietly and in a low frequency. Whenever I forgot it and I wanted to pronounce something in slightly higher pitch, out of my throat came just indefinite wheeze. With a temporary pitch (range) of two notes would be very complicated to interpret any of my songs. Fortunately, a salty mineral water and later a few well-selected brands of beer resolved my voice indisposition to full satisfaction.

A Hobit's performance was a success, which was not too surprising considering the fact, that almost 100% of the audience were our relatives and friends. The reactions were very positive and I was receiving the congratulations from well-entertained spectators. After our next performance the Crazy Tap was even mentioned in a local newspaper. I was the most entertained by the mention, that "a well-known musician (Horror) played a role of mad electrician." The journalists are simply incorrigible.

Undoubtedly the pivotal character of my musical was charismatic doctor Sorensen played by Mita, who apart from creation of model educative personality also sometime enriched some static scenes by his own inventive choreographic elements. Unforgettable was his folk dance in a song "Rebellion" with following expressive heavy metal tarantella.

However, after the first successful performances I had to think of the main character of my musical, which was a beer itself. Originally designed 30 liter KEG during the time turned into 50 liter thanks to altruistic sponsors and the actors, thanks to my benevolent script started to order from always busy stage bartender Vilda more and more free pints. This problem culminated during a show in Ostrava's pub "Prafoťr Moravy". It was a hot June and some actors were being refueling their energy by local brew already a few hours before a projected performance. By the time when a fresh 50 liter KEG was started, many of them already were in a real inventive mood. The run of this almost two hours long performance might seem to some liberal viewers ignorant of my original script pretty amusing, but to me became a feverish nightmare. In front of my sight was being happening something, what resembled my original painstakingly created musical just very vaguely and I regretted too late, that I, as a prevention had not got drunk myself. I was seeking with anxiety in an auditorium for some scrouched disguised theater critic, who would write a scathing review about my musical after which's publishing I would be totally discredited in front of my nation full of famous actors and directors. Extended, about 30 minutes long intermission was the occasion for more drinking and the second half turned into some interactive happening featuring exchanges of words between under-the-influence actors and mostly drunk audience. When this tormenting farce was over, I discovered an interesting thing. I found out, that I had composed an ingenious work of art. However it turns out, it will be always somehow funny and it will be enjoyed by majority of our viewers. Passing a delicate message by an entertaining performance is a good solution and despite of occasional failures of some elements – the whole is working. As being the author, I am not in this process too important. The listeners are like thirsty flowers watered by my music which comes like the most tasty cool beer. And I am satisfied, as my famous colleague Carlos Santana with a role of an efficient hose – in this case the Crazy Tap.

## CHAPTER 7      ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A BAR COUNTER

I feel to be an updated romantic, who enjoys more the path to enjoyment than enjoyment itself. Till today I remember with joy a trolley ride to city ZOO even more than the animals , I used to look forward. The same way today I experience a thrill of otherwise boring traveling by train or long walk to some, until that time for me unknown brewery. An expectation, hope and effort always helped me more intensively indulge the euphoric experience in the end of my journey. I even think about a positive influence of so called Queuing Therapy, when some person (the patient) is queuing for sometime and after he (she) reaches triumphally a head spot, he voluntarily gives up his newly gained privilege and returns to the end of the line.

When I, shortly after the start of my beer carrier was enviously watching the beer tapping bartenders there occurred me some daring thought: How's about to try it myself? I was dreaming in the smoky pubs about a heavy pint in my palm, which is slowly filled up with creamy foam, which is rising up to the gauge, then even higher, sluggishly overflows a tip of the glass, while from the bottom the white dense liquid is slowly turning into the gold one...I am surrounded by always thirsty guests, that are totally depended on my skills. They address me "chief", "mister bartender" or "Maestro", the most intimate ones even by my first name.

They want pale, amber or dark and I am standing behind my work machine and for the affordable prices I am giving away a coastless pleasure...

At those days I was sometime overwhelmed by bad tempers, that my life was going the wrong direction and that I should have study to become a bartender instead of musician. The more I was excited by this job, the more I was sometime surprised by stories about unqualified amateurs working with the beer. As I realized, in matter of fact our pubs were full of fluctuants, slops and lazies pretending to be professionals. At those times I was often thinking: Is it possible simply to come to the dark side of a bar counter and without proper certificates and permissions armed just by own ignorance of this blessed job to profane this Holy Soil? But even those days was clear to me, that no school would create a good bartender. Maybe some genetic predispositions are needed, but the aspirant's interest for this kind of business is crucial.

I personally was looking at the drafting device with unlimited respect. And once in a spring of 1992 during my gig in restaurant "Koliba" I was challenged by one waiter, whom I had asked to give me a pint:

" I am busy. Tap it yourself!"

What? Can I? I am utterly inexperienced person – a layman, who loves beer very much, therefore I would hate to harm it by any kind of my maltreatment. With unsteady pace I crossed an imaginary border line and I found myself very close to snow-white tap. I was so dazed by her shine, that I had to hold to one of her faucets. My eyes finally got acomodated and I aimed my sight back to the lounge. My world, where I had been wandering aimlessly for last 30 years from my new perspective seemed to me narrow-minded and boring. Blindly I fumbled for a glass. I moved a lever of a tap to my direction and metal pipe gushed the first deciliters of white-brown brew. Despite of having a detailed blueprint for a case of draught emergency, I had been preparing for years, in nervousness caused by unexpected situation I neglected to obey many self-imposed rules. I neither started to tap a beer by pouring it along the wall of glass, nor checked or adjusted an intensity of flow, so beer started to froth rapidly without control and I drafted myself a deep undergager. I was nervous, especially because I felt like being watched by all present pub public.

" Isn't it a chairman of Brotherhood of Hops?" whispers an old lady between two mouthful of roast beef to his husband, "he always claim, that the best knack is to fill the pint in one single take and look how he is struggling....." I heard them giggling.

My first beer tapped by my hand was not only under the gauge, but also had a pretty ugly head resembling some chemical agent. I hurriedly returned back into my world, to the well-known environment. It seemed to me, that nobody noticed my bartender's fiasco. The time space remained intact and I sipped my unattractive pint. So, my first attempt failed, but I would never give up!

After an official extinction of socialism state-run ownership of all restaurants and pubs, when everybody steals and nobody misses anything for a while I was flirting with the idea of my own pub. As a regular pub owner I would not tap the beer just for myself, but for vast public as well. I could choose a brand of beer I wanted to serve and present it to my clients, that I

could this way accommodate and educate at the same time. But I was also aware of possible hardship, I might face. It was all around. Surviving in the dirty competition conditions, fluctuation and foul-play from the staff. Fruitless negotiations with a Tax Office, gas suppliers or with unreliable breweries. I was slowly losing my original enthusiasm. OK. A man does not have to be a pub owner to drink a good beer, I kept saying to myself unconvincingly. To extinguish the last sparks of call of the nature I wrote a book about beer and I composed and staged the Crazy Pub. But in a distant corner of my complicated and constantly cheated soul I could still feel, that by all these activities I was just practicing a cowardly alibi.

My life was running on a lucid, flat, predictable path with no sign of my own pub in the horizon, when on one freezing January evening in 2003 I was visited by my brother-in-law Ivan, who was freshly obsessed by buying some real estate and he was spending almost all his spare time by surfing the internet searching through the web pages of some real estate agencies. He told me solemnly, he finally had found it. He showed me a printed picture of a big rural building with a description:

“A recreation object of a steel work company Ferona, 7 rooms, kitchen, lounge, janitor’s apartment, terrace...”

It was apparent, that by brother-in-law needed some financial support. I was not ready for any kind of tourism related business, but Ivan knew exactly how to win my heart and soul. He said, that the lounge there was big enough for establishing a tap-room. It was decided. So in spring of 2003 I became a family hotel’s co-owner.

The house itself we bought for very good price, but the building erected in 1932 needed some reconstruction. But first was necessary to give to the hotel a name. I wanted some name resembling the beer, but my sister – an elementary school teacher insisted on name Motýlek (butterfly) because of local rich flora and fauna. We decided to set the pub inside the club room (lounge), because it neighbored directly upon the outdoor terrace. Ivan owned some used, but still functional drafting device including a fridge and I could not wait for my first real tapping preview.

However, our first disagreement arose upon a selection of beer for our pub. Because we were in Opava region I suggested my favor Zlatovar – a historical brewery est. in 1825, which was struggling for a few years and its products were ostracized out of its former territory by some huge chemical-brewing companies. But we clashed. My brother-in-law called the innocent Zlatovar the shit and out of compassion with the guests of our projected pub he tried to enforce an obligatory Radegast. We clashed again. This time stronger. With increased level of adrenalin in my blood I angrily conveyed him, that I had not spent a lot of money just to tap some South African slush. But, after all I did not care, because SAB Miller could get into Motýlek only over my death and significantly mutilated body. It looked like big disagreement, so it was necessary to reach some compromises. Fortunately, I was kissed by a beer Muse again and I invited to our brand new pub my old friend – a brewer from one near microbrewery, who was not just able to brew a good beer, but he could also tell the interesting stories about it. That was the way how to get to our pub a beer Excellent 11° and dark 14° from local microbrewery in Rýmařov.

With a pounding heart and pulsing temples I stood by my new tap. A fridge was being on for some time, an indicator of CO<sub>2</sub> pressure was moving around recommended value of 1,8. I grabbed a handle of classic mug with my left hand and approached it in a sharp angle to one of the metal tubes of a tap, while my right hand sensibly moved a lever to the front. The beer was flowing slowly down by a wall of the mug and there was evident, that this time the result would be much more satisfying than 11 years ago in Koliba. The liquid did not froth uncontrollably and it was filling gradually a pint, which started to be likably dewy. After two repetitions of this process I stopped a flow of beer and I geared a reverse. A pipe gushed a thick creamy foam, which crowned a pint by a beautiful becoming head. A little amount of foam I let deliberately overflow, so a surface of white cover was in the same level with a brim of the glass – exactly the way I used to admire in famous Prague's pubs under the hands of experienced bartenders. I turned a tap off and with a pride I looked to my piece of art. A drafted dewy skittle was ready for drinking. I emptied a tasty pint watching the aesthetic Brussel laces with a feeling, that I was not gulping its contain as a mere human any longer, but as a bartender – though still trainee.

So, I initiated my pub-owner's carrier. Soon I learned how to adjust a temperature, regulate a pressure, replace a CO<sub>2</sub> bomb or to start a KEG. I must say, that today's technology helps a bartender a lot and a starting a KEG is nowadays a common practice, which can be easily acquired by a little trained layman, in a contrast with a past, when this activity required some know-how and longer experience. Upon an unprofessional manipulation there was a danger of explosion of an aluminum cask, lost of a beer and there is even known a case, when treacherous KEG burst and its upper part killed an ill-fated waiter.

With a well-adjusted drafting device I was able to serve a beer to many people in a short time to their full satisfaction. It is true, sometime there appeared also some clients – the beer Barbarians, there were accusing me of spoiling a beer by tapping it too fast, claiming, that for a good beer is necessary to wait. Of course! I also remember the smokey pubs, where among the drunk miners from the morning shift on a top of a large metal bar counter were simultaneously staling 20 pints, that were absorbing a nicotine from the air, getting covered by some unalluring coats and totally left to willfulness of a mean bartender, who even occasionally poured a little amount of beer from one pint to the other. When I met some guests requiring this type of handling beer and I recollected the times of beer darkness I always tried to educate them, eventually I recommended them some other pub. Even if my drafting method was challenged by some renowned beer drinkers, I would always tap beer like this. Primarily, because I trust this method for the decades and then because that is me, who holds a rein and a tap is under my direct command.

With a fast development of private pubs in 90's, Czech market was also dealing with new technologies in restaurant industry. The aluminum casks were replaced by more practical KEGs and instead of the obsolete air compressors the CO<sub>2</sub> bombs started to be used. But instantly the new bad habits appeared. With a help of CO<sub>2</sub> a beer could be draft much more faster and comfortably, but for this smart innovation eventually paid the guest, who after third pint full of gas in his stomach got a feeling, that he could levitate in the air and leave the pub through a window. Also, in many pubs, thanks to more effective refrigerator technologies they started to cool a beer down to very low temperatures, which did not just

have a negative effect on a taste of beer, but also may become a health hazard for the drinkers. So, under the influence of my own experiences I was carefully watching, so my beer was not too much carbonated and its temperature was in a range between 7 – 10°C. If during a summer heat, thanks to temporal passivity of the tapping device a beer got warm inside the pipes, I always served to a strayed Robinson a brew in a proper temperature after I had wasted a lukewarm pint into a drain.

I also learnt, how to make so called “cut” or the beer of two different colors. To accomplish two colors pint it is necessary to use two kinds of beer of different color, different density and special kind of technique. So, first I filled up about 1/3 of pint with a heavy black porter and then I started to drip the surface by a trickle of light beer, which I let to rotate along an inner wall of the glass by sensitive turning around. Once after a while of this highly sophisticated activity the beer was “cut” and on a top was created a thin layer of light color it was a success and there was possible to carefully finish a beer by classic method.

I remember, how one microbrewery owner brought me to Motýlek two KEGs of pure unfiltered lager. The beer was deliberately undercooled so it could immediately quench the thirst of the clients, but thanks to long transportation over the uneven roads the live yeasts were disturbed and stirred, so the beer was very murky. Right after I had started a KEG I was looking to poodle-like dark brown liquid coming out of it I realized I cannot serve such beer to the guests. I was to store the KEG for a few hours to settle yeast down, but in a pub full of thirsty eager clients there was no time for it. There helped me a diplomacy and trade policy. I explained to the drinkers a principle of unfiltered lager and I stressed all its positive effects to a human body. Despite of its unalluring color a beer was enjoying a lively sale and after drinking about one half of KEG the brew cleared up to golden – rusty hue.

Weeks and months were passing and I got more and more initiated into pub and hotel craftwork. To reach a visual perfection of old fashion pub manager there were missing only a white apron with numerous dirty stains and characteristic pencil stuck behind the ear. That time I even began to revise some of my radical opinions about pub business. The first myth I (at least for myself) challenged was a superstition, that a beer is supposed to be served as long as the clients are in a lounge. After a few sleepless nights, when I was serving the long-lasting guests until 4 AM I realized it is not working like this. The Slavic characters are very stubborn and persistent, especially as for a staying in a pub, therefore I started to abide my new motto:

A BARTENDER IS NOT A DEVIL, THAT’S WHY HE NEEDS SOME SLEEP! (a hint to Czech saying, that “the devil never sleeps”).

Who would not be upset to receive a beer unproportionally long time after the order, sometime a brew of unattractive appearance, smelling after improperly cleaned pipes or unacceptably warm? Before we throw a stone on a depraved staff, let us try to analyze this situation and to select one of possible causes of this unpleasant incident:

1. A bartender is a slop and lazybones, who is not capable to take care of beer and he does not mind.

2. A bartender is an inexperienced beginner and he is trying to solve the problems ASAP. But, basically he is a lazybones too, because it takes a long time.
3. A regrettable situation emerged independently on abilities and possibilities of a bartender (faulty tapping device, inferior brew supplied by the brewery, blackout etc).

Once in a drafting amok I broke a faucet of a tap and beer started to flow out through the hole like a mountain spring out of the rock. Fortunately, I did not panic and I cut off a started KEG of the broken tap. However, later I needed some help from outside.

In the end of August 2006 Motýlek was inhabited by 20 kids of average age of 12, that were spending in our family hotel the last days of summer holiday. The weather was rainy, the children were consuming just soft drinks, waffles and chewing gums, so I decided not to order another supply of beer. But in Thursday a group of bikers arrived. Despite of inclement weather the bikers were very thirsty. After the second round of beer a tap coughed and I was made to recommend my excited clients nearby competition pub. But they apparently liked our place, so they asked me, if I had at least some rum. I had it, so I was able to grant them their wish. But after 20 minutes I found out, I was running out of rum as well. It was too late to grumble at my dilatoriness, that I had not ordered more of this liqueur, because it in a difference of a beer does not go bad so easily. I expected a deserved physical attack, but bikers told me reconcilingly:

“Give us, what has left you!”

I discovered, I had a pretty much of Fernet Stock. It could not be any offense to anybody. The clients were happy, a terrace was resonating of rock´n roll music played from CDs, the kids slept, only three, about 40 years old cyclists, that found a place to spend a night in Motylek could not fall asleep. In about 1 AM the bravest of them took a liberty to ask wildly horse-playing company to be quite, but he was immediately forced to flee. The bikers had, to compare to cyclists not only stronger machines, but also the muscles and they outnumbered them almost three times. Although it was in clear contradiction with democratic principles, that no individual can be sacrificed to the willfulness of the mean majority, I took position of the death insect, I did not take any action to protect my guests and in early morning I charged the bikers getting a huge tip. The next day a spoke person of cyclists in wrinkled outfit with visible circles under the eyes informed me, that last night they had renamed our hotel from “Butterfly” to “Nightmare”(in Czech a “nightmare” means literarily “night moth”). Sometime happens, that beer is finished, fried cheese is burnt, the people in a lounge are troubled by drunk guest or a manually charging waiter makes an unintentional mistake in a check. Therefore always remember:

“A BARTENDER IS AFTER ALL THE HUMAN – SO A MISTAKEN CREATURE”

However, always is needed to discern unintentional failure from malicious intention.

How I discovered shortly after my initiation, a position of bartender is not just about a work in pub itself, but also about psychology and dealing with the people. During the summer season the majority of our clients were coming from nearby cottage camp. Occasionally were

stopping by also hikers or cyclists following a trail to near village. Sometime we were visited by the locals. Because the village Kružberk suffered by significant unemployment rate, by a composition of our guests I was able to guess a date of social benefits give away. Many locals worked just temporarily in logging industry. Sometime a group of lumberjacks got to vicinity of Motýlek's tap, complaining on the other Kružberk's pub "Old School" and especially on its owner Mr. Navrátil, who was serving the warm liqueurs, undergauged beers, cold and underweight meals and always had a stupid gossips. Such chronic complainers in their revolt drank a few beers followed by properly cooled liqueur and they pledged not to return to "Old School" anymore. But soon after their solemn oath they realized, that unlike a seasonal Motýlek an "Old School" pub is opened all year round, so they repentantly returned there complaining of disorderly cold vodka in Motýlek.

I was lucky, that our nearest neighbor and also our regular client was university certified puppeteer, who had spent 25 years in Canada. He had brought home from French speaking Quebec a wife Louisa – a granddaughter of chief of Indian tribe Montagnes. I spent a lot of pleasure moments with that odd couple and my encounter with those pure Czech – Canadians even inspired me to study French.

However, my most favor activity was a service in the private parties. Apart from the people, who found our pub on the internet, the main client's base of Motýlek was composed of our friends and relatives. But the most prosperous drinking sessions were always held by a group of beer lovers from a pub Hobit.

Hobit people used to come to Motýlek roughly three times during the summer. Upon those occasions I was always striving to surprise and at the same time also satisfy my guests by a tasty beer. So, in my private tap were turning beers from many Czech microbreweries, even from Slovakia. When I was holding such parties, I often had a problem to estimate a number of KEGs, that were necessary to buy. It is true, that there was always promised an enormous presence of participants with well-cultivated thirst, but these plans could rapidly change and then I might face a question what to do with a leftover beer, which, in addition had a limited durability. In such situations, when I was standing in Saturday afternoon behind the tap counting that I still had three and half KEG to sell I was joined by my adviser and beer economist Hans, who was predicting, that the strongest beer drinkers would arrive to Motýlek as late as in the evening, when all three faucets would be in operation and I would be happy, if any beer would left for Sunday. Hans prognoses were almost always correct. In one especially successful event the Motýlek crew, beside an obligatory beer drinking started to liquidate the stocks of liqueur, wine, snacks and chocolate. One of the Hobit patron – Baron Andrassy was watching for some time this drinking fever through a thick glass of the pint and then he, literarily in the last moment asked me to save for him one shot of rum for Sunday morning. It was very difficult to conceal this shot before a plundering mass of drunkards, that were finishing the last remaining leftovers of Sherry and Pastise, especially when their smell senses were well-trained to discover a characteristic odor of Czech rum. But I kept my promise, so a greenish Andrassy with a little shaky hands could in the morning swallow his favor liquid stimulant of vital principle.

That Sunday morning left for drinking just a rest of Bernard light beer and beside a few pieces of waffles was for sale just folding regional map of Jeseníky mountains. But even this map was bought by untiring Hobit staff, so it could be later cut to the pieces and put together again in different, more just order.

The times are changing. As same as the opinions and economic situation. In a time of publishing this book was Motýlek in the offer of real estate agency and its fate is very vague. But whatever will happen with it, there will stay inside a vestige of a person, who got there to a dreamed other side of a bar counter, where he found his for a long time dormant desires and aptitudes, same as the Motýlek will stay forever in my heart.

## CHAPTER 8                      SOMETHING IS HAPPENING.....

*“.....a sale of insipid beer is a crime against a Christian love”*

( German regulation from 13. century )

It was an idyllic time. The wild motto from anti-communist rallies were still in the air, once burning piles, where defeated secret agents tried to destroy at least the most important proofs of their indisputable guilt was still smoldering. The new Czech president Václav Havel settled in a Prague castle and Czech nation envisioned a new hope.

The travelers were looking forward opened frontiers, churchgoers the freedom of religion. Potential entrepreneurs could not wait to start their new businesses and beer drinkers were fascinating by the vision of new beer labels and extension of a beer market.

Even a few years after “velvet revolution” it looked promising. There were constantly appearing the brave plans for renovation of closed breweries, new private pubs with a large selection of different beers were founded, even there was officially established a political party The Party of Friends of Beer. Admittedly, from time to time there sparked some pessimistic information about planned soaring beer prices or the aberrant prognoses about mass canceling of Czech traditional breweries, but in euphoric times of early 90’s almost nobody took it seriously and very little beer lovers even paid attention. At this era Brotherhood of Hops as an independent beer organization made its activities more intense and its leadership (basically me) got the idea to offer services to some favorite regional breweries.

In 1992 I met sale manager of brewery Radegast Mr. J. in one unnamed pub in my home town of Ostrava. We were considering a free cooperation between two subjects, when we -

passionate beer tasters could be passing information about a quality of draft beer in local pubs. It was based on the fascinating Czech movie “Postřižiny”, when the brewer himself in 30’s was regularly visiting the restaurants tapping his beer. When he found it warm or badly handled, he reported it to his boss. Impressed by such Brewery – pub relations we were willing to do the same. Of course, for free.

The negotiation with Mr. J was proceeding for about 15 minutes upon a dry spell, because the ordered Radegast allegedly “frothed a lot”. At last, there came two pints to our table. A beer was really frothing but a chemical substitution for a foam was subsiding quickly forming the ugly shapes and more than 1 cm under gauge revealed a dishonesty of bartender. It got even worse after a sip. Lot of CO<sub>2</sub> and a strange solution was even unacceptably warm. I expected a malicious grim on a manager’s face and some expressive grumble of dissatisfaction, but he just exhaled refreshingly and he continued in describing of recent company’s successes. With a help of my small portable thermometer I measured 14°! What? OK. Now the manager jumps out his chair, he will bug a staff threatening them with stripping off the license, I imagined in my wild fantasy effected by this particular Czech movie. But nothing like this happened. Mr. J sipped his beer again, he shrugged and said:

“I prefer a warmer beer...”

OK. Every person has the right to require a beer to be warm, perished, sour, in a dirty glass with a horse hair inside. But responsible employee of renowned brewery must observe some ethics and support respective state norms and regulations. Such heedless individual is dangerous like a goat-gardener, dog in a butcher’s shop or pedophile principal in kindergarten. The ignorants of this kind should be restrained by the law to get closer than 1 mile to all places, where the beer is brewed or served.

A while later our beer market was deluged by German, Austrian, British, Dutch or Belgian brewing companies and because they had not found a space there for selling their trashy products, they decided to buy out our traditional plants. Czech businessmen followed their example and they began to associate to the large groups or holdings. The quality of their products were slumping and some breweries were facing merciless close down. In the biggest danger found themselves the middle-sized regional plants, that needed to supply dozens of pubs to survive. They are drawn into a dirty unfair competition fight with the international corporations. These subject own a lot of funds, that enables them a huge production and large sale of their inferior Euro + Afro shits and some smaller companies are pushed out of the marked.

And how was this situation perceived by that time newly established Party of Friends of Beer? It is hard to say. Its leadership was too busy with political activities, especially before the general election, when it was inventing the possible coalitions with anybody, who might help these alleged beer and carrier lovers to reach their desired posts. Moreover, they were generously sponsored by global brewing concerns. Real friends of beer....

And what was saying our government? A liquidation of unprofitable companies is pretty normal in our modern ages, same as their sale abroad. The best solution then is to place to the empty building of canceled brewery some state office or Asian market. A respect to

national history and culture heritage is nowadays only stale phrase. An average Czech beer drinker does not have to be necessarily interested in details of Czech beer market, mergers, proprietary relationships etc. But constant worsening of taste of many mainstream Czech brands is alarming. It is evident, there must be some consequences of directed acceleration of “modern” brewing process, when innocent beer is fermenting and conditioning in the same vessel, to its fermentation is used second class yeast and is pasteurized and loaded with stabilizers so could be dispatched in a very short time to make a space for next mass produced batches. Some this way saved money is invested to false advertising and propaganda. Or do you really think, that is feasible to brew a real Pilsner Urquell, which gave a name to one whole beer style in a distant Poland or Russia?

The donkeys in the wolf’s disguise are howling, but a caravan of Czech beer lovers is still moving forward to their dreamed beer future. A part of that mass expedition maybe see this future as the sweet drowning in a molasses made by Heineken or SAB Miller, but those educated and enlighten still know, how to brew a genuine beer, hoping that Czech nation finally will come to senses.

Come on! We are not the only beer drinking country in the world! It needs some positive example from abroad! In Little Rock, Arkansas some guy named Terry Wallis is just awaking from 19 years long coma and he is going to say something. Go ahead, Terry!

Spit it out! Tell us, what do you want!

Hmmm. It is a shame. The first his world after he addressed his mother was “Pepsi”.....

The noble knights of traditional Czech beer industry are saddling their horses and armed with the swords are heading to a cruel battle for renaissance of glory of Czech beer. Many of them will die in this fight, but their sacrifice will never been forgotten.

Saint Václav, patron of Czech beer. Please help us in our Holy War on the Both sides of bar counter!

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Bonus chapter in next page

BONUS CHAPTER      How the beer met the soap  
( story about Budweiser)

Adam Busch got off the cap and gave to the cab man six cents for the ride. He found himself on Bowel street, right in front of his father-in-law house. Everywhere in the air could be smelled an odor of cheap soap. Adam's father-in-law, well-known entrepreneur Fritz Anheuser established his living place in neighborhood of his soap factory. Something he produced himself, part of his merchandise he was importing from Europe and in Saint Louis he owned a large depot for all his sales. Adam Busch did not like soap too much. No. He was not a slop. On the contrary – he was a promising young businessman. But he has got a certain kind of aversion towards artificially smelling products of his father-in-law. In Anheuser's house everything was reeked by that odor. Linen, table cloths, towels and even Anheuser's daughter – Adam's wife Gretchen smelled by that soap. However, otherwise he respected his father-in-law and he liked visiting him in his house very much.

Adam rang a bell and a butler took him to the reception hall. It will take some time till Adam also will have a butler and a large reception hall inside his own dream house.

"Guten tag, Adam," sounded right from the dining room door, through which just came out Fritz Anheuser in dressing goan. Both of them were born Germans and Anheuser was even a patriot, so though he was striving in US to speak English, sometime he blurted out some germanism anyway.

"Hi, Fritz,"said Adam shaking Anheuser's hand, "how are you?"

If they lived in their old homeland in Germany, Adam maybe would call him “sir” or “father”, but in US he called him by his first name.

“I am glad, you’ve come, Adam,” said Anheuser, “so tell me. How is your family?”

“You know. We live how we can. Bernie starts to attend a school this year.”

“Time flies,” sighed Fritz, “but it’s great, that you all are healthy and sane. And remember, Adam. The family is the most important thing in your life. It is base of the state. And it is valid here as same as in the old continent.”

Adam did not enjoy his father-in-law preaching. It was true, he was 30 years older, but it did not necessary mean, he had eaten all wisdom of the world.

“Look, Fritz, what I have brought you,” Adam promptly changed the subject and pulled out of his chest pocket one bottle of beer.

“Hmmm. A beer comes always handy,” said Fritz with joy, “shouldn’t I cool it down?”

“It is not needed. Outside is pretty cold,” Adam opened a bottle and handed it to father-in-law.

“It is good,” said Fritz, “but it might be a little cooler, anyway. By the way, where is it from? It looks like German....”

“It is from Austria. From Bohemia, to be exact. It’s been imported to US about two years ago.”

“There is never enough European beer,” nodded Anheuser, “bei uns in Jetetten..But what... And how are you proceeding with your brewery?”

“With our brewery,” corrected him Busch, “I’ve come here mainly because of this matter. Look closely at this bottle.”

Fritz was rotating bottle in his hands and his sight get concentrated on etched inscription.

“Budweiser Bürgerbräu. Made in Austria-Hungary|Bohemia. It is a typical beer name!”

“You see,” interrupted him Adam eagerly, “and this is exactly the reason of my today’s visit. Do you remember, how we a couple weeks ago were searching for the name of our future beer?”

“How I could forget,” mumbled Anheuser, “we’ve been trying hard to find some suitable name since we had bought this brewery from Urban+Hammer. The brewery itself starts to brew soon, but we still don’t have any proper name.”

“The name of the company Anheuser-Busch sounds good, nevertheless, I’d rather put these names to the reverse order...” smiled Adam.

“But I am first in alphabet and beside – I am much older,” Anheuser pretended some anger, but he knew, that his son-in-law was just teasing him.

“And now imagine, our beer would be named Budweiser,” said Adam solemnly and for a while he remained silent to expect Fritz’s reaction.

“The name is great,” agreed Anheuser, “but it has no logic. Budweis is the name of some town in Austria and....”

But Busch was well-prepared to refute easily all Anheuser’s arguments:

“Tell me, Fritz, what does have a logic here? The settlers, who separated from their homeland England almost 100 years ago? The extermination of native people? Or that tragic unnecessary war, which ended just seven years ago? We live in the New World. Everything here is new and different. Anything, what is happening on the old continent, doesn’t matter here...”

For the moment he paused, so he can take a deep breath:

“And we will give to these sentimental immigrants their traditional beer!”

Busch knew very well, he just has played on sensitive string of Anheuser’s soul. His father-in-law remained, even after more than 30 years in US a passionate patriot being in contact with his original countrymen, even organizing regular German parties.

“it does mean something, Adam”, he replied with discretion, “all those name, that we were inventing until now like Sitting Bull, Union or Lincoln Lager were mere trash. Personally, I’d like to name my beer ‘Jestetten’, but I must admit, that Budweiser is much stronger name, which has even some support in European brewing history.”

Busch already knew, he had succeeded in convincing his father-in-law. It was highly needed, because Fritz Anheuser was the one, who was holding a wallet.

Outside the wind changed direction and blew to the house an odor of cheap soap.

“Fritz, please,” asked Adam his father-in-law, “can you close the window for a while?”

“Why? You don’t like a smell of my soap?” Anheuser pretended to be upset, “but it is a good merchandise. It’s been a long time. Once I...”

“Stop, stop, Fritz!” interrupted him Adam desperately, “you don’t have to tell me again your touching story of dirty children in Baltimore....”

“So you see, Adam even a soap trade can be an honest business,” smiled Fritz, “I was just about to order those new dosing machines for potash. But you have won me over. Now I will be investing mainly to our new brewery.”

He was thinking for a moment.

“But listen, Adam. Won’t be those Czechs pissed, we stole them a name of beer? What if they will suit us?”

But Adam knew all these answers.

“How long, you think, can last a preparation of some international trademark dispute? During this time we will have our name already properly registered. And let the Europeans

do, what they can. We are not going to export our beer to Europe. Not to forget... Yesterday I received a letter from our friend Conrad, who has been traveling old continent for six months now. He wrote, he discovered our potential name for our beer.”

He pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket.

“The name of this Bohemian town is ...Me..Meko...Mekoljupaj...mein gott...it is almost impossible to pronounce. So our other brand can be called in German – Michelob.”

Anheuser was very pleased by the activity of his son-of-law.

“I can see, Adam, you are just sparkling by the ideas today. So let’s talk, how our Budweiser should be.”

“Correct,” nodded Busch, “first – it should be American!”

“Sure,” agreed Anheuser, “but I think, we should also respect some European values.”

“Certainly. It will be made of water, barley and hops.”

“It sounds good,” praised him Anheuser.

“Later we can even cultivate our new strain of yeast,” continued Adam, “and for sure we will use a rice...”

“A rise?!” exclaimed Fritz “but Reinheitsgebot, the Purity Law from 1516 says....”

“1516? 1516?” retorted Busch with disdain, “in 1516 the followers of Columbus thought, they were in India and they didn’t know if they would return home alive! I am American and I don’t care a shit, what invented a group of frustrated Bavarian brewers in 1516! In America we will have a beer brewed by our own way. And no year 1516 can prevent me from this action!”

He turned down a little an intonation of his voice and continued more quietly, but still expressively:

“Rice contains a lot of starch, so it may help our beer to ferment better, beside, rice can be found all around, so our Budweiser will be cheaper and more competable.”

But Fritz has not given up. He was trying to pry out of his son-in-law as much information as possible.

“And did you consider a traditional addition of beech bark to the batch? That was an ancient method of the brewers from Jestetten...”

“Are you crazy?!” exclaimed Adam with consternation, “who, do you think will have a time to scratch a bark from the trees when we are planning such big factory? But on the other hand it is not a bad idea. We can use it in our advertising campaign.”

Anheuser saw, his son-in-law had everything well-devised. Why could not he, after all in his retiring age operate some brewery. He likes beer quite a lot. At home in Jestetten he was drinking beer almost every day. Adam is very industrious and flexible young man. Just

sometime is necessary to curb a bit his juvenile eagerness. Money must be handled with care.

“Can you imagine, Fritz a brewery able to brew a few thousand gallons of beer in single batch?” asked triumphally Busch his father-in-law, “and for distribution no horse carriages, but modern train cars supplying whole USA. Only shame is, that the Civil War was won by the North and a slavery was abolished. The niggers would work only for food and we could save a lot of money on the wages.”

“And how are the tests of these refrigerator train cars proceeding?”

“Unfortunately, since one of the developing engineers froze to death, the experiments have been stopped.”

“We all must bring the sacrifices to the altar of the Progress,” said Anheuser reverently, “and I believe, that despite of all possible hurdles or ill-fated matters we´re gonna reach our goal!”

“And I still didn´t tell you, Fritz, that in a future I wanna go to politics,” said Adam solemnly.

“I support your decision,” agreed Anheuser, “I think, politics here has a quite better perspectives, than in Germany. Only German politician I respect is Otto von Bismarck. US is a great country of unlimited possibilities. How our neighbor Kennedy always says, a politics in US has a bright future. What can we know? Maybe you or some of your descendants will become even an American president. You have a surname for it! German and American combined and strict too. Just your first name seems to me a little biblical. You would be better called John or George....”

That evening Adam Busch was returning from his father-in-law´s house home in good mood. The foundations of future world´s biggest brewing company famous for their lager Budweiser were built.