

Trading With the Eastern Bloc

Croatian transcript:

Što se tiče robe široke potrošnje, isto tako Coca-Cola je mislim prisutna možda od kraja šezdesetih ili početka sedamdesetih. Uglavnom, ja otkad pamtim za sebe, znam za sebe Coca-Cola se kupovala. Ovaj, to je, hajmo reći neki kulturološki, šta ja znam, neki indikator relativne te otvorenosti tog društva tada, je li. Znači, mi smo imali, kad bi putovali u Istočnu Evropu, u Mađarsku, Češku, Poljsku, mi smo mogli koristiti to što je kod nas bilo žvakaćih guma, Coca-Cole, finog alkohola, najlon-čarapa i tako toga, tako da smo, ovaj... Ponijeli bi tako sa sobom nekih tih predmeta, i vrlo lako prodali za neke basnoslovne količine forinti, zlota, i kako su se već zvale te valute istočnoevropske, tako da ne znam; *de facto* bi otišli, proveli se u Pragu, Budimpešti, i gdje je već ko išao, i još bi se vratili sa viškom love, jel'. Dakle, to je baš bilo, ovaj... I njima je puno značilo, ljudima iz tih zemalja, da mogu doć kod nas, jer su si mogli onda tu iskoristiti da si nešto kupe i da budu na nekom toplom moru, je li, jer gore inače baš nisu nešto imali. Imali su onaj Baltik i Istočnonjemačko more i tako; bilo je uglavnom zima, nije bilo baš nešto za kupanje. Kod nas su se mogli fino iskupati, i mogli su nešto trgovati i tako, postojala je ta neka.

English translation:

As for the widely-available goods, Coca-Cola was present practically since maybe the late sixties or early seventies. In any case, I know that Coca-Cola was commonly bought ever since I can remember. I think that that's a type of a cultural indicator of the relative openness of that society then, right? So, we had... When we traveled to Eastern Europe – Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland – we would use the fact that we had chewing gum, Coca-Cola, quality liquor, nylon stockings etc., so we would... We would take some of those things with us and once there, we would easily sell them for absurd amounts of forints¹, zloty², whatever these Eastern-European currencies were called; so we would basically go and have a great time in Prague or Budapest, wherever we went, and we would come back home with even some extra cash. So that was, I mean... And it meant a lot to them, the people of those countries, that they could come here, because then they could use that to buy things and to spend some time at a warm seaside, because they didn't have much up (in the north) – just the Baltic sea and the East German seaside, etc. Those are mostly too cold and not really that enjoyable for swimming. So they could spend a nice time at our beaches, trade a little, so there was that.

¹ The forint is the currency of Hungary. The current exchange rate is approx. 220 forints per dollar (in March 2012).

² The zloty is the currency of Poland. The current exchange rate is approx. 3.13 zloty per dollar (in March 2012).

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