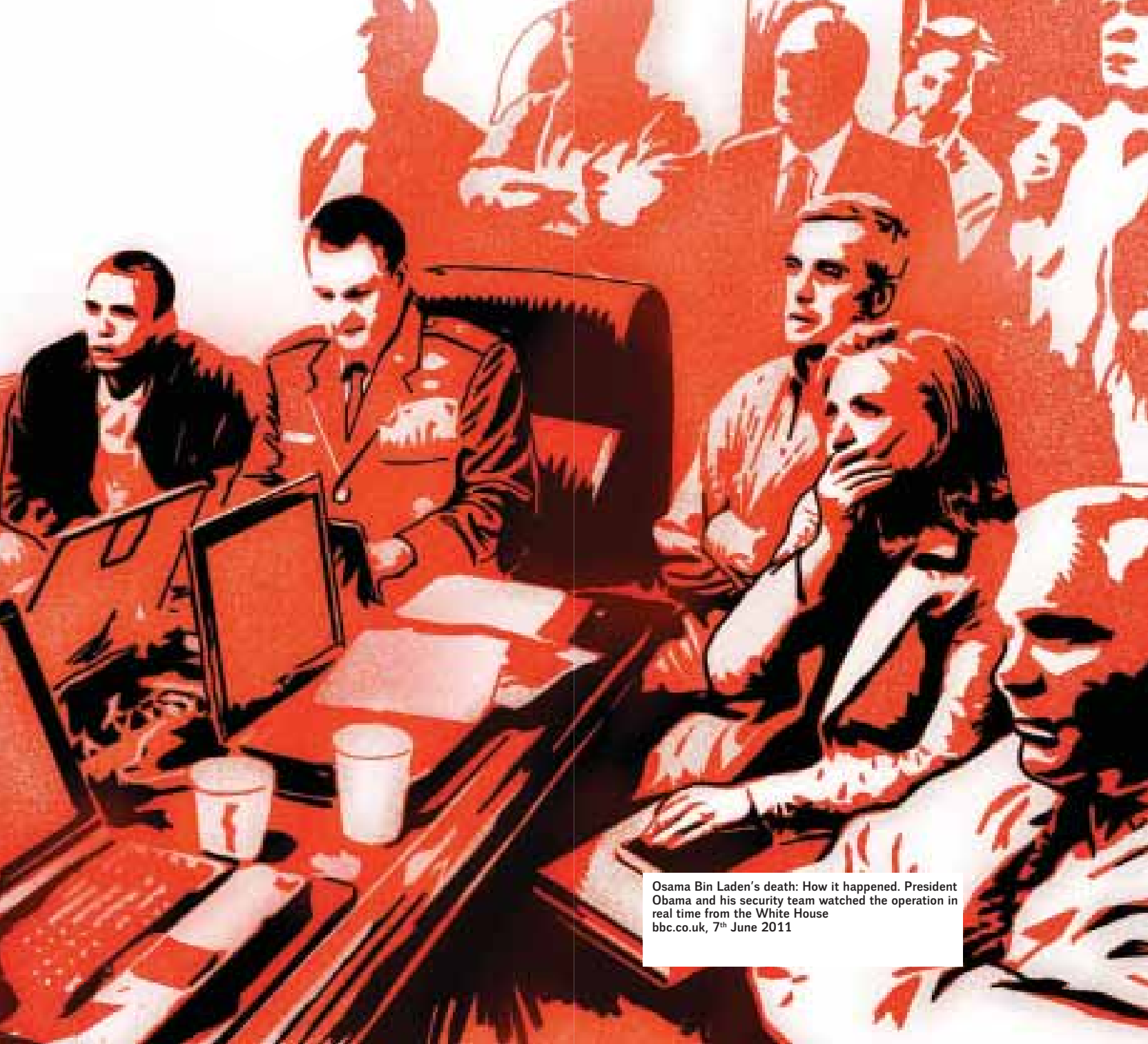
With a Camera, a Pen and a Spray Can

An inspiring and opinionated guide for future journalists, documentary-makers and artists

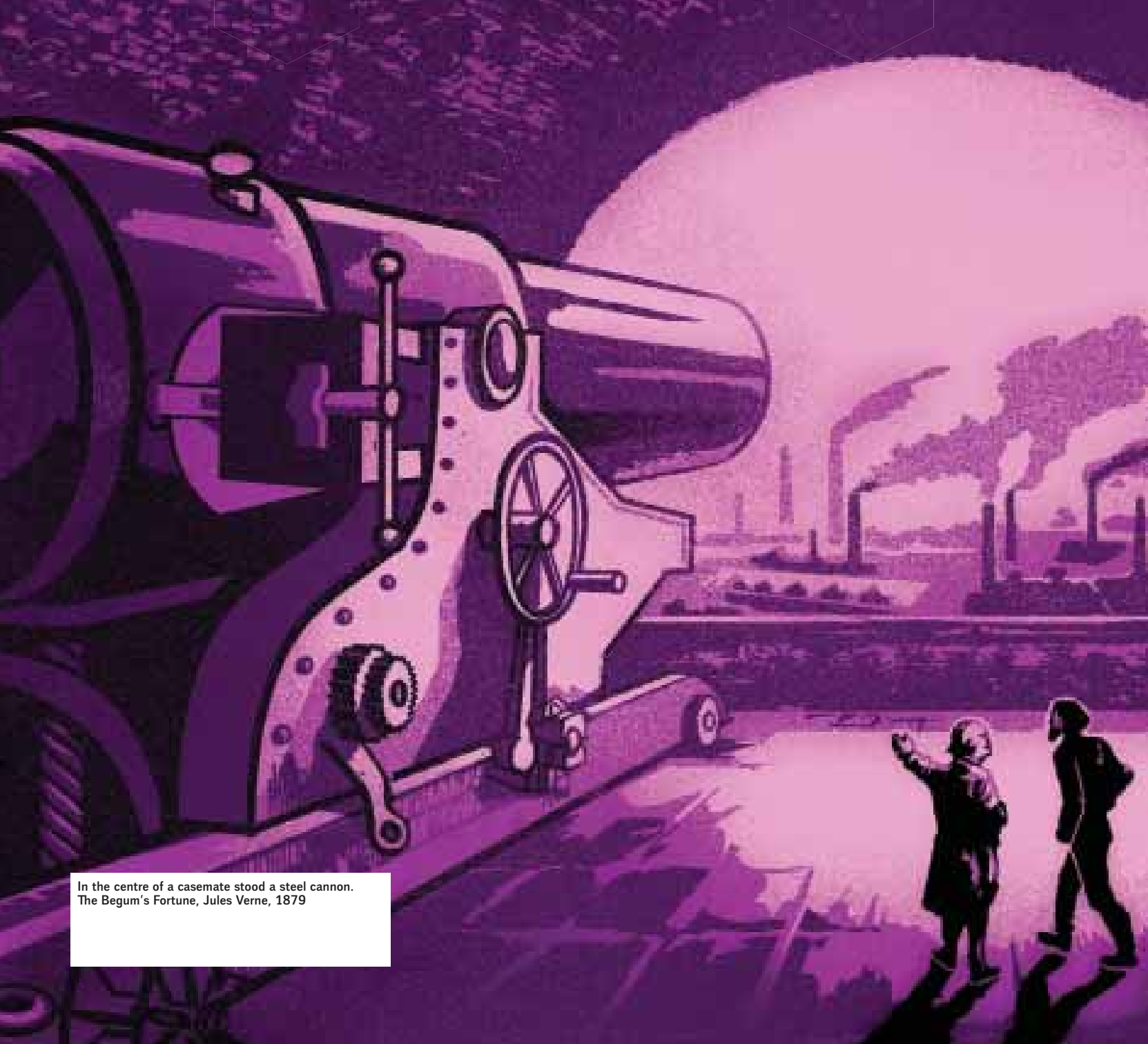
Filip Remunda, Zuzana Válková, Vít Janeček, Tomáš Tožička and our survey respondents



Osama Bin Laden's death: How it happened. President Obama and his security team watched the operation in real time from the White House
bbc.co.uk, 7th June 2011

Vladimir Putin's last act as Russian Prime Minister, immediately finding two ancient amphorae on diving below the Black Sea's waves at the ancient settlement of Phanagoria, resulted more in mockery than admiration on the Russian internet.
lidovky.cz, 12th August 2011

Clumsy beauties:
Showing the world their knickers. Heiress Paris Hilton's (31) knickers are world famous
blesk.cz, 4th May 2012



In the centre of a casemate stood a steel cannon.
The Begum's Fortune, Jules Verne, 1879

A word to future colleagues

Dear friends
This brief guide to the methods which can be used to portray the world around us is based on two assumptions which have had a fundamental impact on its form. The first is our trust in your judgement and critical thinking, and the second is a belief that it is much better to offer you the sometimes differing views of a few individuals of particular interest in the field than to lead you quietly – and theoretically – to something that is appealing to us. We would be happy if, after flicking through our guide, you began to take more notice of the things which whizz through the ether. We would be really pleased if, when looking at the news on TV, you considered whether there is some formula which the channel uses to make its reports. Noticed information in newspapers which doesn't inform, but *sells*. Bore in mind that a documentary isn't an extension of reporting, but a complicated discipline which may arise from journalism, but also from sociology, anthropology or even surrealist poetry.
Two contributions in the introduction outline a few basic questions which we consider important – the first, entitled **Don't believe anything you see, hear or read** – looks at a number of aspects of current media practice and is authored by **Zuzana Válková**, Czech copywriter and public relations specialist. **Knowledge, seeing and blindness** is a contemplation prepared for our guide by film-maker **Vít Janaček** and it focuses on art and its ability to comment on the events around it. The core of the guide, however, is formed by a number of inspirational figures from the **Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Cyprus** who explain to us the path that led them to their current career, the pitfalls they met in their work, and also what they would recommend you do should you decide to follow a similar path. This part, as for the whole contents, has arisen from a synthesis of the experiences of Czech producer and documentary maker **Filip Remunda**, who held the role of overseeing the set of contribu-

tions. To finish, leading Czech specialist in development issues, **Tomáš Tožička**, offers you to consider the myths of the modern era connected with development aid and stereotypical notions which we often accept without taking time to consider them.

Dear future colleagues, study and question things. We're relying on you.
Wishing you pleasant reading
the Educon NGO team who prepared this guide in collaboration with the leader of the **Media for the Millennium Development Goals** project, Polish organisation *Salesian Missionary Voluntary Service – Youth for the World* and Cyprus organisation, *Future Worlds Center*, as reference material for this project.

Don't believe anything you see, hear or read

There are few fields for which you need to train your 'immune system' as much as you do for working in media. The energy which will carry you forward in learning more about it and which will help you find your place within it will constantly come up against various practical, theoretical and ethical hurdles. Because people who 'merely' command their trade brilliantly won't give the best in television journalism, the newsrooms of leading newspapers or behind a camera on the field, but rather people who also know their limits and influence.
The situation we find ourselves in as readers, listeners and viewers is one totally unlike any other in history. Masses of people and thousands of institutions vie for our attention every day. They send an incredible number of emails to editors and agencies, call press conferences, and spend hours on the telephone and at meetings in order to get into our field of vision. Into the home news section of the papers we read. Into the television news via the local TV crew, or perhaps into a radio spot about new books. They use social networks to try to make contact with us. It might appear that with such a concentration of private and group interests, almost no major information channel can strive for independence and offer a service governed by requirements for objectivity and balance. Fortunately, our situation isn't quite so dramatic: in addition to commercial media, whose representatives sometimes aren't afraid to compare the flagship news programme to 'filling up the time between two advertising blocks', we still have public service media and models with which we can compare their work. Public service media whose mission is enshrined in national law include national television and radio (the British BBC, for example, represents a global benchmark for this type of journalism). Even public service media, however, is under pressure from politicians, lobbying agencies, individuals and companies, but with their mission and tools, they have much greater strength to resist. But it's always good to know the mechanis-

ms by which editorial teams, PR agencies, advertisers, important institutions and influential public and private individuals communicate to each other. Every row of column space, every second of broadcast time, and every internet content user is counted, and so the competition for them has moved into the hands of professionals and has taken on the form of a battle for influence.

The aim of this guide is not to provide you with instant knowledge, the correct opinions, or to be a substitute for a dictionary of basic media terms. What we want is to awaken the observer inside you and show you that in a field in which there is no comforting 'good' or 'evil', every time you encounter a particular topic, you will be able to consider whether it can be treated differently, more sensitively, more understandably or just completely differently. If you decide to go down this route, we can promise you your brain will never take a rest.

It is also very likely that you won't be praised all the time for your work – no matter how dazzling or poor your performance is. An unforgettable – and characteristic – welcome delivered when the author began studying journalism was a contribution by a leading Czech sociologist who told all us budding Bob Woodwards and Veronica Guerins in the lecture hall of the reputation we would find ourselves having in (not only) specialist circles until probably the end of the world:

'What are you? Ah, journalists. Okay, I'll make it simple.'

From the street to the end of the world

Particularly over the past two hundred years, the status of journalists has undergone unprecedented changes. Professionals in this creative field have penetrated the heart of leading world universities, become active public figures, artists, defenders of democracy, freedom and religious expression, but also tools of totalitarian propaganda or the overworked victims of the demand for fast mass production of information.

They have included heroes who have stood up against governments, and desperate characters who, in the search of a good story, have plumbed their own fantasies, and as well as the chief swindler, also the committee awarding the Pulitzer Prize. Other characters have left behind 'only' the slur of disgrace, yet their stories illustrate the demands and expectations made of modern journalists in prestigious posts: to give you an idea, a good illustration is the ambitious plan of a young journalist, Jayson Blair, employed at The New York Times in the late 1990s (at the time he was the centre of a national media storm, he was a mere 27 years old).

A student at a prestigious American university, and editor-in-chief of the university newspaper, from the beginning Blair was naturally positioned for a career as a reporter in the most regarded of national American papers. A minor stumble during his work at the student paper (he wrote what was a brilliant story about a student who died of a cocaine overdose, although in fact he was killed by a heart ailment) did not put his internship at the paper with the highest number of Pulitzer prizes at risk. Not even hiding the fact that he hadn't completed his studies endangered the extension of his collaboration with the New York Times. But when it was discovered that during more than a year of working in his post he had managed to steal or completely fabricate dozens of stories, the newspaper had to make amends and before it could begin the resuscitation of its reputation, it had to boot out two members of management in addition to Blair.

(As is common for the over-confident, not even his complete discrediting was able to stop Blair trying to make money from his story and to improve his image. The book *Burning Down My Master's House: My Life in The New York Times* helped him convince the public of his humble return to the truth, uncover the secrets of publishing prestigious newspapers and open the door to a new career as a life coach, which he still does today. When you put his name into an internet search engine, you often come across explanations of what Blair *was not responsible* for, rather than a list of his transgressions, which considering their extent is quite remarkable.)

The freedom to have your head switched on

Whereas before the fall of the so-called Iron Curtain, people living in the Eastern bloc could assume with a clear conscience that most information they received from state-controlled media was either misleading or outright false, today we can safely assume, without being conspiracy theorists, that a substantial proportion of information from private sources serve (or are the result of) some kind of business. We are completely free in the way we decide to filter reports coming to us – and consider them in our heads.

Information and the method of its presentation form the major part of our outlook on our surroundings. Tomáš Tožička's contribution, which you can find on pg. 101 provides a clear example of how stereotypes, twisted facts and the media can form our view of the world. We often have the impression that some problems don't even exist outside the media, while other messages when given out over many years can become societal norms and make life fundamentally harder for people who cannot fit in with them. Because who today doesn't want to be slim, right? Holding a camera, Dictaphone or laptop connected to the editorial system in your hand is a great privilege, but also a huge responsibility. And only once that great Czech journalist who experienced various forms of totality and subtle shades of freedom, Karel Kyncl (1927–1997)'s vision has been met will balance be achieved on both sides of the receiver.

'Political freedom has given us, as journalists, the opportunity to use our heads. But it has also given you, the viewers and listeners, the responsibility to use yours.'

Where from?

The first responsibility we have as a receiver of any kind of media output is to ask questions about the source of the information or to think about it and take it into account. *Who does it serve?*

While the purpose of some information is obvious – we can clearly imagine why newspapers explain the nature of health reforms – other topics are not so obviously pressing to society as a whole. And for a change, some of them appear not to have any purpose. Where do these reports come from then? Let's begin with the role that probably first occurs to us – we are participants in an event which has the potential to become news. We are in some way interesting, we are one of the emerging stars of pop music and we think our image would benefit from a front page story in the largest tabloid newspaper in the country. Does it seem to be an easy task? Is it enough to sing a pop song, go to the right party, choose an appropriate companion and let ourselves be spotted as we walk hand in hand at night? And what do we have to do for the editor to give us a full-page interview in a respected business supplement if we don't want to go down the route of shallow fame, but would rather build up our own company? How can we squeeze a couple of seconds for ourselves within the main news bulletin?

Today's media offers incredible short-cuts to the public where we wouldn't particularly expect it, and leaves us locked out in cases where we might think *surely they must want to print this*. (With experience comes the realisation that 'they' don't have to want to print anything at all.)

Even tabloid newspapers, and certainly the most read one, have a complicated hierarchy of topics, personalities and business relationships, and carefully differentiate between 'premier league' information and other information. They have their values policies, present themselves to the public as representatives of specific readers' interests and those who are in agreement or opposed to them are given positive or negative marks accordingly. If we don't get bogged down in details, we can often notice that, for example, *cor-*

ruption is according to this kind of media *everywhere*, *the rich* are described as *suspicious* or *arrogant* and *ordinary people* are always *victims of the powerful*.
Being a major businessman with an extensive profile in a broadsheet newspaper may mean that you work in a company which cannot be ignored for its economic importance, and whose investment in advertising in the title is important for its economic results. You can be assured of precious broadcast seconds with activities which are, more than anything... unconventional. You can probably remember competitions for the largest hamburger, the longest hair or the worst song. So how will you get there?

Pamper your advertiser (because they're falling in number)

The status of advertisers – the customers who purchase advertising space in the media – and the daily bread for sales people who have to acquire them, is a whole separate chapter and anyone wanting to look at the media should be familiar with the basics. Because income from advertising is a vital item in media budgets, advertising sales are very sophisticated, and when meeting with companies, institutions and individuals, sales people have detailed readership surveys and the interests of their target groups to hand.
We strongly recommend you spend a little time trying to find information for advertisers on your favourite website, or look at the website of your local organisation of newspaper publishers operating a detailed list of the readerships of the most printed media in your country. Go over this information carefully: these are not figures 'for the sake of interest', but rather they represent key data which will affect where and to what extent companies and individuals will place advertisements.
Journalists and sales people become members of one team and they must know how to reconcile often conflicting interests. The media's sales departments want to increase their readership/audience/numbers of visitors, while journalists guard their own space, their independence, and strive to find the answers to important questions regardless of who it might benefit or harm. A delicate balance of powers – to earn a living, but also to serve meaningfully – which can never be kept in place for ever.

Agents, spies and PR consultants

Naturally, there are other players within the complicated structure of editorial and business policies. Publishers, influential people... and PR agencies.
PR, short for Public Relations, has become synonymous (unfortunately in the negative sense) with media influencing and image building. Put simply, it is a tool with which companies and whole countries give out reports of their activities, relations to their environment, employees and citizens and look after their brand in good times and bad. Companies use the services of PR agencies, with whom they discuss the quality of their website or the conduct of their representatives in public appearances. Agency consultants issue press releases about the latest happenings in the company and its products, run press conferences, meet journalists and recommend them new topics, or give them exclusive information. In this relationship, the target value is a particular kind of publicity. A mention in an article, an interview with a client, or moments in front of the client's factory in a television broadcast: whatever you think of.
PR tools are responsible for much of what we think – if we do think something – when we see a famous logo, or perhaps a politician. Because the relationship of the customer to the brand or person is of enormous value in business and public service. Loads of successful companies didn't rise up from the anonymity of the market by wowing the public with a great product, but rather by making an average product the most attractive in the world (Sometimes the company even went bankrupt, but because we have great memories of *this lemonade* or *that mixer*, someone put in the effort to resuscitate it because of our relationship with the product.)
PR is a field about which there are many myths and uncertainties, which professionals in all concerned fields are happy to be subject to. The co-existence of these two worlds – that of journalism and the communication agency world – has, however, been an intrinsic part of me-

dia production for a relatively long time so you need to bear their occasional interaction and irreconcilability in mind and approach it from an informed position. One of our guide's guests, journalist and university lecturer Jan Čulík, in his article astutely mentions George Orwell's quote, which says that *journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed: everything else is just public relations*. In a strict interpretation of journalism as a professional and lifetime mission, we can only concur. But it is hard to estimate how many pages our favourite newspapers would be reduced to and what television stations would broadcast over their 24 hour schedule if that were strictly applied.

News agencies and the pure trade

The mass production of important and less important information is unthinkable when considering the above discussed hierarchy of topics and influencers without the operation of news agencies. Many of us are aware of acronyms such as AP (Associated Press) and names such as Reuters, Bloomberg and Mediafax, but we rarely take the time to consider what they do.[1]

Agencies sell information to the media and individuals in various formats (as text, pictures, audio or audiovisual track). Leading news agencies have strict requirements on the processing, verification and form of all reports which they offer recipients, and their activities will determine to a certain extent how much of the content which we catch during the day will look. They represent a huge virtual library from which each day the customer (journalist, editor) picks out the base material for his economic, national and international news reports, and not forgetting showbusiness. After purchase, the customer can simply print it out with the source detailed, or work with it, find inspiration in it, take the facts out of it and make it all his own.

To understand better what is happening on your television screen, or on the pages of lifestyle magazines mapping out the life of celebrities (there are agencies which exclusively deal in tabloid news), it is a good idea to bear in mind that although the medium in question bears responsibility for the selection, arrangement and other processing of information purchased from agencies, they often work further on it. As the report gets further from the source and it undergoes content and stylistic changes, its meaning can shift. Where originally there stood *Singer XY celebrates his 65th birthday*, we can read, for example, *Singer XY regrets wasted opportunities.*

While agencies offering serious news place great pressure on their authors to ensure water-tight sourcing, verification and impartiality, full observation of topic requirements and clarity of language, for broadcasting and magazine pages, another important issue is looked at: for them, the command *do not be boring* is the top priority.

Amusing ourselves to death

Very few things can discourage you from reading as much as a commentary on the contents of an important book of a Famous Author. We bring you this break then with the aim of opening up a number of topics and offering you the opportunity to think about them and decide whether your own answer to them suffices, or whether you would prefer to look in more depth at the roots of a practice which even the most upstanding of journalists, artists or documentary-makers must at least partially reconcile themselves to.

The term *infotainment* (information + entertainment) and *edutainment* (education + entertainment) have been part of the basic lingo of communication students since the mid-1980s as a result of the book *Amusing Ourselves to Death* by American media theorist, **Neil Postman**. In his book, Postman draws on the ideas of media theorist and visionary **Marshall McLuhan** (if you don't read him now, you'll be forced to read him later) and noted that since the invention of the telegraph, the value of news has been in its speed, and not its content – for each media, information must be as simple as possible. Nobody is interested in complicated ideas and long speeches! According to Postman, this simplification and flattening of reality has been perfected in the television, for which most of its content is not produced in order to give information to the audience, but to *entertain them*.

A somewhat acerbic exaggeration can be used to illustrate his assertions. For news production on television which depends solely and exclusively on viewer figures and the opportunity to have a maximum price on advertising time, a number of basic rules must be followed:
Forget about theoretical links. The viewer doesn't like to be reminded of everything he has forgotten since he left secondary school.
Forget about complicated ideas, relationships and situations. If you can't explain it in one sentence, don't explain it at all.
Forget about specialist analysis. Urge specialists to use terms which, while they may not be absolutely precise, everyone can understand.
Forget about information which doesn't interest the ordinary viewer. Although no-one has yet seen the mythical ordinary viewer, it is said that he likes jokes, football, beer and the misfortune of others.
Forget about foreign or long words.
Forget about anything that lasts longer than XX (fill in current format) on television, on radio even less, and on the internet... just make sure it doesn't last long for Christ's sake.
Use short fast clips. It will look like you are giving the viewers more information.
A word without a picture is incomplete. If you're talking about vitamins, don't forget a picture of an orange.
Include touching human stories. Don't let the viewer feel alone.
Beautiful people are key.

We could go on and on in a similar vein. From your own viewing experience, you will certainly be able to add a few more traditional properties of infotainment reporting – whether it be working with infographics (it's as if anything that isn't in a graph isn't real), the affected speech of presenters or the funny stories which are supposed to lighten the flow of the news.
In this connection, some of you will have in mind the ever-present and all-seeing Big Brother, created by British author George Orwell in his novel *1984*. While today's Big Brother looks like it has some kind of attention disorder because of the flood of conflicting and easily accessible information which surrounds us, on the other side of freedom there are regimes growing who are able and willing to control everything that is said to their citizens (and thus everything that they say to each other). We can still follow political systems which have controlled the tools of censorship so effectively that their citizens have fallen into line – and self-censor. History has demonstrated self-censorship to be an effective tool for managing the extremely difficult task of controlling all

information channels, which is an ambitious goal for societies with a high level of technology. The national news can still be controlled, but to 'unplug' the whole internet, or prevent foreigners from importing inconvenient news and discoveries is becoming more and more complicated. And how does news reporting in our latitude compare to those closed regimes?

One author who offers a readable insight into its development at the dawn of a new millennium is French academic, professor of audiovisual communication at the University of Denis Diderot in Paris and former editor-in-chief of monthly newspaper Le Monde Diplomatique, **Ignacio Ramonet**. In his book, *The Tyranny of Communication*, he looks amongst other things at the role of image in television news and its revolutionary impact on other media, which from that time have tried to catch up in all possible manners. He believes that television has built up a new information equation, which can be summed up: 'if the emotion you feel in watching the television news is true, then the information it gives is also true.' Professor Ramonet is not afraid of generalising and making dramatic claims, so you should enjoy the book – and you might be reminded of Neil Postman and his theory of an education which doesn't bore...

Zuzana Válková
Czech songwriter and PR specialist

Knowledge, seeing and blindness

There's always something we don't see

The previous text, mostly dedicated to printed media, places the question of trust at the centre of its considerations. Many reports which come to us via a route we perceive as one giving facts involve a whole range of unexpressed assumptions and intentions. The first group of these hidden 'deformations' comes about as a result of the fact that even the most factual description or image is always merely a particular representation of reality. This problem also applies to photographs and authentic film clips. This might be better understood if we begin to consider in detail what a so-called fact is made up of. The most common source of a fact is an event which has happened. And we find out about it because it is written about, photographed or filmed – and even here at this simple level the problem begins. German theatre director, Bertolt Brecht, who in his concept of the theatre strived to show how traditional theatre leads its audience to an experience which blinds them to their relationship to reality, expressed the problem of the uncertainty of facts using the so-called distancing effect (commonly mistranslated as the alienation effect). This involves the actor coming out of his role, turning to the audience and explaining something from a completely different perspective – and then returning back to the role. Generally, in doing so, he is saying: 'Attention audience, do not give in to your experience completely, preserve a certain distance for your judgement!' For us, another of Brecht's examples is valuable. In a short essay entitled The Street Scene, he describes an accident involving two cars. As well as the drivers and passengers in question, a number of witnesses also see the accident. They all come together and each tell the police officer how it happened. They were all there, but each of the narratives displays significant differences, although each has its own credibility and log-

ic... Just transferring the event itself into fact represents a problem. And since the police officer must produce a report about what happened, his judgement (as for the judgements of journalists, press agency workers and the cameraman who simply captured certain things at the time in question in his viewfinder and filmed them) creates the first moment of interpretation, whose result is considered a fact.

This narrative has previously stated that newspapers strive for a story – meaning an event or chain of events which have a substantial relationship to people or the human body, through which we can identify with it. In the struggle for interpretation, which creates a second group of hidden 'deformations', the experience of the recipient is in the end the most important factor which determines whether the information appears credible or not. So-called information – which sounds dry – is often presented in a way which carries with it a range of emotions, and in the end these emotions help determine whether the recipient accepts the information. In this respect, film (or television) is a much more intensive and complex instrument than print and photography.

In 2003, I took part in the filming of a documentary about the military conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Over a period of two months, our small crew travelled in a rather complex manner throughout all three enemy territories, collected witness stories, pictures and interpretations and attempted to come to some sort of viewpoint of our own. I will never forget one of the many absurd experiences which made up the events of those years which will remain in the memory of the whole of the Balkans for many years to come. A couple of days before we left Zagreb on a huge detour via Hungary to Belgrade, Croatian television broadcast a report at primetime about the murder of about fifteen Croatian villagers by the Serbs. The essence of the report was shots of dead bodies wrapped in bloody sheets accompanied by music. Ten days later, by chance we came across the exact same shots on Serbian television with a report on a shameful Croatian attack on Serbian civilians. The same shots on both sides helped recipients maintain identification with their deep emotions – hate and a determination to fight for justice and revenge. Military conflicts bring with them a maximum level of difference in the media interpretation of events,

differences which are nevertheless always present in subtler and more sophisticated forms, and which we can find even in places where we wouldn't expect them at all and where we often cannot see them – in the journalism (or film) trade itself. The previous text ends with an ironic Postman list of the 'central commandments' for the right media product, but you can come across this outline encoded in the curricula of many journalism fields and in the unwritten rules for rewarding the professional achievement of journalists in all commercially successful media. At this level, the problem is more insidious, because we can no longer talk simply of manipulation, but rather of the same type of problem which fish would have to deal with if they wanted to find out they were swimming in an aquarium.

The unseen is arranged, even organised

A number of thinkers have looked into this problem, including Jewish philosopher Vilém Flusser, who was born in 1920 in Prague, spent most of his life in South America and Italy, and who died in a car accident in 1991 when he returned for the first time to his country of origin after a lifetime of exile as a famous intellectual (Notice that in describing Flusser, I summarise his arresting life story in order to attract your attention and thus secretly motivate you to read one of his books). Flusser formulates this problem in full and most systematically in his thin, but penetrating book, Towards a Philosophy of Photography. Flusser's basic starting point is to say that there are a wide range of unreflected connections and suppositions in human existence and action (beyond those we are aware of) which are determining – Flusser calls this set-up a paradigm. Viewers of the Matrix film series can certainly learn something here. Flusser demonstrates it using the example of a photograph and camera. In order that the camera, which we tend to perceive as a simple tool for creating photographs, can

work ‘as it should’ in our hands, we need to determine the properties of exposure time, shutter speed, issues of focus, f-number and the nature of lighting (ignoring automatic options). These could be said to make up the basis of the craft of photography. In taking this common approach, however, we do not consider the fact that the camera is basically a black box in which the resultant picture is formed in a complex and pre-programmed method which we are unable to influence. Likewise, the setting of the camera corresponds to a definition, unconsidered by the user and given by the historical goals of the manufacturer, of what photography is. Programming the camera is also expressed in the way we hold it in our hands, its ergonomics, which – just by the shape of the camera – ‘programmes’ us for the one correct method of holding it. Already, this shows that a camera (never mind a movie camera) is not a simple tool, but a very complicated apparatus which to a certain extent and from certain perspectives still simulates to a greater intensity our sensory perceptions, and each unreflected supposition has many layers of consequence. Flusser tells us that in a certain sense even the photographer and recipient are part of the camera programme, a kind of extension realising some of its options for existence in the universe. ‘The photographic universe, like the one by which we are currently surrounded, is a chance realisation of a number of possibilities contained within camera programmes which corresponds point for point to a specific situation in a combination game. As other programmed possibilities will be realised by chance in future, the photographic universe is in a permanent state of flux and within it one photograph permanently displaces another.’[2] The lack of consideration of this state expresses itself according to Flusser such that ‘to be in the photographic universe means to experience, to know and to evaluate the world as a function of photographs.’[3] The inspiring nature of his thought can be applied to other media than just photography – print, radio, television. And also to other instruments. We recently filmed an interview with the former chief of the Czechoslovakian counter-intelligence agency from 1968, and we discussed in great detail events as he experienced them on 21 August 1968 when Czechoslovakia was invaded by the armies of the Warsaw Pact countries (with the exception of Romania). The central experience of the man who held in his hands the country’s most powerful machine for detecting external danger, was shock. As he said, all of his and his people’s ‘programming’ was focused on danger coming from the West and his machine did not take account of danger from the East, and it was only at the moment of attack that he realised how much their awareness had been affected by a programme which contained a blind spot.

From Flusser’s ideas, we see that machines are distinct physico-mental ‘organisms’ whose basic properties are non-transparency, although they appear to us to be transparent – which is a part of their programming. And their basic purpose is for people to construct their parts, keep them running and to enlarge the realisation of their universe through playing with their programme. Flusser is aware that the camera’s end user cannot change many of its manufacturer-programmed properties, but nevertheless sees here a creative opportunity – to play against the camera. A photographer thus orientated ‘is interested in seeing in continually new ways, i.e. producing new, informative states of things’[4] (like for example the lomography photographic movement), while the typical camera user who takes photos of particular places at particular times just as a memory of that moment represents only the memory of the camera and the human subjection to its function. Flusser calls this type of photographer a snapper or documentary photographer, and it is here we must depart from his ideas, because in the case of film and media art, it is documentary makers or conceptual artists working in various media who represent playing against the camera in the widest sense of the word.

Playing against the camera

In his fascinating essay, The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility, German philosopher, Walter Benjamin, demonstrates the special nature of the movie camera, which opened up a whole new access route to man's unconscious mind. The movie camera 'introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses,'[5] says Benjamin, and in the digital age when a realistic image doesn't even need a camera to come about but can be fully modelled, penetration of the 'optical unconscious' is even more intense. Another of the last century's key thinkers, Jean Epstein, a Frenchman of Polish and Jewish origins, directly calls the cinema a 'machine for thinking' and lists a range of parallels between the complicated movie camera and the human brain. For Epstein, the greatest opportunity for discovery of cinema is human prescience. With the ability to penetrate the external and internal reality – i.e. especially human emotion – the opposing movement to growth in insight is represented here too, this being controlled by the identification of people with particular emotions, habits and objects at deep and unconscious levels. The film maker, and the machines following behind him (particularly the television) can thus take the completely opposing direction – from prescience to the 'binding' of people with certain myths, lifestyles or products. This is served by the huge tools of advertising and marketing. In her book, No Logo, Naomi Klein looks at the sophisticated tools of global companies, which begin with advertising and end with the influencing of the product ranges in large chains, and which successfully control the thoughts and behaviour of people who en masse focus on purchasing brand products and brand information sources, while the value of 'domestic products' and personal judgement is falling. 'It should come as no surprise that the companies that increasingly find themselves at the wrong end of a bottle of spray paint, a computer hack or an international Anticorporate campaign are those with the most cutting edge ads, the most intuitive market researchers and the most aggressive in-school outreach programmes. With the dictates of branding forcing companies to sever their traditional ties to steady job creation, it is no exaggeration to say that the 'strongest' brands are the ones generating the worst jobs, whether in the export processing zones, in Silicon Valley or in the mall'[6] Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott's famous 2004 documentary, The Corporation,[8] looks at corporations' historical development, the integration of corporations within the legal system and their gradual removal from the control chain of complete human societies, and features Naomi Klein and a range of key current thinkers and professionals who have decided to 'play against the machine'. Due to the complexity of the whole machine, this 'game' concerns not only filming and media performance itself, but also a range of other strategies in many institutional and social strata. Well-known American documentary-maker, Michael Moore, who systematically criticises the problems of the current United States and corporate capitalism generally in his documentary films-reflexive performances, is unable to have his films shown by the corporate-controlled nationwide private television networks. So he has developed the strategy of using the commercial cinema network for his work where there is sufficient interest amongst the people. His approach involves the work of a conceptual artist and documentary maker in one person, which is a combination typical in its way for artists of recent decades working in this field. In historical development, this approach fits in with the development of documentary modes as described by American film theorist, Bill Nichols, in his book, Introduction to documentary. The two most common forms of approach to a documentary are represented by the **poetic mode** and **expository mode**. Poetic documentaries often don't tell a story, but the logic of their construction arises from various associations, metaphors and analogies, while their goal is not to convey some piece of penetrating knowledge, but rather to open new optical and acoustic experiences in the mind of the audience. The most common of all is the expository mode, into which most current affairs and news reports fall. The concept of events and problems are interpreted by a comentary, with the images only representing an

authenticating addition, like a direct statement. The **observational mode** offers a more sophisticated approach, and its works often represent a synthesis of many dozens or hundreds of hours of material where the camera is present inside the situation and the subsequent assembly represents a certain essence of events played out over a longer period of time. Films which use this mode in its pure form don't even have commentary or remarks to the camera with everything conveyed by the dialogues and monologues collected at the scene. Since the 1960s, three modes have been used in documentaries which directly initiate a conceptual approach of the resulting films and – as for the previous cases – offer sets of various strategies for playing 'against the camera'. The **participatory mode** involves even non-film-makers in filming. Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard spent time with the trade union movement in France and filmed 'collective films' taking advantage of the opportunity to give the camera to those who can be at a particular time at a place that the film-maker himself cannot be. The director of the whole is then a kind of anchorman shaping the result of the contributions – and also active engagement – of many other people. Participation can also involve the film offering situation dialogue to people who approach it according to their possibilities and situations, and also often with surprise, as happens in a number of the previously mentioned Michael Moore's or Jan Gogola's films, which is a part of this guide. A participative documentary can penetrate various social environments, in the internet era this strategy offers a number of further options – a website like YouTube is basically a complete machine utilising the participatory mode as its basis. 'If the historical world provides the meeting place for the processes of negotiation between filmmaker and subject in the participatory mode, the processes of negotiation between the filmmaker and viewer become the focus of attention for the **reflexive mode**,' writes Nichols. A number of films in the collection of the here present Grzegorz Pacek find themselves on the borderline between these two modes. And it is here that we should remind ourselves of Brecht and his distancing which his theatre adopted reflexively towards the whole of tradition up to that point. A typical film of this style is Vertov's Man with a Movie Camera – a film about a film-maker filming himself, but this mode is very productive in grappling with topics which show the conditionality of individuals within the system or machine, including the conditionality of filming the film itself, as attempted in a Czech context by, for example, Klusák and Remunda's reflexive Czech Dream and Czech Peace or Mareček's Source. The final, **performative mode**, goes down to the level of connecting personal expression, possibly almost in the form of a diary or confession, and it can also be the memory of others who are melded into the resultant performance. In contrast to the poetic mode which in comparison to the performative mode appears more as a formalising approach, the performative mode stands at the centre of an individual and looks closely at his experience and reflexes. In a Czech context, Karel Vachek is a giant of this mode, with his film novels. Peter Kerekes (an otherwise participatory film-maker) works in this mode in his film 66 Seasons and we can also find this mode in video art in the guide of the here present Tamara Moyzes.

Canon camera factory, 1966
wanderingwiththememphisblues.tumbir.com,
27th June 2011

And in conclusion, love

The fact that documentary makers and media artists come to be beside each other – though it should be noted that it is a certain type for each case – makes complete sense. Their works have more in common than they have differences – so let's briefly take a look at these. The media artist's field is not the screen but often a new situation, which together form the presentation of the work, so directly becoming the reality of the ordinariness of the place and moment. Many conceptual artists place their artefacts in specific corners of public spaces which cannot be said to be the location of their display – the whole space is changed by their presence. Documentary makers base their work on the given conditions of the tools of cinema, such as single channel projection in cinema or on television, although often at the core of their films is a debate about what otherwise keeps these tools alive. The aim of these works, and of the texts in this guide is not to bring the recipient to a state of mistrust or scepticism regarding the instruments of mass media. In any case, even this guide is a medium which has come to you like any other. The aim should be caution – a concept perhaps more modest than religious vigilance, which in the end looks to the same goals. 'If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing,' said black activist, Malcolm X. Caution and vigilance have the same aim then: to achieve greater real love between people. Much as our conclusion leads us into these categories, which are so simple as to be difficult to grasp, I think it is important not to forget that the frame for all media is life itself, rather than the other way round, which is, I think, a good place to finish this media output in the form of written text.

You will find carefully selected high quality documentary and experimental films on the joint website of five major European documentary festivals, www.dafilms.cz.

Vít Janeček
born 1970, graduate of film science at Charles University in Prague's Faculty of Arts and of documentary making at FAMU. Documentary maker, essayist and university lecturer working at FAMU.

Survey (with the makers of our world)

We asked major journalists, documentary-makers and artists to tell us about their system of working and the path they took to get there. Each of them got the same four banal questions and was asked to answer them from a strictly personal perspective. The answers could be short or long, objective, experimental, written, in pictures or a mix of everything. No specific genre was given. We left everything to the discretion of the authors. It was interesting for me to see how each individual approached the PROBLEM. I believe that their narratives reflect the message of the author's own expression. I appreciate the epic many-paged response from Jan Čulík, and the humorist spirited collage from Jan Gogola. I appreciate the time they invested in our brochure, as I do their work in the newspaper industry, in television, in the public domain and wherever else their voice and work is needed. All of them deserve many thanks.

Filip Remunda
documentary film-maker, Czech Republic

Initial questions:

1. How did your current job come about?
2. What was your first professional piece of writing / film / art project / other job about?
3. Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
4. What would you advise people interested in your field who want to write their first article, record a radio or television report, documentary film, realise their first art happening, concept?

Journalists, Newspapers
Mariusz Szczygieł
Poland

'Every report I write is the hardest in the world right at that moment. Twenty-five years ago, I happened to read one sentence which a villager had written in her diary: Writing's not so simple – it takes up peoples' time. I never forget that when I'm writing. Never.'

Reporter. Studied journalism at Warsaw University. He is the author of non-fiction studies, of which the most well-known are books about the Czechs: the book Gottland was translated into 13 languages and was awarded the European Book Prize 2009, and Make Your Own Paradise was awarded the Book of the Year 2010 title in two Polish competitions. Dramatisations of his reports have been shown in theatres in the Czech Republic, Poland and Italy. He is co-founder of the Institute of Reportage in Warsaw, and the Polish School of Reportage and the Turbulent World reporter library, part of the aforementioned Institute. Further details at www.institutr.pl.

❶ What path led you to journalism?

I grew up in the Rampart Hotel's laundry in my birth town of Złotoryja. My mother and my aunt worked there, and my cousin worked as a chambermaid. When I returned to the laundry from school before one o'clock, the chambermaids used to gossip while carrying down the dirty linen: a naked girl had jumped out of the window on the sixth floor for them to bring her back to the hotel; they made a stretcher out of a door. Two women stayed for some time on the seventh floor; one of them turned out to be a man who had an ID card in a woman's name. A German couple in Room 302 put a crystal vase on their table, two days later they put soil from the graveyard into it and put it into their suitcase. In the 1970s, the Rampart Hotel taught me to listen and I am grateful to it for that.

It's easy to listen. All you need to do is not to make fun of someone's life not being as you would like it to be.

Later, it turned out that not only can I listen, but I can also write nice compositions. And so I put together listening and writing.

When I was sixteen, I wrote my first article in the youth weekly, *Na przełaj*. In it, I described how my school's student leaders were unable to agree with management and vice-versa. When I got the first fee of my life for that article, I thought that journalism could become my career.

Some journalists are columnists – they are the ones who know what the world should look like and know the answers to all the questions.
Others are reporters – they are the ones who want to know what the world should look like and so ask a lot of questions.
Columnists are most interested in their own opinions, reporters in the ideas of others.
I am in the second group.
I therefore hope that one day I will find out how to live and what is important in life.

❷ What was your first piece of writing about?
Unfortunately I'm quite embarrassed about the first articles I wrote for Na przełaj – today I feel they were written really badly – so my brain can't remember. When I was 24 (and today I'm 21 years older than that), I started working for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the largest Polish newspaper. One of my first articles for the paper was a story about five lab workers in one laboratory in Warsaw, where they tested HIV-infected blood. Why did they decide to work there? What did they think of the people whose blood they were testing? Had their work changed their life?
And what most interested me was that they enjoyed their work.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
Every report I write is the hardest in the world right at that moment. Twenty-five years ago, I happened to read one sentence which a villager had written in her diary: 'Writing's not so simple – it takes up peoples' time.'
I never forget that when I'm writing. Never.

❹ What would you advise people interested in your field who want to write their first article, report?
Reporting is talking about something which has actually happened. In contrast to writers, reporters never have to think something up.
A subject for reporting can be anything, but that 'anything' must meet one condition: it must be interesting for other people.
Do you enjoy telling your friends about your trip? And do you enjoy it when someone else tells you about their trip? Not really?

It's not so easy to listen to someone else's trip, is it?
In the same way, OUR holiday photos are the most interesting, not someone else's. So when you write a report you have to make sure that it is something which can arouse real interest in other people.
There is a method for this: even a banal and dry subject can be told in a way that makes it interesting.
Details – this is one of the things which can keep a reader glued to your story.
Detail – it may seem minor, but American writer Philip Roth said that detail is the finger of a giant. Details are of fundamental importance. Detail can tell the reader more than generalisation.
Stamping your fist on the table is clearer than being angry.
In the 1990s, the streets of Polish towns were full of Romanian children begging. *Gazeta Wyborcza* reporter Monika Piątkowska described a little beggar at one of the crossroads in Łódź. The star of her report, ten-year old Cucu, was to pretend that he was paralysed in his legs so he could get more money. He approached people with a piece of paper on which it was written that he was sick and was collecting money for his operation. He usually approached women. But his older guardian and tormentor told him: 'You're walking wrongly! Walk bent over, you've got to be shaking!' And Cucu shook in such a way he almost couldn't get into bed that first night. When he played his role badly, his guardian beat him.
Without an excessive number of words, the reporter was able to show the whole of little Cucu's life. (In a moment, you'll see what role detail played here) At one point, she found out from Cucu what the first words in Polish were that he learnt.
Cucu had a rather particular list of vocabulary:
Read this note, Mrs. Give me some money. I'm Polish. I live in Łódź. I don't have any parents. Knuckle sandwich, fuck, ciggie, street.
What do the first words young Cucu learnt in Poland make you think about his situation?
You must agree with me that those words say a lot about his life in a foreign country.
Write normally, the way you speak. Reports mostly use informal language, because reports are about life. They must be authentic.

I think you should write a story the way you would tell it to your sister, brother, mum, dad, partner. You would never tell your sister, 'The vehicle collided with a tree,' because you're not an official. You'd say: 'The Ford smashed into a big tree.'

A report isn't an essay. For a report about a woman who feeds stray cats on her estate and about whom people are angry, you don't need to start as you would writing an essay about a well-known poet or writer:

Anna K. is one of the most active feeders of cats on the estate. As a wonderful example of volunteering and humanism, who has been undertaking her task for years, the estate is not an easy life for her.

The story of Anna K should be told in a different way:

The fastest one is the one who doesn't have eyes. He recognises her from a kilometre away and he flies like an arrow. He wants to be the first to lick her fingers.

That's quite a good beginning, and there was no need to disclose right in the first sentence that it was about cats. It's good to surprise the reader. Surprise – a good element in any report, show, film or photograph. Surprised readers will want to read your report further.

Do we have to immediately disclose that ten-year old Cucu was begging at a crossroads? Of course not.

Cucu begins his work. His boss takes him to his place, a crossroads. His training lasts for seconds. 'You've got to be shaking! You've got to always have your legs shaking!' yells the boss. The boss is sixteen years old, six years older than his employer.

And so on...

I like that controlled release of information. I often write so that I pull the reader into the story. One critic who read my books said that I use a 'striptease method'. I reveal the core of the story slowly.

The report on Anna K. can bring the reader's attention to another aspect right from the start:

It's mostly women of her own age who are angry with her. They don't let her into the courtyard, they deliberately lock the front entrance, one of them even spat at her.

There's important detail here (spitting), but we haven't revealed everything yet. As we reporters say – 'don't waste all your ammunition right at the beginning.'

How do we know that the cat with the bulbous eyes responds like he does to Anna K.? Because we have spoken to Mrs K. (maybe a few times). Or maybe we've been out with her to all the places she goes to feed the cats, and we've seen all of them with our own eyes. In my experience, our heroes are more open when they can show us a piece of their world, than when they only give us an interview. (But when we're out and about with someone, we shouldn't be taking notes because it looks silly. We just accompany them – and take notes later.)

We should ask questions so that our interviewee says as much as possible about his experience. So we should avoid questions which can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. We should ask 'why...', 'what did you feel when...', 'what were thinking at that moment...', 'what was the biggest surprise...'.

Don't forget that the reporter is a mediator between two people. This means he isn't just interested in facts, but also in the feelings of the person they're speaking with. It's all about each understanding the other, to see their situation. The reporter tries to understand in the name of the reader. Not to judge, not to apologise, not to praise, but to understand. Why a person is the way he is.

Michał Olszewski
Poland

'I never forget that the heroes of my articles often pay for their honesty, which is why I try to protect my sources as much as I can. I usually warn them that interviews with a journalist are quite risky.'

Michal Olszewski was born in 1977 in Ełk, Poland. He is a journalist, writer and publicist. He graduated from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, where he studied Polish philology. Since 2007, he has been the head of the reporters in the Tygodnik Powszechny weekly. He is the author of many reports, articles and reviews in literary magazines and deals in topics relating to ecology and environmental protection. As a prose author, he has a collection of horror stories, To Amsterdam, which won a Znak award, under his belt. Some of his well-known publications include, e.g. Chwalcie łąki umajone, Zapiski na biletach (Notes on tickets) and 'Eco-book o eko-Bogu' (Eco-book about eco-God) – interviews with priest Stanisław Jaromi on environmental topics.

❶ What path led you to your current work?

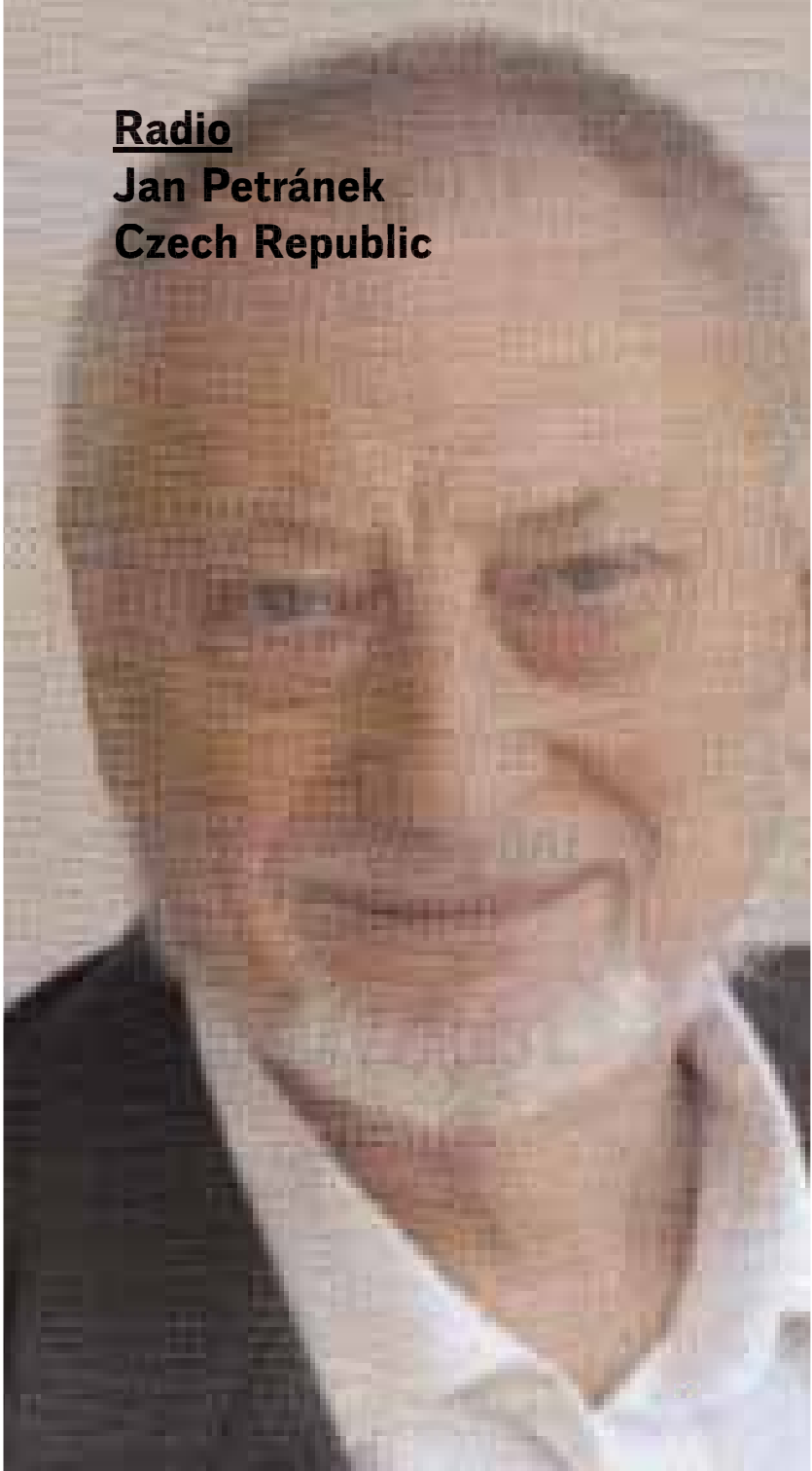
From what I remember, I've always wanted to write. As a child, I used to ravish anything written that came into my hands, I liked to read the Scout magazine 'The World of the Young' just as much as I did magazines for motorists. I liked books about making submarines, and also books of poems. I made my first newspaper at primary school. Along with three friends, we put together a little magazine focused on life at school and in town. It was ten or twelve pages. It was a funny era, the political system was undergoing changes and freedom was literally blowing in the wind – you could even feel it at our school. I think that's why we decided to criticise some of the teachers and the activities of our principal, something which in the past was not permissible. It was at primary school I began working with local journalists. I know it was a long time ago, but I'm only talking about it to demonstrate that it's good to get interested in a job as a journalist as early as possible – the earlier you start, the longer you can gain experience.

It went on as it usually does. During my studies, I began writing for the student magazine, from where I moved on to the local edition of the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper and the *Tygodnik* weekly.

❷ Do you remember your first newspaper article?
As a student, I wrote an article for the local *Wyborcza* edition about how students were stealing from public telephone box units.

❸ What work do you consider the hardest in your career in journalism?
I struggle most with unfinished topics – with stories where the trail gets lost, or there are insufficient documents and witnesses. Another thing I think is hard is your responsibility for the people you write about. I never forget that the heroes of my articles often pay for their honesty, which is why I try to protect my sources as much as I can. I usually warn them that interviews with a journalist are quite risky.

❹ What would you advise people interested in a career in journalism who want to write their first report, take their first photos, record their first interview for radio or film their first television report or documentary?
Not to be afraid of failure. To have thick skin and steel themselves against killer criticism. To constantly look at what others are doing, read and examine everything they come across. To find topics which other journalists haven't yet thoroughly explored.



Radio
Jan Petránek
Czech Republic

'In order to do good journalism, you need to know many times more facts that you are actually going to be able to use; but you should never forget that it should be interesting, objective, expressed in the best style and language possible – and you should also ensure you don't leave out anything important. If it's funny too then you can be a little bit, and only a little bit, satisfied.'
Jan Petránek quoting Czech journalist, František Gel

Jan Petránek (1931) is a Czech journalist, writer, dissident and author of chansons. Prior to 1968, he worked for Czechoslovak Radio and specialised in international relations, cosmonautics and strategy. He was a foreign correspondent in India, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, Vietnam and China. Because of anti-regime activities (he continued broadcasting during the Soviet occupation in August 1968), he lost his job for the radio and until 1989 earned a living as boiler attendant. He signed Charter 77 and contributed to samizdat (illegal) issues of the Lidové noviny newspaper. He has been a freelance journalist since the fall of the Iron Curtain.

❶ How did you become a journalist?

I've been in journalism all my life, for over 60 years. It's the joy of my life, and in fact it's the way I live. Since I began reading books – when I was a boy of about 7 – I have been enthralled by the written word. In contrast to standard person-to-person contact, it has an incomparable richness of expression and realness.

As a student at Business secondary school, I began publishing a kind of occasional school magazine, in which I wrote news, stories and poems. Naturally, this meant that after I did my leaving exams I didn't look for a place as an economist, but I went straight to editorial offices to ask if they wanted me to work for them. Czechoslovak Radio took me on. So by 1951 I was already a radio journalist.

When the Soviet occupying troops arrived in 1968, I was one of those who wouldn't let go of the microphone, and my colleagues and I stood up to those who wanted to destroy our freedom and freedom of expression.

I want to mention this in order to emphasise that I didn't stop being a journalist, even during the following 20 years, despite having to earn a living for myself and my family as a worker in a boiler house. Political sanctions gave me no better option. This meant that as a journalist, I worked for free for samizdat papers (meaning they were published and distributed privately under threat of arrest). I wrote news reports, opinion pieces and analyses – these were published in the 'Ludmila Daily News', a usually irregularly published newspaper of one copy for my wife and friends who came to read it and often also copied it down.

As well as that, I translated complete books – in a very particular way. A way which managed to get past the censors and protected freedom of expression and opinion. For example, I translated Solzhenitsyn's 'The Gulag Archipelago' directly from the original by reading the Russian text while translating into Czech into a tape recorder. So while it wasn't a brilliantly polished literary translation, at that time it was important political information which was shocking in content. Less so in form. The audio tapes were then easy to copy and still today they can be found somewhere in the country. They have already fulfilled their political task, and anyone who wants to can read better translations of Solzhenitsyn's major works in book form.

At the first opportunity, I began working for Lidové noviny's editorial office, which at that time was actually being published despite being banned by the Communist regime. And as soon as the regime fell in November 1989, I was there when Lidové noviny was subsequently published officially. In poor health, I retired and after a partial recovery I have continued to work freelance as a commentator for Czech Radio and Czech Television. The reason why I don't stop working – even though I'm over 80 – is that I believe that when you work as a journalist, you must help the public see the truth as best you can. And that's only possible when you work every day, from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to sleep, seven days a week. It's a way of life without relaxation, and it can only be divided into two stages: research and writing. There's no time for tiredness.

❷ What was your first professional piece of writing about?

My first professional piece of writing was about 'Operation Ingot'. A huge ingot (a piece of metal suitable for further processing), the only one of its type in the world, had been cast in Pilsen steelworks, and the train carrying it had to speed through the whole of Bohemia all the way to Ostrava to ensure the red-hot piece of metal did not cool

down, because only in Ostrava was there equipment large enough to process it while still hot into a huge spindle.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
I don't know which journalism job I could term the hardest. None of them have been easy. I've been learning my whole life and I still have the feeling I know less than I should – when I have to be ready to go to the radio microphone or in front of the TV camera or just write an article. You can always make any problem clearer than you just have. My great mentor, František Gel (a fantastic journalist who reported daily for Czechoslovak Radio, for example from the Nuremberg Process when Nazi war criminals were put on trial after the Second World War), implanted this principle into my head: 'In order to do good journalism, you need to know many times more facts that you are actually going to be able to use; but you should never forget that it should be interesting, objective, expressed in the best style and language possible – and you should also ensure you don't leave out anything important. If it's funny too then you can be a little bit, and only a little bit, satisfied.'

❹ What would you advise people interested in journalism who want to start off well?
First of all, to be aware that every time, they will be speaking to lots of people who are more of an expert than the journalist himself. This means you have to try to be as fair to the subject matter as possible, use resourceful and clear construction and display humility towards listeners and readers. It is unforgiveable not to verify your information at least three times or more if you are being absolute with facts or theories. Only use superlatives exceptionally. Anyone who uses them and some time later looks back at what he wrote will certainly blush. Anything that today is talked about in superlatives... tomorrow won't be such a big thing. And if you don't have a love for language which you intend to use, then don't claim to be journalist. This also applies to film makers and camera operators, although their language is image and their opinion is the field of view.

TV
Marek Wollner
Czech Republic

'You certainly have to preserve an objective detachment, provide space for both sides of an argument, be 'balanced'. But balance cannot mean 'ten minutes of Hitler, ten minutes of Jews'. It doesn't mean treating lies in the same way as truth, which is a very dangerous and convenient trend which is spreading throughout journalism in all our media.'

Marek Wollner was born in 1967 and studied Journalism at Charles University's Faculty of Social Sciences. He currently works as an editor, reporter and script editor for the programme Reportéři ČT. As well as public service television, where he began in 1999, he has worked for Lidové noviny, Respekt and Týden. He is the author of the novels Ukradené knihy (Stolen books – 1997), Babiččin Majnkampf a já (Grandma's Mein Kampf and I – 2008) and the collection of poems Pamatuju (I remember – 2007). He lists some of the most important reports of his career as, e.g. *Třináct zavražděných se dočkalo kříže (Thirteen murder victims get their cross)* written for the weekly Respekt, or his report on the manipulated investigation into the death of Roma, Milan Lacko, for Týden magazine. Also important was his interview with Nobel prize for literature winner, Wislawa Szymborska, also published in Týden. Czech Television broadcast his report uncovering the first confirmed KGB agent in Bohemia, and he was the first to investigate the post-war massacre of Sudetan Germans in the Czech borderlands on the television screen.

❶ What was the path which took you to your current job?

In fact, I never really wanted to be a journalist, but that's quite common for journalists. When I made the decision of what I wanted to be, we were still in a communist totality. Only a madman or liar would have wanted to be a journalist. I beg to suggest that I am neither. I started off studying physical education, a subject I could slack in easily – at least when I was able to avoid Bolshevic ritual dancing. But from the age of sixteen I had been writing, mostly poems, and in my heart I wanted to be famous novelist (rather a lot of contradictions at one time for sure, but without contradictions, without opportunities, they say). Slacking in physical education in provincial Olomouc seemed more and more like a waste of time to me.

Then I met a friend who studied journalism in a bar who was enthusing about how a certain great writer was teaching them in fiction seminars. I told myself that I would give it a go. Despite my mediocre background, with no communists in the family. I dealt with my moral dilemma by deciding that studying journalism didn't mean becoming a professional liar, and under no circumstances would I work for a newspaper. But I was looking forward to the fiction seminars. Once I had got into the school on my second attempt, I realised that that great writer may well have been quite a good writer, but he was also a big liar, if those two things can go together. And in the end the fiction seminars were cancelled, which didn't really bother me. I cared little for my school, but I was in Prague, where communism was beginning to break up. It was great to be there from the beginning. Apart from the first demonstration since 1969 – the anniversary of the Russian occupation on 21 January 1988, which took place when we were going for our work experience on the hop fields – I went to all the demonstrations which took place in Prague. And that helped me get a job later in Lidové noviny, where I didn't need to lie any more. Although I considered it only temporary, without noticing it, that temporary job ended up becoming my life.

❷ What was your first piece of writing about?

I know that exactly. Although I had published plenty at school before, illustrious articles mostly about films, my first task after starting my job was rather inglorious. (Although looking back on it it seems more and more of historical interest to me). I had to provide 'news coverage' of the official lighting of the Toshiba advertising sign on the roof of Diamant palace on Wenceslas Square. There were loads of Japanese there and good food and drink (my first sushi). At some time in the evening, the red Toshiba sign shone out over Prague, for the first time here. Capitalism at its beginnings. The Japanese were ecstatic. The journalists were stuffing their faces. I must have been the only one to run to the editorial offices to make the deadline. In the morning, I couldn't wait to see the paper, but it wasn't there. My article wasn't there! The editor declared it was a concealed advertisement. For the time, quite a progressive (and correct) decision.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
The toughest period I've had was in the weekly Respekt journal at the beginning of my career. I came there from Lidové noviny, where I almost felt like a star, but at Respekt I realised that I knew nothing. It wasn't enough to write nice sentences, play side A on the dictaphone and then side B, carefully note it down and leave it there, even if both sides conflict with each other, or even one side contradicts the other. Readers, it is up to you to decide who is telling the truth! No. I had to learn how to pose questions, look for all available sources, not only those which offer themselves up, but also those which are hidden, uncover disagreements and contradictions in answers, break through prepared messages which mask the truth, in short to work so that real, new information can be formed running under the surface which can bring something new to light. That was tough, but real lessons were learnt.

❹ What would you advise people interested in your field who want to start off well?
I would advise them not to be journalistic alibis who just shit out letters (sorry, but I don't know how to say it any better). You certainly have to preserve an objective detachment, provide space for both sides of an argument, be 'balanced'. But balance cannot mean 'ten minutes of Hitler, ten minutes of Jews'. It doesn't mean treating lies in the same way as truth, which is a very dangerous and convenient trend which is spreading throughout journalism in all our media. Of course, the journalist never (or almost never) knows in advance which is the lie and which is the truth, and should never place himself in the position of having that knowledge. It's something which you can attain after the careful and often time-consuming collection and analysis of information. If you can present this careful process of finding the truth to the reader step by step so that he can believe it and understand it, then (probably) your work has some meaning.

Internet
Jan Čulík
Czech Republic

'Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed. Everything else is just public relations.'
Quote attributed to George Orwell

Jan Čulík was born on 2 November 1952 in Prague, where he studied at Charles University's Faculty of Arts, specialising in English and Czech. He completed his studies in 1979 with a doctorate comparing English and Czech phoenetics. In 1978, he moved with his British wife to Glasgow, Scotland. In 1978-1983 he taught Czech literature, history and East European Studies at universities in Glasgow and Lancaster.

In 1983, he founded with his wife, Lesley Keen, a film production company, Persistent Vision Animation, which filmed mainly animated arts films for the British cultural commercial broadcaster, Channel Four.

Beginning in the second half of the 1980s, he regularly contributed to BBC broadcasts in Czech, particularly giving literary and cultural reviews, under the name Václav Písecký. From 1989 until the end of October 1995, he was British correspondent for Radio Free Europe's Czechoslovakian, then Czech, radio broadcasts. He filmed dozens of investigative reports for the programme Hlasy a ohlasy, and hundreds of his analyses, reports and commentaries were broadcast in the programmes Panoráma, Události a názory and many other of RFE's programmes.

With his wife, Jan Čulík has translated many short pieces of Czech literary prose into English, which were published in British literary magazines. He has published widely, during the 1980s for example, in Daniel Strož's cultural quarterly for exiles, Obrys, in Josef Škvorecký's bimonthly Západ, the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences' quarterly Proměny, and after 1990 for the weekly Respekt, Tvorba, Tvar, Babylon, Literární noviny, Esprit 97, Svobodné slovo, Slovo and Reflex. He was a member of the editorial board for the British academic magazine Scottish Slavonic Studies and is a member of the editorial board for the magazines Nová přítomnost and Listy.

In collaboration with Ivan Kytka, Jan Čulík worked from October 1995 until April 1996 as British reporter for Prague press agency ČTA. In 1994 and 1995, he was also a reporter for Radio Alfa and took turns with Ivan Kytka to present the regular weekly programme Dopis z Británie (Letter from Britain).

Beginning October 1995, Jan Čulík once again taught Czech studies (literature, history, journalism and film) at the University of Glasgow's Department of Slavonic Languages and Literatures. Since July 1996, he has published the online newspaper Britské listy, which specialises in the confrontation of thoughts between the West and the Czech Republic.

❶ How did I become a journalist?

The answer is rather complicated, because I have always only worked as a journalist on a freelance basis. I studied Czech and Anglo-American literature in Prague (although I had always also been engaged in cinematography and I also filmed some – amateur – films in Czechoslovakia, in Britain after a period I then worked for television).

By historical circumstances, I am someone who, since the age of 25, has been shown the confrontation between various cultural perspectives and has had the opportunity, or rather felt it my duty to compare how people do things differently in different cultural societies – in my case in Britain and in Czechoslovakia, then the Czech Republic.

I am convinced that, especially today when the world is getting ever smaller and is under greater and greater pressure of globalisation, it is vitally important that people – and young journalists in particular – are presented different cultures and different countries to their own for a certain longer period of time. Czech educator Jan Ámos Komenský (1592–1670) knew this: young people must study abroad. By comparing how things are done in different cultures, new ideas and thoughts are created. It is extremely valuable to find yourself in a different culture and see from a distance how people there deal with their problems and what mistakes they make. With this experience, you can then assess the approaches of your own society in a similarly critical manner. And I think that is the most important thing for a journalist's work. Submit all acts and thoughts that we write about to the endurance test of critical thinking. To constantly ask what's wrong with something. Which part of the argument has been left out. What analysis is missing.

In the late 1970s, not long after completing my studies at Prague's Charles University, I married a British woman and I was lucky enough to get a place teaching Czech studies at Glasgow University. But then Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1981 and she started making radical

cuts to university education and I was forced to leave the university. I didn't return until 1995.

In 1982, a new nationwide commercial cultural television station, Channel Four, began broadcasting, whose programmes were made by independent private production companies, both large and small. My wife and I founded such a company and we worked for Channel Four for the whole of the 1980s. My wife is a graphic designer and creator of animated films. Our works from the 1980s strived to express, through visual forms, abstract philosophical ideas. Probably the most significant film we made was the full-length animated film, *Ra: The Path of the Sun God*,[8] which visualised certain elements of Ancient Egyptian mythology. I was mostly head of production, although I also took part in a wide range of other film activities, from specific work on an animation to cutting or filming music or commentary. I also filmed documentary films for Channel Four explaining the background to our projects. Through scriptwriting and other activities, I helped create the accompanying documentary, *Orpheus through the Ages* on the changes to Orpheus's myth in the cultures of the past two thousand years, which was awarded a BAFTA Scotland, and the short animated film *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1984), which was the core of this project and which was screened in May 1984 at the main competition in Cannes. At that event, we sat in the front rows with the producers of the films in the competition, such as Wim Wenders and Ingmar Bergman.

Even after my departure from the university, where I had tried to build bridges between the cultures of Central and East Europe and the West, I translated short Czech prose and wrote articles about Czech literature and culture, mostly for academic magazines.

❷ How did I get into my job in journalism?

In 1987, on the occasion of the awarding of the Dutch Erasmus Prize to then dissident Václav Havel, London publishers Faber and Faber published Jan Vladislav's collection of essays about Havel and his 'Living in Truth'. Angus Roxburgh, a young Russianist who I had once taught Czech to in Glasgow, phoned me. He would later become a well-known BBC television reporter in Moscow, but in 1987 he worked as a correspondent for the BBC's foreign radio broadcasts. Angus asked me on the phone: 'Listen Honza, I have to write a commentary on Václav Havel but I know nothing about him. Would you like to write it?' I thought this information was important, because it told me that even Western experts on Central and East Europe didn't know much about who Václav Havel was. I agreed, and so I got into broadcasting for the BBC, first I wrote commentary in English which was used in all language sections broadcasting to Central and East Europe, and then the BBC's foreign broadcasting Czech section called me in.

When Radio Free Europe's Czechoslovakian radio station stopped being jammed on Gorbachov's orders at the end of 1988, I offered my services to them too. In no time, I moved to Free Europe. I did basically everything there, although I mainly worked for the programme *Hlasy a ohlasy*, which was edited by Karel Friedrich. I worked in Prague and Glasgow: I filmed interviews on various topics during my visits to Prague and I then gradually went through them in Glasgow. At that time, tape recordings were still cut manually using a razor and a small rail. By 1995, I must have contributed to all of Radio Free Europe's programmes.

Dozens of my interviews and analyses were broadcast in Hlasy a ohlasy, and for anyone who is interested, I would like to refer you to one of them – my interview with Ivan Svítek, a noted adviser to then Minister of Finance, Václav Klaus from 1991.[9]

Not long after the fall of communism, Radio Free Europe's Czechoslovakian editorial team moved to Prague and found itself facing problems. After a certain period of time, station manager Pavel Pecháček managed to ensure the finances of the station, and transformed it into Czech Radio 6. Because financial support had to be found from governing Czech politicians, it was suddenly difficult to get anything broadcast which was critical towards the first post-communist Czechoslovakian government. About ten contributions which Radio Free Europe's editor-in-chief, Olga Kopecká-Waleská, rejected, were published in 1996 in Britské listy and in our first collection, From Britské listy ...how Czechs think.[10] The core of the conflict was a criticism relating to the fact that Prime Minister Václav Klaus, although holding public office, was paid for his public speeches. I telephoned to Downing Street and asked if British Prime Minister John Major was also paid for his speeches. They almost had a heart attack ('But for God's sake, he's in public office!!'), I recorded it, put it in my contribution and sent it to Prague, and got the

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response that it was just an unusual practice in Britain. So I called Radio Free Europe's reporter in Washington, Karel Jezdínský, to ask if he would ask the White House if Bill Clinton was also paid for his speeches. About five minutes later, my editor-in-chief called from Prague: 'Mr Čulík, you're playing at being some big-shot reporter, and you'll get our licence revoked.'

In the first half of the 1990s, open-minded editor, Radko Kubičko, secretly broadcast some of my investigative blocks in the Saturday programme *Názory a argumenty* instead of repeats of commentaries from the previous week. Authors such as Václav Žák and Jiří Pehe also met with suppression of their work at Radio Free Europe. When Radio Free Europe was still in Munich, problems with 'censoring' (or rather 'very strict editorial control') were experienced by Karel Kryl and young interns Radko Kubičko, Tomáš Klvaňa and Bohumil Pečínka.

National daily, *Svobodné slovo*, were brave enough to print that which Radio Free Europe refused to broadcast. You can find dozens of these analyses, e.g., in the Newton media database. In the early 1990s, these mainly concerned a wide range of very controversial facts surrounding the founding of Nova commercial television station.

In terms of my work in this early period, I would like to draw your attention to one documentary which was broadcast in April 1995 (twice, it was repeated on the request of listeners) in the then nationwide commercial current affairs station, Radio Alfa. What was it about? From mid-1994 I'd been asking the Ministry of Industry and Trade for an interview with minister Vladimír Dlouhý regarding the privatisation of Škoda motor works. I phoned the ministry almost every day and just kept getting the most unbelievable excuses. I recorded my calls and then put them together for the programme.[11] This could probably help young journalists to learn that a journalist has to be stubborn. The question remains, however, whether there is a safe enough climate for journalists in the Czech Republic that their employers or unions are really able to protect them from political pressure. In other words, is there a guarantee that making these kind of programmes or films won't lead to the journalist losing his job?

❸ What was most difficult in my job as a journalist?

Convincing bosses to respect the critical nature and independence of the journalist profession. In almost all media which I ever worked in in the CR, restrictive political pressure was put to use. In at least one Czech newspaper, journalists had a list of major advertisers on the boards above their desks who they were not allowed to criticise. And in fact, I know this kind of practice goes on in some British newspapers too.

Why did we set up *Britské listy*? After the transfer of Radio Free Europe to Prague and its growing timidity which grew in proportion to the increasing existential uncertainty of its editors, the Czech climate in the 1990s began to make it – with the exception of the aforementioned *Svobodné slovo* – rather difficult to publish anything in the media containing any kind of individual or independent thought. Editors began to show quite literally incredible talent in the sense that they ALWAYS cut out the most important part of any article sent to a particular medium. Bohumil Pečinka described the media culture exactly in May 1999 in the weekly *Reflex* magazine.[12] The *Reflex* article is accompanied by cartoon from Vladimír Jiránek. In it, the editor-in-chief and a journalist-intellectual stand facing each other. The caption to the picture reads, editor speaking: 'We're going to have to let you go I'm afraid. Your over-education is putting off our large advertisers.'

Over to Bohumil Pečinka:

The Czech journalist doesn't move in an environment which is any different from the world you and your friends move in, that is to say in a small town. The small town is essential for understanding the mentality of Czechs, because it is here that certain habits, traditions and conventions are formed, which then also dominate in cities such as Prague and Brno. In the Czech small town, a mainstream conventional view rules supreme, and determines what public opinion should be, ruthlessly terrorises doubters and forces them to hold the same opinion. Make no mistakes, not much discussion goes on in the small town, there won't be any large differences in opinion here either, even if small talk can come close, but it's more likely all just talk.

Small towns usually tolerate one or two people who bring a different opinion, but from the perspective of the creators of the mainstream they are merely tolerated 'lunatics' who the small town treats with benign superiority. Everyone else is either ruthlessly silenced by a tidal wave of banality or driven out of the small town.

The small town does not strong views, right-wing or left-wing, conservative or liberal, it really can't afford the lux-

ury. The small town respects the old traditions of a single and unifying national opinion, one conventional truth. Therefore journalists won't say: we evaluate the world from such and such a perspective, but pretend that only the truth comes from their computer monitor (and sometimes even love too). Incidentally, would you be able to determine what set of opinions the national dailies represent, with the exception of the clear-cut Pravo?

You have to fall in. Because the small town venerates the mainstream, and is uncompromising in its defence against all dissonant opinions, expressing in this regard an extraordinary herd instinct. You will rarely glean the genuine situation, but you will often be told what is proper for you to think. The moment you open a Czech newspaper, a commentator puts you into a pigeonhole: 'Are you a communist, a coward, a lover of the old order? Then you must think this. Are you a democrat, are you intelligent and of good character? Then this is your opinion. You're not one or the other? Forget it, my friend. You are in the Czech Republic. You must join the crowd.'

The tone of communication within the mainstream in the small town has two basic pitches: verbose praise ("our beautiful transformation") and depressive wailing ("everything has been stolen"). Which pitch prevails depends, naturally, on the mood of the times.

Mainstream proponents perform several dance routines. One of these is a game of pretend politics, in which journalists put themselves in the role of 'avengers' of textbook ideals, which they beat over the head of the politician and demand are fulfilled. It's a virtual game. Journalists often say something, often taken out of context and politicians ritually repeat it. In the end, the politicians are moralising, the journalists are moralising, everything is fudged into insubstantiality and illusionary political initiatives are formed – both sides are happy, and life moves on somewhere else.

In reality, politics is a practical activity, aiming to change things. The small town does not think of this until there is a fire. At that point, a good old unelected civil servant enters the scene and writes up a new act of Parliament.

In the 1995-1996 academic year, Jan Rybář, future foreign politics editor of the *Mladá fronta Dnes* newspaper was on a study visit in Glasgow University. In May 1996, he told me that writer Ondřej Neff had begun publishing the paper *Neviditelný pes* on the internet, it was then a kind of blog (which at that time didn't exist). I told Neff that I would like to contribute to his paper. Neff clearly thought I must have been a student staying in Britain for a short time and that I would give tourist views from the island, because he gave the *Neviditelný pes* supplement the title *Britské listy* (British pages). The supplement developed into something a little different, a critical cultural and political paper, and before long it separated off. Today, *Britské listy* has about 330 000 individual readers each month. Its negative aspects include a certain kind of amateurism (only two editors are involved in making up the paper, the paper has a minimal budget which comes solely from small reader donations) and the fact that authors of a mainly left-wing view are showcased there. This is probably because left-wing authors have much smaller space in the Czech media that authors considered in a Czech context as 'right-wing'.

❹ How to begin as a journalist?

If I am to advise a young journalist what to do and how to begin, allow me to quote from a recent British debate on the role of intellectuals in society. A good journalist is an intellectual. He is someone who can bring an opinion to the public arena which is different from the current standard ideology or political perspective. It's not enough just to oppose, because that is too negative. 'Public intellectuals attempt to widen and deepen the public discourse, by adding further analysis and coming at issues in surprising or unexpected ways,' argues psychotherapist and author Susie Orbach[13] in a recent discussion in the British (intellectual) newspaper, The Guardian. 'The dilemma for the public intellectual is to remember at all times that the point of the project is to remove arguments from authority,' writes Brian Cox, British physicist and journalist. 'A public intellectual is somebody who either says something new or says something that everybody knows to be true but is afraid to express,' suggests writer Lionel Shriver. 'An intellectual is someone whose reasoned ideas have an impact on a broad swath of society,' states philosopher Alain de Botton, and adds that in today's Britain a lot of intellectuals are public servants: they influence the strategy and running of the country, even if nobody knows them. From what I know of the Czech civil service, I would guess that this situation does not apply in the Czech Republic.

Some time ago, English historian Timothy Garton Ash attempted to define an intellectual in a debate with Czech academics. According to him, an intellectual is a thinker or author who is engaged in public debate and in politics in the wider sense of the word, but who is *deliberately not seeking power*. 'The final part of this definition is in my opinion very important,' writes Ash and refers to his discussion with Václav Havel (in 1995) when the then Czech president rejected the necessity of independence for intellectuals.[14] He argues that eafter forty years of communism, now every one of us must get things going together e and got down to politics. Would Havel remain an authority today if he had preserved his independence and not identified with a particular political grouping, as Ash recommended he do in the early 1990s?[15]

A journalist should be able to look at various ideological or political stances independently, *sine ira et studio* – without becoming the victim of a false narrative – such as a Marxist, anti-communist or nationalist one – or being convinced that only he is right because on the basis of his experience he understands things better than anyone else. A journalist should be able to 'put himself in another person's shoes', to find out how the Germans, or the Poles, or the Roma see the world. Many people in the CR, on the basis of their traumatising experience of communist totality, are today convinced that there is only one truth and that they stand on the side of 'good' against evil. The problem is that it's not that simple. The duty of a journalist is to subject all uncertainties to detailed critical examination – even his own deeply held beliefs.

Freedom of thought emerged in Czechoslovakia after 1989. The Czech scholar, however, began to feel the *horror vacui*: people rushed to fill the empty space with activist groupings and organisations. Czech society became fractional – countless groups of people were formed who speak only among themselves, who hold a shared, single opinion, run their own, ideological internet websites, and who other people either ignore or consider to be pathetic or even actively dislike. Yet if they publish some article it should be my duty as an editor to strive to find another article which tries to break down that argumentation from an opposing perspective. The fractional, almost tribal disunity of Czech society was for me

one of the biggest disappointments of post-communist development in the Czech Republic. A journalist should be able to openly accept new ideas and reevaluate his convictions when he discovers something which is in conflict with his previous beliefs.

In the Czech environment – and this would certainly also apply to any small country with its own language which is not spoken anywhere else – the same often conventional and tired ideas keep going round and round. We should open Czech discourse to the world and speak to other people. Look for international allies. Ask how our problems are dealt with elsewhere. Some Czech politicians, shut off from the outside world through their Czech, say things in their small world which are so utterly preposterous they would not survive even a minute in an open global discourse. Comparing yourself with other cultures and other ideas brings in new, creative solutions. It's always thought-provoking to look at a problem through the prism of your own, and then someone else's experience and compare where the pictures differ and why.

Communism successfully frustrated not just engagement in public affairs, but also a public intellectual debate. Not only did it forbid it, but it also attacked the very basis of the language and its communicative abilities. It got rid of words which had clear, specific, comprehensible meanings, and replaced them with empty expressions of totalitarian newspeak. This method of expression has an extraordinary shelf life in Czech society. Many people in the public sphere still today do not know how to express themselves clearly, briefly and specifically – and many politicians deliberately choose not to do so. The politician today does not have the – humble – feeling that he should only inconvenience citizens with his speeches for the shortest possible time. Cramming together abstract phrases in clumsily worded sentences, in a way that commissars in the Communist army or agents of the secret police used to speak and write to each other, is a bad habit which we still come across today in the theses of students in their twenties, who weren't even around during communism! They've obviously got it from their teachers. Journalists should strive to ensure people in the public sphere express themselves pertinently, clearly and specifically and should not tolerate poor quality discourse and waffle. Insist on quality even while an argument is being put forward.

What can you do?

If a journalist is to have a positive impact on society, if society should view him positively and if his work should have a specific result, he should observe these principles: Eliminate fractionalism and personal antipathy. Practice openness.

Be humble. Humans are in essence imperfect. This applies to each of us. We can only achieve something in co-operation with others. A journalist should not work on boosting his own personal position of power, but on projects for the good of the community.

Even in today's society of weakened values, a network of intellectuals working together should provide protection for basic moral and cultural values. A good journalist should systematically use these values in the public domain, in the media and in schools. Ideological convictions should not be disseminated, conventional opinion should in contrast be questioned, critical questions should be posed. If more people did this together, it would have the required effect. A non-ideological network of intellectuals and journalists could and should work in competition to an incapable government and president. People are disillusioned with their politicians today in most countries of the world. Why not get together and look for a better solution without them? Journalists can really help. A good journalist strives for a new, surprising, original solution. He extends public discussion beyond the Czech environment. He systematically brings people from abroad into public discussion, and not only people from his own country.

Conclusion

Journalists should rigorously promote the importance of basic and unchanging ethical principles and high professionalism in the public domain and compare them with the behaviour of public figures. Journalists must do this *sine ira et studio* – it should not be apparent from their behaviour that they have some private agenda. They shouldn't even have one. It is important to initiate real, specific, informed and comprehensible public debate in all issues. Find out how things are done elsewhere. Create an alternative to incapable and corrupt politicians. An island of stable values and rationality in today's ambivalent society. People would listen to the substantive, composed, clear and independent voice of journalists who are willing to work in service to the public.

Jakub Patočka
Czech Republic

'I recommend doing journalism thinking about one or two people close to you who you admire and aim to please them, or ensure they would understand it so they could get something out of it, or be persuaded by it. (...) Not to make compromises for the spirit of the age and not to be satisfied with what happens to be in fashion today or what is just enough, but rather strive to find inspiration in the best examples of the field, maybe even some old classics from home or the best from abroad.'

Jakub Patočka was born in 1973 in Brno, where he studied sociology at Masaryk University's Faculty of Arts. In 1989, he co-founded Hnutí DUHA – Friends of the Earth Czech Republic, from which he launched the Posledni generace (Last Generation) magazine in 1991 (renamed Sedmá generace – Seventh Generation – in 1998). In 1999, he became editor-in-chief of Literární noviny, in which position he remained until 2009. Since 2009, he has published and run the online Deník Referendum. In the late 1990s, he was a member of the British magazine The Ecologist's editorial board. In 2002, a selection of the first ten years of his journalism writings was issued, entitled Český zájem (Czech concern). He has worked with a number of Czech politicians as an informal advisor, including Václav Havel, Petr Pithart and Vladimír Špidla. In 2002, he launched a successful movement for the renewal of the Czech Green party, after which he was their lead candidate for the elections to the European Parliament. Following the Green Party's movement away from the democratic left, he cancelled his membership.

❶ What was the path which took you to your current job?

My current job is publishing and editing the online Deník Referendum – www.denikreferendum.cz. I founded Deník Referendum in 2009 with a group of friends who had all worked with me previously for Literární noviny, which was a cultural and political weekly print periodical which I had run for ten years. In the end, we had to sell it, because a particular governing party which you wouldn't expect to do so began systematically getting rid of our sponsors for political reasons. It was impossible to publish any further a journal as a strictly non-commercial title without sponsors. Although the new owner of Literární noviny made out to begin with that he wanted most of the journalists to stay and continue the course

we had set, before long his plan to make a more conformist paper with other people soon became clear. I didn't want to allow the method of journalism which Literární noviny stood for under my management to disappear. I would say that we have developed a certain method of journalism which stands apart from the mainstream of Czech media operations, which gains its inspiration both from critical media worldwide, such as the American Common Dream, The Nation, Democracy Now, the British Guardian and German TAZ, and also from the Czech humanitarian democratic tradition of journalism, established by Karel Havlíček Borovský in the 19th century, and which flourished in the interwar period and shortly after the Second World War when it was represented by Lidové noviny and Přítomnost, then in Literární noviny during the 1960s; and subsequent to 1989 in just small sections of Lidové noviny in the first few years after its renewal.
It was obvious that we would be unable to publish a political print weekly during a general period of crisis in the print media. Printing and distribution costs and falling advertising revenue was putting all print media at a disadvanbtage compared to competing online journals, so it was clear that if our community of journalists and authors were to have a future, it would be on the internet. I prepared a project, found a sponsor for it, and developed the business as an opinionated daily, which would strive to convey a different type of reporting. Unfortunately, our sponsor stayed for less than a year and we had to reduce our reporting section because quality reporting costs a lot of money and our income wasn't enough to do so – and was likely to remain so.
We did the only thing left to us: we kept the bare bones of the site and asked our readers for their support. Today, we continue to publish the journal using these voluntary contributions, with additional income coming from advertising, fees for taking part in discussions under articles, and grants. Although our journal is still published with much economic difficulty and it has not inconsequential debt, its visitor numbers and influence is steadily growing, so we are fully convinced that within two or three years the project will be able to stand on its own two feet and become a fundamental part of the Czech media scene, with its own distinct profile differentiating it from the mainstream.
So I have come into my current job by creating it myself.

❷ What was your first piece of writing about?
My journalism path is a very unusual one. I studied psychology and I've worked in the environmental movement since I was sixteen. Within Hnutí DUHA, the Czech Friends of the Earth, I founded the Poslední (later Sedmá) generace magazine. My first articles then, which could probably be classed as analysis and comment, were published in the magazine of an environmental movement of a global nature, and my writing corresponded to this. Over time, in striving to do my editorial and journalism work as best I could, I learnt from various examples, mostly from abroad and from the past, because I couldn't find any from amongst my Czech contemporaries, with a few exceptions (such as Ivan Hoffman, Jana Klusáková, Alexandr Kramer, Ondřej Vaculík and Jaroslav Veis) whose writing or activities, however, did not reflect the overall character of the media in which they were working. In 1999, I got an offer from Sedmé generace subscriber and regular reader, Ludvík Vaculík, as to whether I would like to take over Literární noviny, rocked by crisis and in immediate danger of closure, and return it to the critical cultural and political medium it was in 1968. So my first job in professional journalism was something between editor-in-chief and crisis manager, to be honest nothing I could recommend to anyone to follow.
But there is one thing I enjoy looking back on, and I think I can recommend it too: From the beginning in Literarní noviny, I did a lot of interviews, extensive interviews of eight standard pages. This is a genre which in my opinion can be managed by any novice of journalism – I would recommend learning from A J Liehm's Generace – interviews with Czech and Slovak writers from 1968 – and Alexandr Kramer's five books of political interviews.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
Probably the hardest for me was writing about books and films, or art in general. This is because first of all I don't have the necessary education in this area; I studied sociology, so I'm missing the skills and methods which would help me in my writing; and also because I always feel I should critically evaluate the author's work to the same depth that he himself gave the work in creating it. I want to fully experience the book I am writing about, see the film I'm writing about at least three times, listen to an album seven times. That's probably why I only

rarely write about books and art in general, yet I do think it's important because what happens in art anticipates social change, creates groundwork for it and provides it with vital feedback.
Probably the absolute hardest for me is writing articles which I know can relate to some of my friends. Really hard, maybe the the toughest ever, was writing a critical review for Pavel Kosatík's book about Ferdinand Peroutka, for which the author received a number of awards. By chance, I had myself been studying Peroutka so I was able to compare Kosatík's findings with my own. I came to the conclusion that Kosatík's book was awful, because it panders to popular taste, fitting exactly into the mythical nature of Prague intellectuals, who much prefer the veneration of symbolic figures than a proper analysis of them. Because I received angry responses to my article from Pavel Tigrid, who had life-long personal and political disagreements with Peroutka, and a number of other people who disagreed with my attack on Kosatík's mythicising, unfortunately including my then boss Ludvík Vaculík, and even the very upset author himself, I felt satisfaction that despite all my fears, what I had wanted, that is to trigger a scandal which would shake Kosatík's mythicism, I had succeeded in causing.
From another perspective and facet of my work: really tough is dismissing people who work or generally cooperate with me. When I recently had to close the entire news section in Deník Referendum, it actually made me physically ill.

❹ What would you advise people interested in your field who want to start off well?
To do it thinking about one or two people close to you who you admire and aim to please them, or ensure they would understand it so they could get something out of it, or be persuaded by it. To try as far as possible not to make compromises for the spirit of the age and not to be satisfied with what happens to be in fashion today or what is just enough, but rather strive to find inspiration in the best examples of the field, maybe even some old classics from home or the best from abroad. I would strongly recommend anyone who wants to work as a reporter read Milena Jesenská's book Nad naše síly (Beyond our power), in my opinion the best set of reports ever published in Czech. Or if you speak English and are interested in reporting, read Barbara Ehrenreich's book Nickel and Dimed about living amongst the poorest Americans.

Documentary Filmmakers

Jan Gogola Jr.

Czech Republic

'The hardest thing in any new job is to use something you have learnt differently.'

Jan Gogola was born in 1971, is a director, script editor and lecturer. He studied journalism at Charles University's Faculty of Social Sciences, and documentary making at FAMU Film Academy in Karel Vachek's creative workshop. In his work, he focuses on philosophical and sociological themes, dealing with relations to institutions, social icons and events. He helped in making a number of documentary films, including Český sen (Czech Dream) (directed by Filip Remunda and Vít Klusák), and is the author of a number of films and television programmes, including Deník babičky Němcové (a filmed diary about the weather and society), Nonstop (a philosophical film of the absurd about the infinity of a motorway flowing with vehicles), Odstup a kontakt Dana Trubače (a portrait of Dan Trubač, sculptor, husband, father, villager), Panelák je kamarád – Praha mizerná, Slečna Braník – Praha mizerná, Ave Braník (portraits of Prague neighbourhoods), Panenka proti zbytku světa (an portrait play), and many more.

❶ What was the path which took you to your current job?

So, to the first question – how I got to what I'm doing – I'd answer with two pictures set next to each other or one below the other

Staré Město u Uherského Hradiště, 1985

Podmokly, 2010

If those photos aren't enough, then a description:
The medium of the ball was replaced by the medium of film, the game remained.

❷ What was your first professional job about?
Work experience at school in a pickling factory, where I stacked five-kilo jars of gherkins. Going to bed and waking up exhausted. Important experience. Work is also painful.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
The hardest thing in any new job is to use something you have learnt differently.

❹ What would you advise people interested in your field who want to film their first report?
Not to worry about the fact: everything happens for the first time.

Peter Kerekes
Slovakia

'On the first day of filming, I realised that the script was unuseable and I threw it out, but because I had a clear theme and structure, I basically filmed what I had envisioned at the beginning'

Peter Kerekeš was born in 1973 in Košice, Slovakia. In 1998, he graduated from the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava in film production. His university films, O troch dňoch v Jasovskom kláštere (Three Days at Jasov Monastery) and Ladomírské morytáty a legendy (Ladomírova's Ballads and Legends) won a number of international awards. His two feature documentaries, 66 sezón (66 Seasons – 2003) and Jak se vaří dějiny (Cooking history – 2009) were shortlisted for a number of film festivals. The Cooking history documentary won the special Jury award at the FIPRESCI Hot Docs festival in Leipzig in 2009, the Golden Hugo Award for best documentary at the Chicago Film Festival, and was awarded top prize in Vienna's Viennale. As well as filming, Peter teaches documentary film production at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava, where he himself studied. Other films we could mention include e.g. his scripting and production of the documentary Podvod sveta (Global hoax – 2002) and his scripting and production of Most Márie Valérie (Mária Valéria Bridge – 2000).

❶ What was the path which took you to your current job?
I got into documentary films by chance. As a young and immature student (and looking back on it now, I have to confess also a bit of an idiot), I was accepted to study film production. Luckily, the school didn't have enough money for student films, so I began to film documantary films as a 'subsidiary programme'. It seemed to me that you didn't need any education to film a documentary. My school was my first day of filming, my teachers my fellow students – cameraman Martin Kollár and editor (and also author of the sound) Marek Šulík. I was fascinated by the freedom and opportunities of film language in documentaries, and so I have remained in this genre until today.

❷ What was your first professionally filmed documentary about?
Most of my films – right up until Cooking History – are actually amateur, although I did have a real budget for them. They were amateur in the sense that I made them with passion, quite selfishly for my own satisfaction and enjoyment, without thinking about their consequences, and only with friends. In this way, I was able to film my student films and my first feature film, 66 seasons. My first 'professional' film was a feature documentary on military cooks, which came out of a fairly large international co-production. I achieved these conditions, however, on the basis of good references regarding my 'amateur' films.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
'Murdering' the actors in my film. I usually choose the people for my films on the basis of a lot of research, I spend a lot of time with them and we form a close relationship. Sometimes, however, they don't fit into the concept, I don't film them, or the material I do film doesn't get into the film. They have invested their time, trust, sometimes hope in it, and I break it. I don't like making this decision because in doing so I'm fighting myself. Other problems common in filming I take as par for the course – problems with financing, institutions, approval, the weather or just bad luck.

❹ What would you advise people interested in documentary making?
There is no such thing as universal advice, I can only speak of my own experience. I made my first films about places I knew intimately. One took place in a monastery converted to a lunatic asylum (Three Days at Jasov Monastery), another was about a crazy old amateur artist from a Hungarian village in Slovakia (Balog Josef, 66 Pribeník). Both topics shared strong emotions and images from my childhood. I often walked to Jasov with my father on trips, and I met the crazy artist every summer. I was lucky that I didn't have enough money to start filming immediately – while waiting for finance I had loads of time to think about the film. I talked a lot about it to my friends in cafés and trains at a time when it wasn't even written down on paper, and so the film's theme and structure became clearer during these dialogues. I wrote

a very precise script for my ‘ideal’ film – I put situations and images which I saw on my trips to the location into the structure and I also thought up new ones.
On the first day of filming, I realised that the script was unuseable and I threw it out, but because I had a clear theme and structure, I basically filmed what I had envisioned at the beginning. I made the film only for myself, I didn’t adjust it to the liking or requirements of any producer. That doesn’t mean I didn’t consult people I respect about it. It took me a long time to finish the film (although I didn’t bother with a number of things in post-production), I tried not to let go of it until it was ready and I was satisfied with it.
And then I embarked on preparation for my next film.
That’s probably everything.

'Notice the mistakes you make in doing your work, and learn from them.'

Ivan Charalambous is a young Cypriot film maker helping NGOs in Cyprus in media production. He has been involved in many peace projects in the country and supports active civic initiatives and campaigns focused on increasing the awareness of development issues. As part of a media project supporting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs – Media for Development Goals), he visited Kenya in August 2010 where he attempted to portray various views of local life through his camera. In the following interview, Ivan Charalambous shares his experiences as a film maker with you.

❶ What was the path which took you to film making?

I come from a creative family which was always actively linked to publically exhibited art, mainly music and theatre. So that was the environment I grew up in and I took part in all family projects. I usually worked behind the scenes somewhere, where my interest in film took shape. My grandfather was an example to me when I was growing up. He was a Cypriot activist who campaigned for peace and high living standards on the island when he was young.

I chose a career in film because this work allows me to take advantage of both influences which formed me: it allows me to link aesthetic feeling with the need to campaign for a better life.

❷ Do you remember your first professional article/other work?

The first film I made was a documentary. I worked on it with Sophia Loukaides and it was about the local music, dance and acting scene in Nicosia. The documentary was called 'Artistic Endeavor Nicosia'. It was made in 2010, a few months before my trip to Kenya. You can see it online at the address vimeo.com/aibori.

❸ On your trip to Kenya, you made a documentary about the life of Kenyans who were resettled within their country. What brought you to that topic?

In 2007, Kenya experienced a tragedy. The political situation in the country collapsed after the election, and 1500 people were killed in violent clashes. Roughly 250 000 Kenyans were resettled within the country. The United Nations uses the acronym IDP (internally displaced persons) for these resettled people – they are people who were violently displaced from their homes and had to move to a new location within the country. It is similar in Cyprus, but we call these kinds of people refugees.

Since I had seen and heard so much about the resettlement of about 250 thousand Cypriots in 1974, I went to Nakuru so I could meet the displaced people and see for myself how the UN camp for refugees had grown up on the plains.

I didn't plan my visit in any way, I just expressed my wish to visit the refugee region to local co-ordinator, Nicholas Ochieng who had also been affected by the events of 2007. He told me about Martha Kimani, who helped him, and many others, to overcome the difficult situation they found themselves in on having to move. Together, we planned a two-day trip to Nakuru in order to visit her.

Martha Kimani was just how Nicholas described her, and even better. She was very happy to accompany us and arranged some wonderful experiences for us. Despite the harshness of the living conditions, she was infectiously optimistic, and no doubt this was the greatest help to the refugees she introduced me to.

It was an incredibly intense experience. Not even my research or imagination could have prepared me for the reality I was faced with. But I was open to everything, and so a little cooking show was created.

❹ Which job do you consider has been the hardest in your professional career?

I have to confess that so far, the toughest experience for me was my trip to Kenya. There are many reasons for this. The project gave me the opportunity to travel and learn something about film making, which I wanted to work in in the close future. In many ways, I look at that trip as if I was studying at university during it, because I really learnt a lot during it, in terms of both theory and practice. There were problems I had never even considered before, such as planning your time, meeting, film structure, battery lifetime, sufficient space on your disk, objective, aperture colour temperature… It was very difficult and stressful, but as a result I got an idea of what to do in film making to ensure I don't make life more difficult for myself.

❺ What would you advise people interested in documentary making who want to start off well?

→ If you want to make something, do it; if you don't know how, the internet will tell you.
→ Notice the mistakes you make in doing your work, and learn from them.
→ Try to minimise negative environmental impacts.
→ Behave to others in a way you would want them to behave to you.
→ Don't forget ethical issues. The three pillars of ethics are empathy, moderation and humility. Always and everywhere.

Grzegorz Pacek
Poland

*'I asked myself the naive question then, what is more important – friendship and people, or film. I said film. Today, I would say **people**.'*

Grzegorz Pacek was born in 1965 in Puławy, Poland. He studied at Warsaw Polytechnic, then at film school in Łódź, where he studied directing. As a director and screenwriter, he is responsible for a number of documentary and feature films and advertisements. He is the author of the documentary on film making, Life as a Fatal Sexually Transmitted Disease, and his film Letter from Argentina received an award for the best script at the Krakow festival, and a Grand Prix at the festival in Szczecin.

❶ What path led you to your current job?
It was a long journey. First of all the dream of a country boy to become a director, then my study at Warsaw Polytechnic which almost ended in a psychiatric clinic and I failed to complete. On my third attempt, successful entrance exams for Łódź film school. And then it was even more difficult.

❷ Do you remember your first professional act?
It was a documentary film about Polish gamblers at a time when Poland was undergoing political transformation. The producer at the time wasn't able to finish his project on his own, so he went to the film school to choose a director to complete the documentary. I was beside myself with excitement, I wanted to create a master film, but there wasn't a lot of money and I couldn't film in the casinos, so in the end I only filmed for one day, and that was in the corridor of one of Poland's film institutions (it was free of charge).
Each gamblers would come out of the lift, come up to the camera and start speaking (I gave them an interview). And guess what happened? I created a really moving picture! Simply because the stories of those men (from age 18 to 80) were really tragic.

❸ Which job was hardest for you in your career?
Probably my first big documentary, which I filmed in Argentina. It was a *mockumentary*[16] based on the true story of the Polish writer, Gombrowicz. The idea was that we would confront the living friends of the late writer with the idea (later confirmed) that although Gombrowicz was gay, he had an extramarital child in Argentina. In order that their reactions could be natural, we kept the whole thing a secret from them and Gombrowicz's friends were mostly convinced that the writer's son really did exist. As a result of my carelessness, the secret was revealed too early and all the people I had established relations with and become friendly with (including documentation and filming, I had spent about 50 days with them) got angry with me. It was a very difficult time. I asked myself the naive question then, what is more important – friendship and people, or film. I said film. Today, I would say people. Naturally, the situation and choice weren't so clear. After a number of days visiting people and explaining why I had done it, the writer's friends, and now my friends too, were persuaded that it was necessary and they forgave me my misinformation. Except for one stubborn old guy who couldn't forgive me for not having him in from the beginning on the wonderful intrigue.

❹ What would you advise people interested in your profession who want to film their first television report or documentary?
If you want to make a good documentary, you have to dedicate as much time as possible in preparation. You need to spend time as yourself looking at the particular topic, or at specific locations looking for settings, shots and situations which can be used during filming. The rest will be quite flexible to changes and you shouldn't limit yourself to whatever you think of first.

Note from the editorial team
Because of the film Letters from Argentina, Grzegorz Pacek is a controversial figure, and some of his critics include Polish journalist Mariusz Szczygieł and his Czech translator, Helena Stachová. Some of the public criticise him, saying his insensitive documentary misinformation intruded too much into the personal life of the people involved, especially Gombrowicz's widow. Despite this fact – or maybe because of it – we decided in the end after deep discussion to include this contribution in our guide, because from an ethical viewpoint the problematic genre which a mockumentary can represent for some people is a good illustration of the power of the media and its ability to have a major impact on the world around it and our fates as part of that.

Art
Tamara Moyzes
Slovakia, Czech Republic, Israel

'Don't be put off by rhetoric that political art is propaganda. That's a stereotype which prevails in Eastern Europe as a memory of fear from the former regime.'

Tamara Moyzes (1975) is a video artist. She studied New Media at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, where she graduated in 2004. In her work, in which she mainly concentrates on political issues, she doesn't go for an academic approach, but rather goes for direct intervention – she doesn't comment on facts from afar, but rather steps into the middle of events. People in her fictive documentaries are not actors and their role as artists is to highlight and imagine their actual status. In formulating current controversies in society, the author chooses a mix of documentary, and impassioned and humorous scenes. Their parodic execution, however is a tragedy which doesn't lighten the situation, but presents the explosive content in a palatable form. For Tamara Moyzes, video is a tactical and political tool.

Selected exhibitions:
2011 Mediations Biennale, Poznań (group exhibition)/ Reconsidering Roma-Aspects of Roma and Sinti Life in Contempoary Art, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany (group exhibition), Czech Centre in Stockholm, Welcome to Prague, Sweden/ Mamuta at the Daniela Passal Art & Media Centre, Protocol, Jeruzalém, INTEGRA(C)E, Karlin Studios, Prague/ 2010 Transgression, Videotage gallery, Hong Kong, China (group exhibition), Mute Signs, Barcsay Hall, Budapest, Hungary (group exhibition), SHE DEVILE 4, Stefania Miscetti Studio, Rome, IT (solo), Kick the Habit, SOHO festival in Ottakring, Vienna, Austria (group exhibition)

❶ What was the path which took you to your current job?
I wouldn't call art a job or employment. I think that's one of the first things which anyone who wants to become an artist should know. I could also write here a conventional answer: 'I had talent which meant I was accepted at the Academy of Fine Arts (AFA) and after completing my studies I acquired the Mg.A title, meaning I was an artist...' Unfortunately, not even in academia will you learn how to begin exhibiting after university, and certainly not how to fund your works.

Getting a job in the field means knowing the system and the policies of working cultural grants, galleries, gallery owners and residences. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of gallery owners who know much about contemporary art. And those few who do are mostly looking for artists they can sell. Meaning painters, sculptors etc. If you want to work in video art, new media, political art, this kind of art is practically impossible to sell in the Czech Republic. So the only option left is to ask for grants for exhibits. Before applying for a grant, you will have to ask a gallery to exhibit your project. Every year, galleries draw up tenders for projects and once you have it confirmed, you have a greater chance of obtaining a grant. In this way, you can avoid investing only your own money in your art. But it still won't guarantee you can live off it.
There are only a few museums and galleries here which will pay artists for exhibiting or constructing your artwork. I would strongly recommend exhibiting abroad, where your artwork will also be properly priced. And in particular, I would ask the upcoming generation to do what our generation couldn't manage. To come together and refuse to exhibit without entitlement to royalties! When international exhibitions are organised in the Czech Republic, it is automatically assumed that the foreign artists will have to be given some royalties, but our Czech artists can be exhibited for free. Anyone who isn't turned off by that will be an ideal candidate for studying at any art school in the Czech Republic.

❷ What was your first professional experience?
My first encounter with the reality of working media was a happening I organised when I was still an AFA student (Na vlastní odpovědnost – At your own risk, AFA happening, Prague 2002). At that time, a new AFA rector was being chosen and unfortunately there weren't many great candidates to choose from. There was a general fear that the school would become yet more fusty. I took advantage of the circumstances of the flood, which meant that many places in Prague were closed and barricaded off. During the first school day, during enrollment I closed the school. I hired two actors to play Czech policemen. On the doors of the school was the message: Enter at your own risk. Risk of death with the signature: Crisis task force. The message naturally referred to the reality of the school's old-fashioned teaching and policies. On the other hand, it was a real message which at that time was put by the city police on buildings after the flood. All who took part, including the rector, professors, lecturers, students and new students had to sign a declaration with this wording: 'By my signature, I confirm that all my movements within the Academy of Fine Arts are made of my own will and I am aware of the possible risks and their consequences. I will not ask for any compensation for any losses which may occur as a result of my actions.'
All who took part, including then rector, Mr Kotalík and professor Milan Knížák signed the declaration in front of the building, it took a whole hour. Right up until the caretaker was told by the rector to call Prague 7 council and he discovered that the city had under no circumstances closed the AFA. Only then did the rector call the real police on the performing students, demonstrating that while the school may teach about provocative performances from the 1960s, God forbid that students should use these practices to criticise the school.

❸ Which job was the hardest for you in your career?
Probably the organisation of each performance is always the hardest. You're never sure how those around it will respond. And whether it will end up in accordance with your expectations. It's good to assume a number of different possibilities and prepare well for each. But probably the hardest was organising and defending my Bianca Braselli and Benedict XVI performance, 5:05 min, which was performed at Brno-Tuřany airport during the visit of Pope Benedict XVI together with Darina Alster. Even after my experience with the occupied territory in Palestine, where I was placed in front of soldiers with whom I disagreed politically. Then, there was a crowd of praying people, they were about 400 thousand, who we didn't want to touch, and us three. Overcoming the power that emanates from that kind of crowd, and perform a pirate event at that place, was not easy, just as it wasn't easy to smuggle two people into a place reserved for journalists and VIPs.
The essence of BB's encounter with Benedict XVI was to give the message that the church needs reform. The performance was a response to Ratzinger's conservatism. For some time, I have been interested in religious and queer topics. I look at religion as it is: Catholicism, Judaism,

Tamara Moyzes, Last Orgasm, 2003
tamaramoyzes.info/last.html

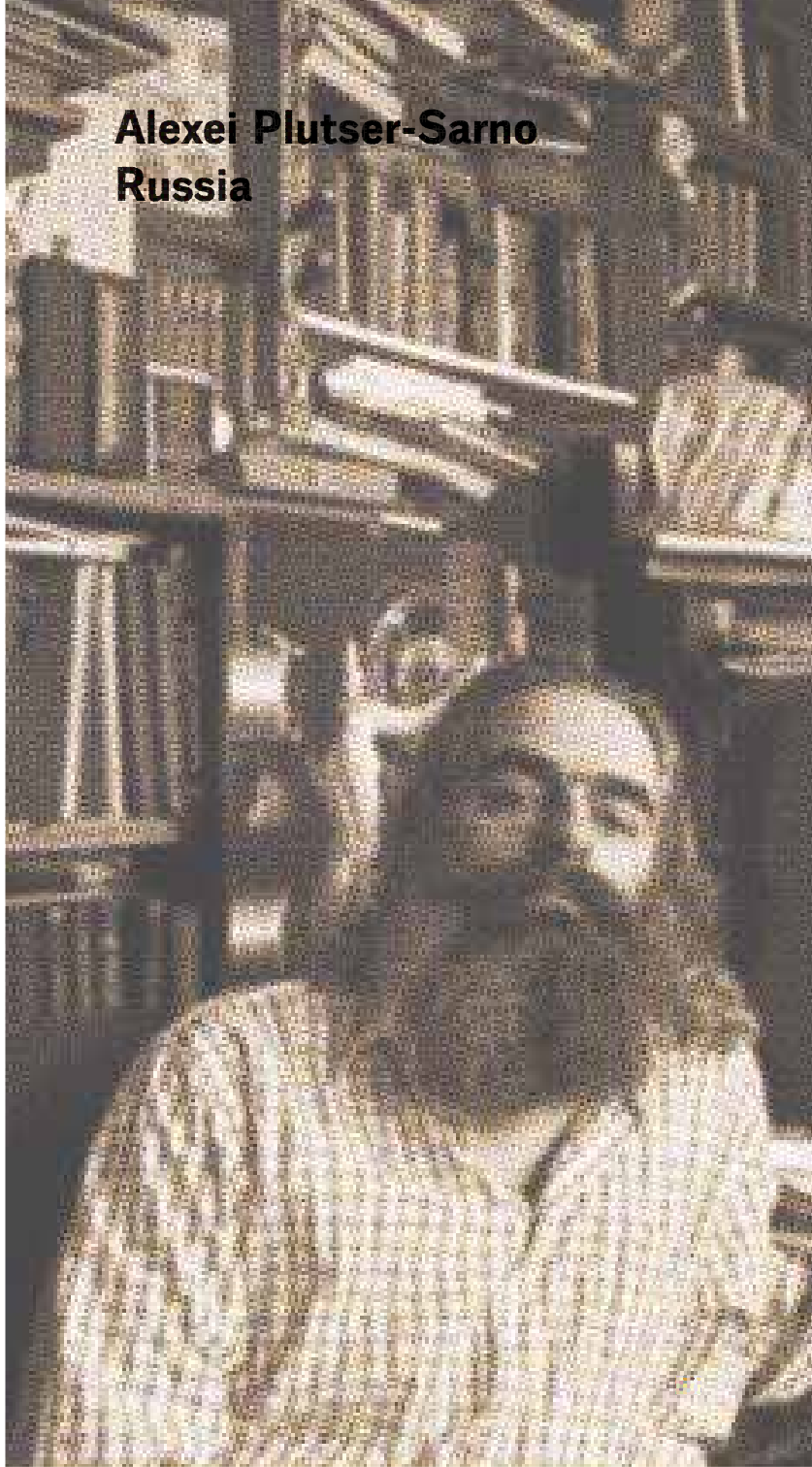
Islam. As a feminist, I lived two years within the Israeli queer scene, took part in 'love parades' in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Berlin, Istanbul, Brno. None of them took place without the participation of religious fanatics. Their presence resulted in great conflict for religious homosexuals, lesbians, transexuals etc. For me, it was important to demonstrate that in the 21st century, the term 'queer' has a much wider range of meanings than many of us are able to imagine. For me, Bianca represented that queer society which is close to religion, even if she has been in some way evicted from it due to her sexual orientation. But for her, this hasn't killed her relationship to faith.

❹ What would you advise people interested in visual arts who want to start working in the field?

For social or political art, such as happenings, performances or video installations, it's always good to work out in advance ways of capturing the media. Not giving them the opportunity to twist your statement. It's something you can't have one hundred percent under control, but you can take account of to some extent in advance. The whole happening will depend on the particular social atmosphere which even stereotypical perceptions bring with them. This can be a positive influence, or if poorly judged it can have negative results. It is always good to prepare a press release pointing out the name of the event, with the most important part being the first two sentences, which serve as your message.

Don't be put off by rhetoric that political art is propaganda. That's a stereotype which prevails in Eastern Europe as a memory of fear from the former regime. Over the past 23 years, critics, curators and society have failed to comprehend that communist art was art to order and not political art. Art which really was art at that time was against the regime. Even today, art to order isn't the best path to good art. Today we can talk about statues ordered by the state, or art which is ordered by private companies. In these cases I would consider whether they may not just be propaganda.

Engaged art has always had the task of showing up the shortcomings of our society. And if this is the case, even where it uses visualisations familiar from the commercial sphere, it's still art!



'For me, the hardest was getting the leaders of our group, Voina, Oleg Vorotnikov and Leonid Nikolaev, out of prison after our action, Palace Revolution. I had to go round all the world's media, do two hundred interviews, write three hundred articles and pick the brains of thousands of people. I virtually didn't sleep for three and a half months. I gave myself an impossible task. And I did the impossible.'

Aleksej Plutser-Sarno, known as Plut. Media artist and member of the Voina Group. Born in 1962 in Moscow, he served as a seaman and studied philosophy at the Estonian University in Tartu. He is the author of a number of books, hundreds of articles, and dozens of art projects. He joined the Voina Group in 2006 and from that moment has been responsible for all its media and art concepts, and runs the *Ironic Notes from Russia about Protest Street Art and Radical Political Artists* blog. After the arrest of two members of the group in 2010, he had to leave his home and cut all family and social ties, and since that time he moves from one place to another each month.

Voina Group

Voina is an art group of radical anarchists who have engaged in battle with the Russian establishment. The group has made itself known by, for example, drawing a gigantic penis on the bridge opposite the headquarters of the former KGB (today's FSB), and an artistic engagement in sexual intercourse in a museum. Two of its members were held in prison for three months on the basis of a fabricated accusation, others hid in a secret apartment from the police, from where they organised a rescue operation. To begin with, Voina activities were anonymous, but since 2008 over 200 activists have declared themselves members or participated in their events, and over 20 criminal prosecutions are brought out against it. Branches of the Voina Group are active in most Russian cities and there are records of over 3000 sympathisers.

❶ How did you end up in your work?

First of all you have to send to hell all your thick relations, idiotic friends, social morality, shitty law, crappy social norms, stinking thoughts about money and fucking stupid ideas about revered high art and artists as saviours of the country, which have come to us from the Stone Age. Have you sent them all to hell? Then you can get to work!

❷ What was your first professional experience?

Right after Voina's first actions, which we thought up together with Oleg Vorotnikiv and Natalia Sokol, the whole art world as one declared that we were no artists, but utter crap. Exactly the way twenty years ago, when I published my famous Dictionary of Russian Profanity the whole philological world ranted that I was no philologist, but crap. When you witness a rant like that, you know for sure that you are going in the right direction and you are creating your own innovative artistic language.

❸ What job was the hardest in your professional career?

For me, the hardest was getting the leaders of our group, Voina, Oleg Vorotnikov and Leonid Nikolaev, out of prison after our action, Palace Revolution. I had to go round all the world's media, do two hundred interviews, write three hundred articles and fuck the brains of thousands of people. I virtually didn't sleep for three and a half months. I gave myself an impossible task. And I did the impossible.

❹ What would you advise anyone who is trying to start well in your field?

You have to be totally honest with yourself. Don't try fucking the world. History won't forgive you and it'll delete your name from the annals of eternity.

« Voina Wanted » – worldwide solidarity action by the Voina Group in Prague, 2011.
Photo: Yana Sarna

Ten photographs that changed the world:
Segregated Water Fountains in North Carolina [1950]
by Elliot Erwitt
telegraph.co.uk, 8th September 2009

Nine myths and legends from the unknown world

When the seafarers of old discovered the new world and drew the maps of their journeys, they used to write Hic sunt leones (Here be lions) on unknown territories. Tales of monsters, cannibals and great treasure troves then filled in these gaps...

Today, we live in an information society, where information and the exchange, transfer and sharing of information have become a vitally important part not only of our lives, but also of economic and political debate. The tools we use for doing so – television, radio, computers – are part of our lives from early childhood.
But this constant supply of new and up-to-date data has not led to us becoming better informed. There is an information flow overload and news gradually transforms itself into information and propaganda. Our knowledge of the world, of which our country is but one small part, has thus more and more become one based on legend and myths than on information and practical experience.
When I talk about myths here, I mean a certain collection of information, stories and explanations whose goal is to understand the world around us, particularly at a level of simple or simplified symbols. Sometimes these may be based on reality; sometimes they may be far from it. The aim of a myth is to create a certain basic idea in which a specific human society will be able to survive in a given context, share mutual convictions and act as one in shared concerns. A myth can be in the very structured form of a religious or socioeconomic theory. In a simpler form however, it can take the form of stories (urban legends), which may, for example, describe the alleged benefits an otherwise marginalised and oppressed group is accorded.
There are also many myths associated with less developed and poor countries. This is often because it is these countries about which we know the least. The causes, however, run much deeper. These are mainly based on attempts to distinguish ourselves, to show why it is that we are prospering and why those less fortunate than ourselves are unsuccessful.

The media is also partly responsible for spreading myths. They can do this deliberately for some purpose (to attract attention, inflict damage on someone, further their owners) or just without thinking. For example, in trying to inform us about a situation of interest in countries we know little about, the limited time given over to these stories results in them being significantly shortened and simplified. In this way, myths are fed and supported because the situation of the local inhabitants is not sufficiently explained.
For this reason, we are going to take a look at some of these myths and try to uncover them. It's not easy to come out of the world of myths into reality, because it demolishes our long-held views of where we fit in the world. Myths also prevent us from understanding each other when different groups have their own myths and prejudices which are mutually incompatible.
Let's try to look at some myths about developing countries which are heard not just on the streets, but which are also often told by our politicians and media.

❶ People in developing countries are poor because they are lazy and don't work hard.

First of all, it has to be said that the attitude to work that we have in our so-called Western culture (the Western World, Occident) is unique. Today, most people in our society – the poor and the middle class – consider work to give their life identity and meaning. The question, 'What do you do?' is one of the first questions we ask on meeting someone. In contrast, the first question most people on the planet would ask would relate to the other person's family, the purpose of their journey etc. In many periods of European history, work – except for administration (government) and investment – was considered something only done by the poor. The ancient democracies were reserved only for those people who did not have to work; employees or small tradesmen were unable to share in government. Even in nineteenth-century England, working meant a loss in social status.
Nevertheless, International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNDP reports show that the amount of work performed, whether paid or unpaid (work in the home, helping neighbours, growing crops for own use etc.) varies greatly country by country. It does not always correlate with the prosperity of the country, nor to the dignity of the lives lived by its inhabitants. In general however, it

can be said that people in rich countries spend less time working while people in poor countries spend more time working. OECD statistics from 2010 show that Mexicans worked the most out of all the OECD countries, while the South Koreans spent the most time in paid work. Within Europe, the Greeks spend the most time working, while the Belgians, Danes and Germans spend the least time doing both paid and unpaid work.

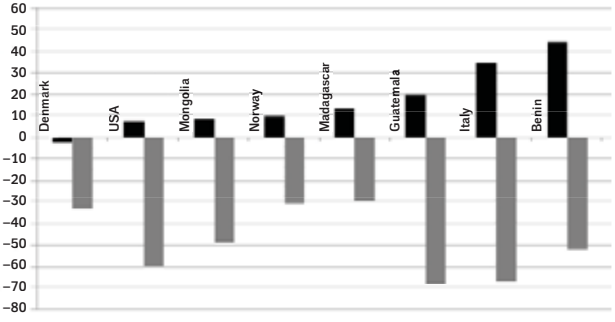
If we look at developing countries, however, the overall workload is even greater. According to 2006–2008 UNDP statistics, the citizens of Mongolia, Nepal and Benin are amongst the most hard-working on the planet. Nicaraguans work similar hours to the Japanese, but the difference between the share of work done by men and women is smaller. Does this not stand our prejudices on their head?

It is clear, then, that peoples' workload is a result of many circumstances. People who live in poorer economic and environmental conditions work more (whether paid or unpaid). The number of hours worked has very little influence on peoples' lifestyles. According to studies by international institutions, this is affected much more by a fair distribution of wealth – a progressive tax system, salary levels, a general health insurance system, a fair pension system and so on.

Women work more than men, except in Denmark, Holland and Germany.

The purpose of work is to ensure that we and others can live a life of dignity amongst family and friends. Its purpose is not to spend endless hours slaving away for unfairly low wages, which is the reality today for most of our planet.

Table – share of work undertaken by women and their wages



Source: Rania Antonopoulos, The unpaid care work – paid work connection>

❷ Child labour isn't bad; the children learn to be responsible, and it's better when at least someone is working.

In the Czech Republic, the naïve notion persists that child labour means carrying baskets or holiday work. Many connect it with a naïve romantic idea of a boy helping his father in his workshop, or girls with their mother in the kitchen. The reality of the world of child labour, however, is completely different.

Let's take a look first of all at what the term child labour means. The International Labour Organization's conventions (especially No. 182, from 1999) define child labour as any economic activity of the child which has a negative impact on his/her health and mental development, or which prevents systematic education. It means any form of work for children under twelve years of age, hazardous work for twelve to fourteen-year olds and the so-called 'worst forms of child labour' regardless of the age of the child. This phenomenon affects an estimated 215 million young people, of which 62 million are under the age of fourteen. The worst situation is seen in Sub-Saharan Africa, where every third worker is younger than 14 (almost 48 million children), and in Asia and Oceania, where we find the largest number of working children in absolute numbers – 127 million.

Children work in various industries. The vast majority of them (70 %) work in agriculture. In contrast, street children often make money as errand boys, prostitutes or factory workers. Sometimes, children have to work in areas where there are mines. In so doing, they forgo the chance of a real childhood, education and a better life.

Child labour is not banned in all countries, and it still occurs in those places where it is against the law. Child labour is difficult to eradicate, because the survival of the family and the children themselves depend on it. While its complete elimination is a long-term aim, the worst forms of child labour must be eliminated immediately. Roughly three quarters of these children are employed in hazardous conditions, such as working in mines, working with dangerous chemicals (such as fertilisers and agricultural pesticides) and with dangerous equipment, including being hired by armed forces (300 thousand), debt bondage and other forms of slavery (5.7 million) and sexual abuse (1.8 million).

Every year, 22 000 children die in work accidents. And yet an ILO study has shown that the economic benefit of abolishing child labour would represent almost seven times

its costs. This is because if child labour can be prevented, adult employment increases, wages and living standards increase, and because the children are being educated, a new generation can grow up with better socioeconomic perspectives.
A classic example is the Pakistani city of Sialkot, where most footballs are made. Following protests by the international community and supported by many sportspeople, an agreement was made between UNICEF and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1997, that no children under the age of 15 years would be given employment. This helped increase adult employment, improve working conditions and re-establish the interest of purchasers who had not taken products from Sialkot because they were made by children.

❸ Developing countries have corrupt rulers, misuse aid and don't know what to do with it.
It is an undoubted fact that the governments of many poor countries are corrupt, their leaders steal what they can, and donor money is a welcome means of adding to their own secret bank accounts.
But this is not a general rule for all countries. Those countries where corruption is the biggest problem are mainly ones which are governed by dictators of various political ideals, as well as many countries where insufficient finances have led to the degeneration of government and local administration.
Unfortunately, companies and the political interests of rich countries also play an important role in the corruption of developing countries. The most blatant example here is the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its bloody dictator, Mobutu, was kept in power using loans from Western countries (the USA, Belgium, France) and international financial institutions. Despite their representatives being warned that money designed for projects was disappearing into the bank accounts of Mobutu's family and friends, nothing was done about it. Their main interest was to keep the DRC within the so-called Western hemisphere and prevent left-wing powers from gaining control. As a result of this support, Mobutu and his family were able to acquire more than five billion American dollars.
The case of Augusto Pinochet is similar, a general who toppled the democratic government of Salvador Allende and installed a right-wing dictatorship in Chile, resulting

in thousands of deaths and disappearances. Pinochet's government was financed by the USA and many people considered the General an example of the fight against communism – such as politician Václav Benda here in the Czech Republic. Pinochet, however, was just one of many corrupt dictators, transferring 6–8 million dollars from state finances to his family account.
This extensive corruption doesn't just represent stolen money, but it also results in national debt. Philippine dictator Marcos took possession of a government with a national debt of around one billion USD. After he was removed from power, the Philippines had a debt of 28 billion USD. One example of how Marcos got his money, and the Philippines its debts, is the Bataan nuclear power plant, which was built under the supervision of Philippine and American nuclear authorities at the base of a volcano, and so will never be operated. Nevertheless, Filipinos still had to pay for its construction, including interest from American, French and German banks. Westinghouse paid a bribe of 80 million USD to Marcos, which was provided to his deputy, Disini.
Bribing high level national and regional politicians and civil servants results in direct economic loss and leads the country into a debt trap, having to make repayments for things it does need and whose only purpose is to make a profit for wealthy banks and companies in developed countries.

❹ Even bad and poorly paid work is of benefit to the poor in developing countries; the flow of companies from rich to poor countries means more work for the poor and economic growth.
Many people, including renowned economists, believe that foreign investment helps improve the lives of people in poor countries. In fact, this only happens in a scant number of cases. Usually, the arrival of foreign investors results in calamity for poor people in poor countries.
Developing countries often have a lower level of social and environmental legislation. Companies which transfer production to these countries, thus have no need to take these aspects into account, reducing their costs and increasing their profits.
Developing countries are presented with a so-called foreign direct investments model as one of the principle steps to jumpstart their economy. Experience, however, demonstrates that foreign direct investment often means a deterioration in working conditions and a gre-

International criminal responsibility is to apply to individuals, members of organizations and representatives of the State who commit, incite or conspire to commit the crime of apartheid (art. 3). Audiovisual library of international law

ater environmental burden. Investors in the Philippines demanded a reduction in the minimum wage for their employees, while industrial zones in Chine produce a large amount of pollution.
Unfortunately, even in cases where foreign investors provide better working conditions and do not harm the environment, they do not have unequivocally positive impacts. This is mainly because these investments are linked with huge benefits provided to multinational companies. Thanks to government guarantees, they receive special rate loans in the rich countries in which they are headquartered – often paid for by taxpayers. In the target countries, they are often offered tax breaks, and the state builds up infrastructure for them etc. This deforms the market situation, and national producers are put at a disadvantage because they don't receive any of these benefits. In addition, the new company can attract employees and orders as a result of these benefits. National companies are left with no choice but to adapt to the situation and become suppliers to large concerns or chains under very poor conditions. Once the tax break is over, the companies leave or hide their profit using accounting operations in tax havens where most of their income disappears without the state receiving any profit.
Another danger is large agricultural projects. Although these result in massive production of commodities, most of these are designed for export and not for home consumption. The founding of extensive plantations also often means the devastation of original ecosystems, or so-called land grab. The local people, who are in a very poor bargaining position and are unable to sufficiently secure the rights to their land, are forced to leave their land because of the investment, often under observation, or even under duress from their own government. The banks linked with this huge capital investment will refuse to provide farmers with operating loans.
The people so displaced then have no option but to accept poorly paid work on newly created plantations (so becoming part of the statistics showing a growing number of jobs) or move to an urban area. This results in the break-up of communities and threatens food security.
The transfer of manufacturing to less developed countries, however, also affects our lives. The so-called 'useful victims' motive means that people in developed countries who have lost their jobs because of this phenomenon believe that people much poorer than them have taken their jobs, improving their living conditions. However, lower workforce costs in developing countries don't just result in job losses, but also pressure on our own working attitudes and efficiency. Workers in developed countries are accused of not being as hard-working as people in developing countries. Meaning that they are not prepared to work for two dollars a day, twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

❺ People in developing countries are much more violent than we are 'in the West' and are always waging wars against each other.

One widely-believed myth is that poverty in the developing world is a result of the violent nature of its inhabitants and leaders and their perpetual desire to wage war, conquer new lands and take control of neighbouring countries.
The reality, however, is somewhat different. If we look at most of the wars in poor countries, it can be demonstrated that rich countries contesting for mineral resources or strategic position stand behind them.
In terms of violence, developing countries just can't compare to the developed world. The largest genocide in history, about which very little is said, was the murder of Congolese forced labourers on the rubber plantations of Belgian King Leopold II in Belgian Congo (today's Democratic Republic of Congo). Between 1885 and 1908, over ten million Congolese died on these plantations. The Belgians also cut the hands off their hostages (the family members of the rubber tappers) if they failed to meet their rubber quotas. Villages which resisted were razed to the ground and their inhabitants massacred. A hundred and fifty years later, the Congolese are still the most persecuted nation in the world. Even after independence, they were unable to achieve peace. Belgium and the USA overthrew and later tortured the country's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumbu and installed the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in his place, who was responsible for millions more deaths. In exchange for supplies of cheap strategic raw materials, he received support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This money ended up in the bank accounts of Mobutu's family and resulted in debt for Congolese citizens for generations. Even after his removal, the civil war continues, allowing multinational concerns to acquire the cheap raw materials they need for manufacturing microelectronics – computers, mobile telephones etc.

Also worth being reminded of is the massacre and exile of the citizens of Tasmania so that the British could set up colonies, and the genocide of the population of the Banda islands by the Dutch in order in enforce a monopoly in the sale of nutmeg...

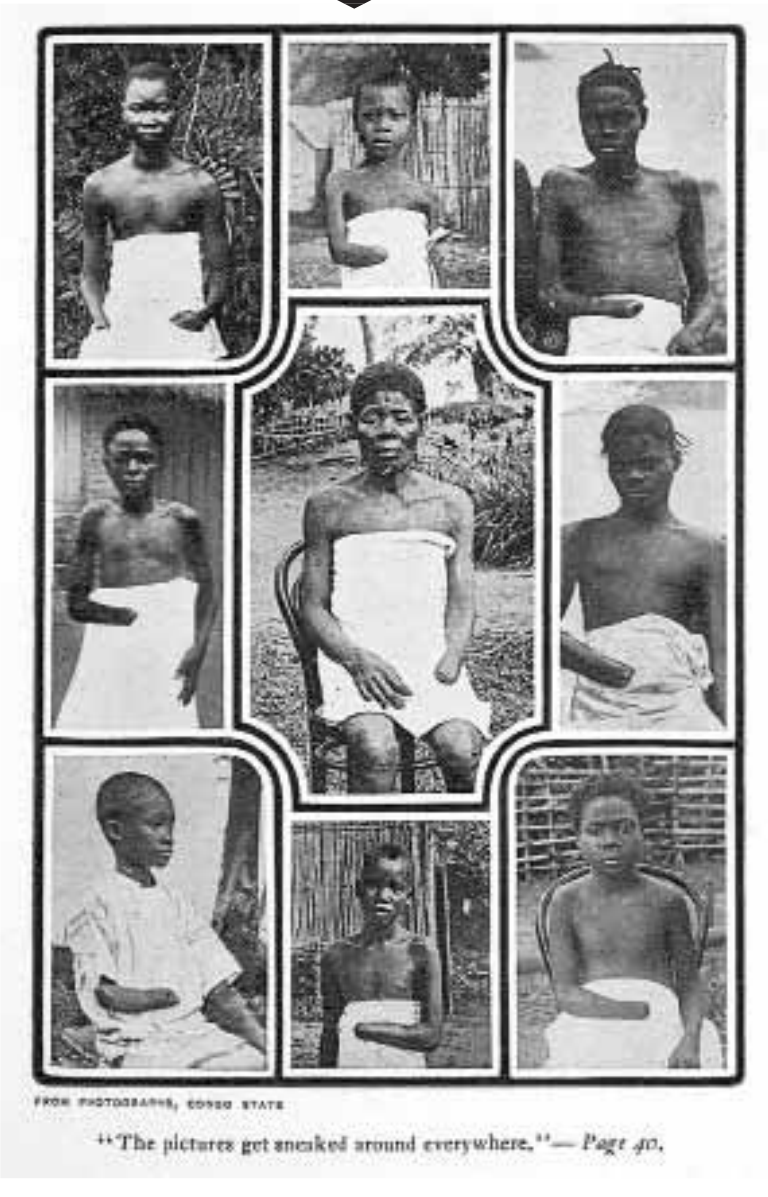
But we don't have to go back to the Colonial era to find examples; examples can be found in the period after the Second World War, the bloodiest conflict in history led mainly by Europe and America.

It was at this time that the so-called Cold War broke out – a conflict between the countries of the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies) and the so-called West (The United States and its allies). The term 'Cold War' was supposed to express the fact that the enemy camps were leading only an ideological war, and not a real military battle. Conflicts in Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, Guatemala and other states, however, demonstrated that the war had simply moved elsewhere and was being carried out through other countries.

The post-war history of Vietnam is particularly enlightening. In 1945, the Vietnamese liberation movement represented by Ho Chi Ming succeeded in banishing the Japanese occupiers. Ho Chi Minh asked the United States, which until then had supported him, to help him negotiate independence from France, which had colonised Vietnam in the late 19th century. The USA, however, supported France, who sent an expeditionary force to the region. The First Indochina War lasted until 1954 and a quarter of a million Vietnamese civilians, a hundred and seventy thousand Vietnamese soldiers and a hundred thousand soldiers from France and its African colonies lost their lives in it. The result was the Geneva Accords, which divided the country into North and South Vietnam. South Vietnam was governed by a right-wing dictatorship controlled mainly by the French and Americans, while in the North a communist dictatorship took power, supported by the Soviet Union.

President Eisenhower of the USA feared that if the USA permitted a communist regime to form in South-East Asia, ones would soon be set up in other countries until communism arrived in the USA (the domino theory doctrine). For this reason, he considered it necessary to fight against it before it could begin.

With the end justifying the mean, the so-called Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred, triggering war in Vietnam. The USS Maddox destroyer reported an attack by Viet-



The colonialists punished slaves on rubber plantations in Belgian Congo for insufficient work by cutting of their children's or parents' hands.

namese torpedo vessels and the USA passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, giving President Johnson the authority to perform military operations against North Vietnam. NSA documents declassified in 2005 show, however, that no incident occurred in the Gulf of Tonkin and the whole event was thought up to support military action. The resultant bloody war lasted until 1973, in which half a million people perished, mostly Vietnamese.
This was followed by the bloody rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, who, like the anti-Vietnamese forces, were supported by the United States and China. The Pol Pot regime was finally toppled by Vietnam and following international interventions, a peacetime government was set up.
The domino theory doctrine was later used to support other conflicts, such as in Benin, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Angola, Afghanistan, Grenada and Nicaragua.
But massacres didn't just occur to populations outside the West. The genocide of the indigenous people in the USA and the genocide of Jews and Roma in Europe remain today an awful reminder of what 'civilised' people are able to do to each other.

❻ We pour huge amounts of money into poor countries and get nothing out of it.

Many people are of the opinion that rich countries such as the Czech Republic give huge amounts of money in development assistance without any reason or benefit to the donor. This is not true.
From the outset, the goal of development assistance is to ensure mutual and peaceful prosperity. In order for this to succeed, the development of less developed countries must be ensured. Should this not happen, there is a danger of inter-country tension, economic destabilisation, waves of massive emigration and similar phenomena. In addition, the countries of the global South send us huge amounts of strategic raw materials, from crude oil to rare technology metals. If their supply were to be threatened, our current economy would also be threatened.
And so the paradox is that in fact more capital moves from poor countries to rich ones. This is a result of a number of factors. The first of these are tax havens, where company profits disappear. Also relevant is income from tariffs, removed as a result of often forced liberalisation. Debt repayment is another massive problem. Thanks to changing interest rates, crises and other problems, there

are today many countries still repaying debts which they have in fact repaid a number of times over.
As a result of this situation, the governments of rich countries are able to negotiate advantageous conditions for its companies who then acquire further lucrative opportunities for mining important minerals or growing crops. This means that rich countries can manufacture cheap electronics or eat cheap meat.
This situation, however, naturally leads to the discontent of citizens in countries exploited in this manner, and to unrest and often wars at a local or international level. This is why it would be better for us all if the living standards of people in poor countries could rise in order that they had sufficient opportunities to make more things for their own needs and ensure the fair exchange of goods at an international level.
This would lead to improved conditions not only in less developed countries, but also in rich ones, where the situation is used to threaten and put pressure on employees that if they are not willing to work and live like people in poor countries, their companies will depart the country leaving them without work.

❼ We don't need the countries of the South for anything.

There are, of course, some people here who could say that. Those who grow their own food, make their own clothes, and don't use telephones or computers...
The rest of us are dependent on international trade and the changing prices of commodities and products between countries. For electronics, we need ores from Africa, for cattle we need feed from Latin America, and we need material and clothes from Asia. Cars and plastics rely on crude oil from the Middle East and Africa. And rainforests clean up our industrial pollution too...
Certainly some people would like to limit the volume of exported and imported products, because it would reduce environmental damage and would also give work to work to our and 'their' local people. But nevertheless, you can't grow coffee or cotton here in the West, and it isn't easy to just build manufacturing plants for engineering and electronic technologies.
If we want to maintain at least an approximation of our current standard of living, international trade and the purchasing of commodities and products from the countries of the global South must continue. However, these products need also to be produced on a socially and economically sustainable basis.

❽ People in poor countries lag behind us in terms of culture, technological literacy, and ability to learn new things. They like their life and it's not a good idea to force them away from it.

Neither the education system in the Czech Republic nor the Czech media provide us with sufficient information about life outside Europe. It's no wonder that many people have a distorted view of life in developing countries, North America and Asia, and they also have very little idea of how people live in the countries of the global South, whether in the richer or the poorest countries.

All too often, people associate the whole region with backward countries, cruel dictators, undemocratic regimes, a lack of education, poverty and famine. They think that supplying these countries with aid is like flogging a dead horse. The people don't know how to use new technology, they steal what they can, and what they can't steal they destroy. They have no management or administrative skills and are easily manipulated.

It's interesting to note that those countries with the biggest problems are those which took advice from the West, particularly from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) groups. In contrast, those countries which took their own course – copying more of a Western European model, such as Botswana, Uruguay and South Africa, or more of a socialist model such as Tanzania or today's Venezuela – are better off.

However, as well as infamous institutions like the IMF and WB, European banks have also played their part in the situation. One example is the European Development Bank funded privatisation of copper mines in Zambia. A Swiss and a Canadian company received a loan, and together with a small share from the Zambian government, formed the company Mopani. Privatisation of the mines resulted in a deterioration of social conditions and a growth in unemployment. In addition, the majority of Mopani holding's profits are siphoned off to tax havens and the gains for Zambia are minimal.

People in poor countries don't have experience of our technologies and aren't always able to effectively use them. But it is only a matter of time and how much we allow them to take advantage of our developed technologies.

In contrast, they display excellent knowledge of how to use natural resources. Much of this knowledge, however has been stolen by multinational concerns from rich countries, patented and sold at great profit. This applies, for example, to products protecting against insects and fungus, which have been produced in Asia for thousands of years from the Neem tree. This practice is known as biopiracy. It would be similar to McDonald's patenting the burger bun, and anyone who wanted to bake one having to pay a licence fee.

On the other hand, there is also the romantic notion of indigenous people in primitive shacks dancing to the sound of drums and bamboo xylophones around the fire at night, and the old tribal members telling long tales of the days when the world was still young. According to this view, foolish development workers come here with their crazy ideas of electrification and education provision, destroying the natural cultural traditions and with their projects always ending in failure. The white people then flee in despair and disillusion of their foolish ideas to change the world for the better according to their Western ideals.

This is like someone from Namibia coming to visit the Strážnice folk festival in the Czech Republic and coming to the conclusion that Czech villagers wish for nothing more than to walk around in folk costumes, singing folk songs and dancing folk dances. Banalities such as rural transport accessibility, preventive medicine or compulsory schooling just put this idyll at risk. But Namibians probably wouldn't be this naïve...

The reality in developing countries is similarly completely different. These 'traditional' tribes are few and far between and most of the rural population, even in the poorest countries are familiar with modern conveniences and how they help to improve their quality of life, and simplify their work and businesses.

Things such as availability of healthcare and education, drinking water provision and access to energy are top priorities for them. If people are unable to get to them in the countryside, they move to urban areas with the belief – often unjustified and naïve – that things will be better there.

The aim of development assistance should therefore be to help deal with these problems (and not to solve them in one go). And this can mainly be done by providing countries and communities with resources and tools. And this doesn't mean just money, but also technology, knowledge and experience. And with the understanding that every situation is different and no one solution will apply everywhere.

❾ People in poor countries don't have enough food because they are overpopulated

This is one of the most common myths encountered. People believe that there are too many people in the world and they cannot all be provided for. But if we look at a ranking of countries according to their population, the top thirty countries with the largest population density per square kilometre are mostly middle and high-income countries, with the exception of Bangladesh and the Palestinian territories. In contrast, if we look at the thirty countries with the lowest population density, we can see that more than half of them are made up of the poorest countries, and yet these countries have excellent conditions for sustainable agriculture and food production.

The problem, then, isn't that people in poor countries don't have a real chance of providing for themselves, but rather that unfortunately they do not have sufficient resources, technologies or the necessary infrastructure for effective production or to be able to provide for themselves in critical periods. Agricultural production for export, mainly to rich countries, remains a big problem, and often happens at the expense of food production for local needs. Many small farmers, who are key to food security, lose their fields as a result of the expansion of monoculture plantations for export – such as oil palms, a basic ingredient in our margarines.

And it isn't even true that we are unable to produce sufficient food for our growing population. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2002, page 9), agriculture produced 17% more calories per person in 2002 than it did thirty years ago! And yet despite this we are unable to prevent starvation. It's no wonder when globally, 1.3 billion tons of food is thrown out. An FAO report in May 2011 states that the average European or North American citizen throws away 95–115 kg of food each year. It total, consumers in rich countries throw out 222 million tons of consumable food, equivalent to the total production of all the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

So if each one of us can be economical with our own food, this represents one important step in the global fight against hunger.

Tomáš Tožička
development expert, Czech Republic

Endnotes

1 We would suggest our dear readers do a little self-study here and previously
2 Vilem Flusser: Towards a Philosophy of Photography, London 2000
3 Vilem Flusser: Towards a Philosophy of Photography, London 2000
4 Vilem Flusser: Towards a Philosophy of Photography, London 2000
5 Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility. In: The work and its source, Odeon 1979.
6 Naomi Klein: No Logo, Random House Canada, Toronto 1999.
7 not officially distributed in the CR, information and further details in English can be found at the project's official website,Th e Corporation: http://www.thecorporation.com in the text.
8 http://www.vegasqueen.com/ra.htm
9 http://www.britskelisty.cz/9905/19990506j.html
10 (Milenium Publishers, Chomutov, 1999, pg. 261-284, also on the ìnternet in Britské listy issues from 1. 11. 1996 do 21. 11. 1996, http://www.britskelisty.cz/1996/1996.archiv.html#11)
11 Available on the internet here: http://blisty.cz/art/61869.html
12 (quoted by Britské listy, 10 May 1999 http://www.britskelisty.cz/9905/19990510d.html#03).
13 The discussion is available here: http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2011/may/08/public-intellectuals-britain?INTCMP=SRCH, last accessed 10 August 2011.
14 Ash, Timothy Garton. "Prague: Intellectuals & Politicians." New York Review of Books 12 January 1995. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1995/jan/12/prague-intellectuals-politicians/, last accessed 10 August 2011. See also http://whataretheseideas.wordpress.com/2010/12/15/understanding-political-judgement-vaclav-havel-and-timothy-garton-ash/, last accessed 10 August 2011.
15 Ash's review of Collini's book on the history of British intellectuals is here: http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2006/apr/27/comment.mainsection?INTCMP=SRCH, last access 10 August 2011.
16 Mockumentary – a stage-managed documentary. It is a television or film format, in which fictive events are presented in documentary form, and in which misinformation or deliberate witholding of information is used. Mocumentaries can be dramatic or comic, and are sometimes made as a parody of classic documentary making. An alternative name is docufiction.

Contents

Colophon

With a Camera, a Pen and a Spray Can

An inspiring and opinionated guide for future journalists, documentary-makers and artists

Filip Remunda, Zuzana Válková, Vít Janeček, Tomáš Tožička and our survey respondents.

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T: [illegible], E: [illegible]

as part of the MDGs – Media for the Millennium Development Goals project. This guide and other materials are freely available to download at [illegible]

Write normally, the way you speak. Reports mostly use informal language, because reports are about life. They must be authentic.

I think you should write a story the way you would tell it to your sister, brother, mum, dad, partner. You would never tell your sister, 'The vehicle collided with a tree,' because you're not an official. You'd say: 'The Ford smashed into a big tree.'

A report isn't an essay. For a report about a woman who feeds stray cats on her estate and about whom people are angry, you don't need to start as you would writing an essay about a well-known poet or writer:

Anna K. is one of the most active feeders of cats on the estate. As a wonderful example of volunteering and humanism, who has been undertaking her task for years, the estate is not an easy life for her.

The story of Anna K should be told in a different way:

The fastest one is the one who doesn't have eyes. He recognises her from a kilometre away and he flies like an arrow. He wants to be the first to lick her fingers.

That's quite a good beginning, and there was no need to disclose right in the first sentence that it was about cats. It's good to surprise the reader. Surprise – a good element in any report, show, film or photograph. Surprised readers will want to read your report further.

Mariusz Szczygieł, reporter, Poland