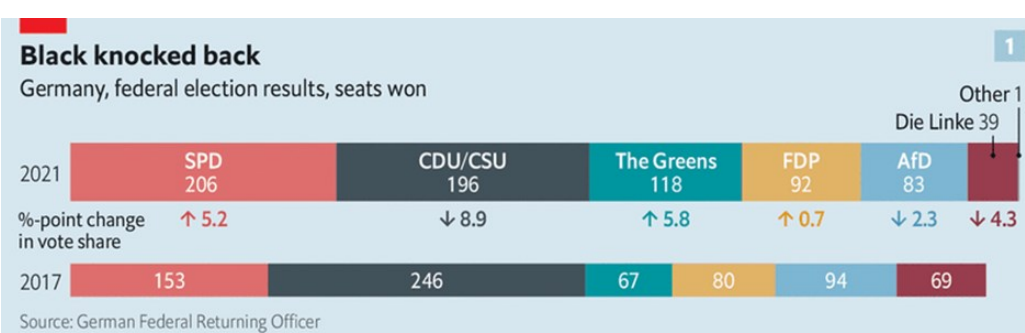




NEW BEGINNINGS: A POST-MERKEL ERA IN GERMANY

When Robert Schuman pioneered the European project, he might have thought of Spinelli's free and united Europe, but what every European politician had in mind was the industrial valley of the Ruhr and Rhine rivers in West Germany. While it holds only a few of European institutions, and no major treaties are named after its cities, it is undeniable that Germany lies at the heart of Europe. Angela Merkel has been the leader of Germany for the past 16 years, and she has very much kept the tradition of going beyond Germany in her politics. Merkel was at the center of the European response to the Great Recession, she took charge of the handling of the migration crisis, and, as her farewell, she once more put Germany in the spotlight as an instrumental EU vaccine maker. It does not matter whether you agree with Merkel or not, it is clear she's been a remarkable figure for Germany and for Europe.

Angela Merkel's departure also implies her replacement. Various politicians in Germany have a claim to the throne, so let's look at the main contenders.



The Economist
SOURCE: https://www.economist.com/img/b/800/275/90/sites/default/files/images/print-edition/20211002_EUC453.png

Being Merkel's home party, the Christian Democratic Union was a clear favorite, but internal struggles harmed the party severely. CDU and their sister party, the Christian Social Union run in the federal election together, and that has been a point of friction ahead of this year's election. Markus Söder, the head of CSU and the minister-president of Bavaria, was distinctly more popular than his opponent Armin Laschet, the head of CDU and the minister-president of North Rhine-Westphalia. In light of Merkel's controversial openness to migration and gay marriage, the party was worried of sliding even more to the left, and so it appointed the less popular, more conservative Laschet as their candidate for

chancellorship. Laschet's program includes cutting taxes, restricting migration and increasing deportations, opposing radical environmentalist policy, and involving the German army in more international missions.

Opposite the CDU stand its rivals and coalition partners, the Social Democrats. Although they are opposing parties that campaign against each other, they have on numerous counts governed together with the outgoing parliament being the most recent example. Olaf Scholz, the man in charge of SPD, has his eyes set on ending that coalition, and getting the CDU out of the government altogether. He plans for Germany to: steepen progressive taxes, increase minimum wage,

make immigration easier, tax planes and subsidize trains and electric cars, and take an active international stance on climate change.

SPD's preferred coalition ally, the young Green party is generally considered to be the party of the educated, as its voter strongholds strongly correlate to higher education hotspots. In the lead of the young party is the young duo of Baerbock and Habeck. The Greens' platform resembles that of SPD, except they are taking a tougher stance on phasing out fossil fuels and accepting asylum-seekers.

Lying at the opposite end of the spectrum is the neo-liberal business-oriented Free Democratic Party. It has been resurrected by Christian Lindner after it failed to get into the Bundestag in 2013. Lindner wants to repeal any pro-environment interventions into the market, because they are illegitimate as he believes that climate change will solve itself by the invention of new technologies. The same approach is taken on social policy, where FDP strongly opposes rent caps or guaranteed pensions, in favor of a laissez-faire



approach. On migration Lindner believes that asylum-seekers should be protected but sent back as soon as the conflict ends.

There is also the communist The Left and the neo-Nazi Alternative for Germany, but they aren't serious contenders for the chancellorship and likely not even the government.

The election was a triumphant victory for the center-left, as it secured over 40% of the electorate compared to 29% in the last election, and a staggering defeat for the center-right as they secured just 35% of the electorate, compared to previous 43%. It is also a victory for the left because it sends a message to all parties, that rightward movement is going

to be punished: it is only the third time CDU didn't win the election, and it is largely agreed that their poor choice of candidate and anti-left fearmongering are to blame.

The success however is limited, as the left aren't able to make a coalition free of a right-wing party for the lack of seats. It was clear all along the SPD and Greens are all in this together, but it was for a long time uncertain, who would be the last one to fill the 9% void in that government. It now seems all but sure, that we are heading towards a traffic light coalition (SPD, Greens, FDP) with Olaf Scholz taking the Chancellorship, Lindner likely taking the finance ministry and Baerbock possibly taking the novel climate ministry. The rising death toll of COVID, the unanswered question of China and the looming threat of climate change beg the question: Is post-Merkel Germany set to tackle the challenges of tomorrow?

MATĚJ MAREK

EDITORS' NOTE

As the sky gets darker and the weather gets colder, we figured you might consider making yourself a cup of hot chocolate, cuddle up in a blanket, and, most importantly, get yourself a copy of this year's first edition of the Chronicle! What better way to spend an autumn afternoon? We guarantee that by reading our World News section, you won't miss a single thing about the current situation – not only related to the pandemic, but also to the German elections. How is Germany adjusting to their new so-called “post-Merkel” era? How has covid impacted people in poverty? And will Ježíšek be able to deliver our gifts and wishes in time? Well, Matěj, Eliška, and Ád'a can tell you all the answers and much more in their informative articles. We hope to make your day at least a bit better by encouraging you to sit down and relax, whatever you decide to read the Chronicle or not. Because we continue fighting the pandemic, the importance of self-care has never been more necessary. We hope you enjoy reading this edition, despite the ongoing appearing theme of the covid pandemic, through which we surely will get through sooner or later.

JULIE SEDLÁKOVÁ &
ADÉLA ARCHALOUSOVÁ



THE COVID PATH TO POVERTY

COVID-19 has impacted everyone in the world whether it be through a lockdown, getting sick, or losing a family member. For some, COVID pandemic determined the good or bad circumstances they will live in for the next couple of years. These people were the ones that had just escaped from poverty before the pandemic hit in 2019. Before 2019, 9.2% of the world's population lived in poverty. Due to COVID that number is rising. COVID has had a huge impact on countries' economies. Due to lockdowns, fear of catching corona, or getting sick, many people lost or quit their jobs. Some people lost interest due to not going out for so long, could no longer get to work, or couldn't adjust to the changes in work created due to the pandemic. For example, the different work hours or the transition back into a workplace from home. Mothers quit their jobs to help their children in online school, and some students left school and never returned due to a lack of motivation or the worsening of their situations at home. Other students didn't have the option of going to school during the pandemic. Schools for about 168 million completely closed for a year because of COVID.



SOURCE: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-05-05/covid-s-shockwaves-took-poverty-in-latin-america-to-a-new-nadir>

The changes from COVID were hardest for families living on the verge of poverty to overcome. These were the families who earned only enough for necessities like food, clothes, and water, with no expenses left for wants. According to the UN, the effects of the pandemic are predicted to push 70 million people into extreme poverty. As the economy worsens, so does the situation of families living in poverty. When COVID hit, the first jobs that were lost were the lowest paying ones. For example, a job as a house cleaner, small business employees whose place of employment ran out of business, or factory workers laid off due to business inactivity or lockdowns. The consequence of this is homelessness or extreme poverty. For families on the

verge of poverty, once a job is lost there is no other option but to give up everything they own, or to find another job in which they are barely paid. It is estimated that about 195 million full time jobs have been lost due to COVID and that four out of every five workers on earth were affected by workplace closures.

Some of the countries most affected were the ones where poverty levels were already high, especially countries in Africa, Southern Asia and Latin America. Prior to COVID these countries were on track to see a slow decrease in poverty. However poor education, decline in economic growth, and no good job opportunities or proper health care, have led to an increase in poverty instead. Countries in Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and Pacific are projected to have higher levels of poverty but the changes to poverty are returning to be the same changes predicted before COVID. Higher income countries poverty levels are predicted to see a small increase. Lower income countries' poverty levels, however, are set to increase by 2.7% in 2021 instead of the pre pandemic 0.2%. Now it is especially hard for younger generations to end their families' cycle of poverty due to living situations getting worse and opportunities

disappearing. In lower income countries budget cuts in education have led to permanent school closures. 160 million children are predicted to be living in poverty in 2030. In other countries, tools like the CTC, American rescue program, stimulus checks and social protection programs in the UN have helped stabilize the percentage of poverty. However, this wasn't enough to battle the changes from COVID. In America, the demand for charitable food assistance grew. The main groups of people that needed it were people with disabilities, households of color, and families with children and single parents. With living costs also rising in many countries it is becoming harder for people to receive the help they need. In upcoming years poverty levels are estimated to increase by at least 50 million people worldwide, with 588 million people still living in extreme poverty in 2030.

We are currently living in a time of uncertainty where no one can predict the full extent of COVID on poverty levels or its effects on the future.

ELIŠKA HELENA LEE

SANTA WILL NOT HAVE ENOUGH GIFTS THIS YEAR!

Santa doesn't pay for gifts, of course, but he is the one to carefully choose them and deliver them to households around the world precisely on the right day and time to everyone. However, this year Santa as well as Ježíšek and all Christmas deliverers of gifts are in trouble because there are simply not enough gifts for distribution! This situation is called the Supply Chain Crisis and right now is threatening to ruin the spirit of Christmas. Here are the main reasons why this problem has occurred:

Firstly, toys which are mainly manufactured in China such as Lego, dolls, or cars are right now a scarcity because of COVID-19. Due to severe lockdowns in countries like China or Vietnam there is a

shortage of either components or in labor producing the final products and their available working hours. So, this has led to the lack of products in stock that we may observe here in Europe or America.

Secondly, there are also the travel expenses for the distribution of toys, which have increased as transportation costs increased during the pandemic. In 2020, all types of transportation such as planes, boats and even trucks were paralyzed so that the distribution of all goods was delayed. Even though the transportation chain was restored, there has already been a huge loss and transportation companies are still trying to get back the profit and the labor they lost last year. Therefore, there is not enough labor in this field which would be sufficient to transport all goods on time and for the same price as before the pandemic.

Another reason is that during the first half of 2021, the sale of toys skyrocketed increas-



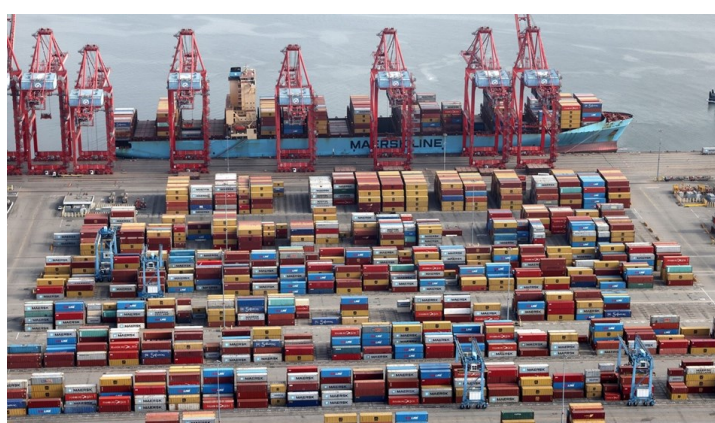
SOURCE: <https://bestlifeonline.com/toy-shortage-news/>

ing by 19% compared to 2020. There is a simple explanation for this as parents were tired of having their children constantly at home and wanted to find something to entertain them during lockdown back in the spring of 2021. Therefore, right now these three factors combined and caused a large shortage of toys, board games and other products in stock.

And lastly, both the manufacturers as well as the transporting firms are still in recovery from the COVID pandemic that completely halted most of their work,

therefore, at the moment they lack sufficient resources to supply more goods such as toys, board games, sports equipment or clothing till Christmas. Many large companies for example MGA Entertainment, have already advised their customers (Santa Claus or Ježíšek) to buy gifts early on this year to be certain that everything will be delivered in time and for a reasonable price.

ADÉLA ARCHALOUSOVÁ



SOURCE: <https://www.nationalreview.com/2021/10/the-real-culprit-in-our-supply-chain-crisis/>

A LONELY WASP JAMES BOND AFTER ALL HAS NO TIME TO DIE

I come from an extremely poor family. Not counting my aunt Gertrude's private castle in the Alps, which she inherited from some guy with a moustache with whom she apparently had an affair, we almost have no place to live. Our palace is almost inhabitable because of the infestation of poor people near it in the city centre and our apartment buildings are fully occupied by the same sort with which my family wants no business except to exploit them.

During our annual visit to Versaille last year, George Sozzeb strictly but accurately criticized our family's handling of the heirloom left to us by our hard working ancestors and denounced the lack of forced labour in our practises. Generally, my family has been very liberal in our stances. We have always had the least servants out of the social circles we visit and in the modern age have strayed away from the popular practices of 20th century Italy and leaned more towards 18th century America. This has brought us some snide looks at the templar chamber conferences, but we always stand by our ideals.

I must say, however, that I am the black sheep of the family. Being the 16th in line for the throne and 22nd in line for my ancestors' riches, I had no choice but to provide for myself. I decided on the life of a journalist because it was the only thing I could do, being absolutely useless in any physical or mental task presented to me. Refusing the liberal views of my family, I decided to study at Oxford University, which was paid for in full by my father. There, I started the WASP club, which has since gained popularity for being placed on the NATO watchlist and appearing on national news every once in a while. After graduating, I was thrown into the deadly seas of job hunting filled with evil socialist sharks trying to bind me into a union or make me work for fair pay. I defended myself against their attacks with ease, bearing in mind their work for my ancestors.

Having no success in finding an open position suitable to my status and education, I had to retreat to our family holiday house in the countryside to regain my energy and prepare to face the leftists again. There, a very fortunate event befell me. During the ball, my family prepared for the richest of the rich (one has to be called 'filthy rich' to even send an application) at the end of the summer, I met a distant relative from the land over the sea. He holds majority shares in a small ideologically-aligned news company over there and was, as chance would have it, looking for a newscaster. Eager to find my place in society, I accepted his proposal and flew out right away. Now, I can spread the mentality which got me where I am and stands at the base of my success every Sunday at 10 a.m. on FOX News.

MIKULÁŠ ŠKORPIL

The journey of James Bond played by Daniel Craig, which started in 2006 by *Casino Royale*, is now at its end. The last 007 movie was released at the end of September 2021 after 18 months after its original release date due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. However, the prolonged wait was worth it as this action-packed movie offers a lot with its breath-taking duration of 163 minutes.

The whole movie starts with a captivating prologue styled as an ice-cold childhood flashback of Madeline Swann (Léa Seydoux). The beginning is followed by Billie Eilish's song "No time to die" with a boring "Spectre" like opening. Afterwards the story moves to Italy where the first action scene happens and instantly captivates the viewer's attention. Fast forward five years and James Bond (Daniel Craig) is already finished with his job for her Majesty, but then the main conflict is introduced - a biological weapon which can be specifically modified to wipe out the mankind - and he has no other choice than to get ready for his last mission to save the world...

With the plot being up to date during a deadly pandemic we also get introduced to a few new characters. One of them is Agent Nomi (Lashana Lynch) the new 007

and the actress played her role excellently. She was able to display her character's elegance and helped to contrast the inner processes Bond was going through in the movie. Daniel Craig delivered the persona of James Bond to a tee within this last movie. Throughout the movie he portrayed loads of different emotions depending on the overall atmosphere and showed us the beloved detective from a new, more vulnerable perspective. He was able to masterfully play his role until the very end of the movie. Regarding the other actors from the preceding movies and the few new ones, such as Ana de Armas or Rami Malek- their skills were also superb and helped the comprehensive cinematic experience.

I would also like to appreciate the work of the camera as the scenes were presented from many perspectives and an outstanding camera-job helped the viewer sit in the cinema for almost three hours and be completely blown away with the whole movie. This also links in with the great variety of places where the movie was filmed such as Jamaica, Norway or Italy which also helped the overall complexity of the movie.

As a fan of action movies, I enjoyed Craig's last James Bond journey with him.

As the movie mixed all genres in it, I loved the action scenes but by the end I was on the verge of tears as the rest of the cinema. Despite enjoying the whole movie with the new female characters and overall progressiveness, I was sometimes quite lost in the plot as there was a real lot going on. The producers tried to connect all the previous movies in this extraordinary ending but sometimes that caused more harm than good, and it was unnecessary. Also, it was not completely clear most of the movie- at least to me-why the main villain was acting the way he was. On the other hand, the action scenes propelled the movie forward and most of the time I while watching I was not thinking about the logical fallacies in the plot but about how will James Bond and his allies stop the villain who holds weapon of mass destruction. In the end I would surely recommend the movie to every James Bond fan as it is an indispensable completion of the Daniel Craig's era of 007 movies.

It truly owns its rating of 84% on Rotten Tomatoes and you surely won't leave the cinema disappointed.

BARBORA VOTLUČKOVÁ

SCANDAL & SATIRE: A THIN LINE

Scandalous! The election is compromised by a man who is ravenous!

Blasphemous, you're populous, kissing the arses of them and us. I agree, we can't let you be, the oath to the republic got to have thee!

Disagree, to those who flee, you scream you'll kick their knees. Benevolence gentlemen, your ignorance here does not have significance.

How vigorous, have you had your devil's herbivorous weeds? All your deeds are not in the people's needs, more pensions to the old generation of sensations!

How dare you steal my inventions! My ideas and donations, it was I who supported our nation's foundations!

Oh, how the turntables, those who are unable, old grumpy and stable, you use them for your election.

What about the young that you mentioned?

What of the virus and the tension?

And those under discrimination, who immigrate from a war's damnation?

Who do the people choose to be the strongest, if every sweetest man tries to sell the cheapest?

After all the motive is the same, that which controls the heads of people and their fate.

Which comes around the twelfth date, which decides if they stay safe.

Money, and whoever has it, controls the state.

SERGEJ ŽUKOV

"Hipster content warning"

Pumpkin Spice Recipe Latte

It's unbelievable that the summer break ended almost 2 months ago. Insane right? However, the trees are starting to change colour, evenings are getting longer and overall, the autumn mood is starting to kick in. And there is no better way to spend the bleak evenings than by drinking the pleasantly warm Pumpkin spice latte.

INGREDIENTS

For 2 drinks (or 1 if you expect that the evening is going to be long)

- Pumpkin puree 30g/2tbsp
- Sugar 4-12g/1-3tbsp
- Milk (any) 470ml/2cups
- Espresso 120ml/½ cup
- Pumpkin spice 1.5g/½ tsp + for serving
- Vanilla extract 15g/1tbsp
- Whipped cream for serving

DIRECTIONS

- Heat up milk, pumpkin puree and sugar in a saucepan. Do not reach the boiling point.
- Remove the saucepan from the hob and mix in vanilla, pumpkin spice and the coffee.
- Divide into 1 or 2 cups, top with whipped cream and sprinkle some pumpkin spice.
- Enjoy! Post aesthetic IG stories, so your friends would know how super handy you are and that you are living your best life.

DANIEL STRNAD



Is McDonald's ZERO-EMISSIONS PLEDGE JUST GREENWASHING? RACISM IN SPORT

In the US alone, around 85 million adults, or one-third of the population over 20 years old, consume fast food daily. All of these people either directly or indirectly contribute to the fact that 15% of global greenhouse emissions are produced by animal agriculture each year and feeding the livestock itself accounts for a third of annual global water consumption.

This gives many of the multinational fast food companies as well as their customer base a staggering level of influence in deciding what the results of the climate crisis could look like in 20 to 30 years. Ironically enough, the costs of climate change on the industry are already becoming more apparent. US livestock producers are facing 30% higher feed

costs due to increasing droughts and extreme weather... Looks like our future is going to be pretty depressing, right?

Thankfully, many of the contributors to this vicious cycle, with McDonald's being one of the most prominent ones, have begun showing efforts to put their excessive production of emissions to an end. Thanks to the collaboration with different science-based NGOs, brands like KFC, Burger King, or Starbucks have started making plans which can help them achieve net-zero emissions globally by 2050. But is this really an achievable goal, or just another way of playing on the "sustainable, eco-friendly business trend"?

What's more, in the case of McDonald's, the problem may not be solely on the company's side. This is because, unlike many other options to reduce its carbon footprint such as reconsidering the ways it lights and fuels its restaurants, rethinking its "burger-centric" business model requires a far more complex solution. In a best case scenario, the company would need to decrease the

total beef consumption by 20-25%, considering it is now responsible for almost 30% of its entire emissions. Achieving this goal while still expanding the scale of its global business is de facto impossible, which is why McDonald's is rather choosing all these other, less expensive "green" changes like cutting plastic out of their Happy Meals toys by the end of 2025 or new, more sustainable packaging and restaurant designs.

Only time will tell whether the promised changes are meaningful and whether they will actually be delivered. While the companies' growing awareness of their impact on climate change looks like a promising start to solving it, the need for stricter international agreements, climate laws together with carbon taxes imposed in each state is still very evident. After all, regulation of these multinational companies, whose levels of influence often exceed those of whole countries, seems like a safer choice than quietly waiting for another new "amazingly progressive" press release and hoping for the best.

VOJTĚCH PAVROSKÝ



SOURCE: <https://cardiffstudentmedia.co.uk/quench/features/the-rise-of-greenwashing/>

LACK OF COMMUNICATION

During the past few years, the world has gone through a massive digitalization stage. Many companies have gone fully online with some technologically advancing more than was expected. The amount of customer interactions in business has increased as well, so one would assume digitalization was a success. However, especially when it comes to the government and people, I would say otherwise.

Although digitalization helped us through the pandemic and made things easier, it has also created a wall which split society into groups. There is a lot going on behind the 'stage' which forces us to question the credibility of what is put out. Sometimes the so-called facts are made up or from old research which leaves the viewer responsible to fact-check for themselves.

Unfortunately, such things happen everywhere. Over the past year, lots of campaigns full of false information have been launched all around the world. They have an enormous impact on people's opinions and stance on vaccines or the virus overall. It is the result of poor communication between news outlets and the government. There was even a time when

certain media were not allowed at press conferences. Since the Czech political scene is quite complicated, many people have a hard time trusting the government, so why should they trust them with their campaigns?

Before the rise of social media, when the government wanted to make an important announcement, there was a team of people who always double-checked the information. But with the rise of social media, politicians can upload anything that is on their mind to Twitter or Facebook without checking what they wrote. This resulted in politicians contradicting each other when it came to new restrictions. Some did not always know them, and many times they even broke them themselves. It's hard to then expect the public to not do the same. Less harm would have been caused if the information put out had been clearer and agreed upon



SOURCE: <https://blog.capterra.com/fix-poor-communication-in-workplace/>

by everyone.

In my opinion, governments should be more open about what is going on in the country. It takes a good and united government to make a country work, therefore, all the groups need to make an effort to do so. Campaigns containing false information should be replaced with correct information, and more effort should be put towards educating people regarding important topics.

CALISTA MAŘÍKOVÁ

In recent months, racism has been associated with sport, namely football, multiple times. Commissions were investigating reported racial abuse of many players of color by both fellow players and fans. It has become a hot topic of public discussion, but it remains uncertain whether the help and effort from football governing bodies such as UEFA is big enough to achieve the goal of ending racism in sport.

For example, in the English Premier League there is a campaign called No Room for Racism. Players take the knee before the match to show respect to people with another skin color. This has become a stereotype for everyone on the pitch which raises the question whether the players are even taking it seriously. Some of the players decide to not to take the knee because they think the gesture is humiliating and has lost all meaning. I think that a lot of people respect the diversity, but it is true that after few weeks people have gotten used to it which means they forgot the importance.

A different example is when an incident of racism happens directly on the field. This situation happened in Glasgow-Slavia match when Czech player Ondřej Kúdela whispered something to Glen Kamara, a Finnish player of African origin. UEFA gave a ten-match ban to the Czech defender and a three-match ban to Kamara for attacking Kúdela after the match. Kamara claims that Kúdela called him "a f**king monkey". However, Kúdela denies this, and nobody else heard anything. It's the player's responsibility to be honest and tell the truth of what happened. This affair continued when Glasgow faced Sparta. The supporters were only children with some adults accompanying them. In this case, the kids were whistling on Kamara. UEFA did not punish anybody because no racist intent has been confirmed. So again, the situation remains unclear and unresolved.

Racism doesn't belong in neither society nor sport. I don't know if we will achieve a world without racism, but at least we can try to remove it from sport. Sport should be about joy, fun, and entertainment.

ONDŘEJ GALYÁŠ



How We ELECTED A PRO-WEST PARTY WITHOUT WESTERN VALUES

The Czech Republic held parliamentary elections on 8th and 9th October 2021. The election was won by the center-right Spolu coalition formed by the Civic Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Union, and TOP09. Together with the more liberal Pirates & Mayors coalition, they will hold a comfortable majority of 108 seats. This means the defeat of the current government and the sitting prime minister Andrej Babiš. There is certainly a lot to celebrate. The defeat of the billionaire prime minister in a conflict of interest is a win for democracy and a blow to populism, oligarchy, and corruption in the former Eastern Bloc. It means a pro-West foreign policy, commitment to the rule of law, and hopefully getting our country's debt under control. The battle for a better future seems to be won. But is it really?

One of Spolu's campaign slogans was that "We belong to the West". However, their proclaimed commitment to allyship with Western countries comes short of matching their values. Number of Spolu's elected politicians openly hold homophobic, sexist, and xenophobic beliefs. Most of them, including the future prime minister Petr Fiala, are against same-sex marriage and adoption. They are also reluctant to finally ratify the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women. The Christian Democratic Union would love to criminalize abortion as well. Furthermore, Spolu's support for the European Union only goes so far. They

are against accepting the Euro as a currency, and they aren't about to step up to our responsibilities as a member state and take bold action on climate change or accept refugees fleeing war and dictatorship regimes anytime soon. This certainly does not sound like the West we have been promised.

Sure, I am glad we avoided a disaster in form of another four years of Babiš treating this country like it is his business. Still, it is hard for me to not feel disappointed by the downfall of the Pirate Party. Even though they will still likely form the government, the most progressive relevant Czech party had particularly underwhelming performance. The Pirates & Mayors coalition won 15% of the popular vote and 37 seats in the parliament which will give them a significantly inferior voice in the government compared to the conservative Spolu who now holds 71 seats. Because of preferential votes, which were used mostly by the more centrist Mayors' sympathizers, the Pirate Party itself is down to a mere 4 seats in the parliament, and it is unlikely the opposition made up of the populist ANO and the far-right SPD will be any help to Pirates in pushing forward their progressive agenda.

For me, the Pirates & Mayors coalition was the one that represented a chance for a real change and a new era in Czech politics. Both the Pirate Party and the Mayors are fairly new parties filled with young

people who bring a new and more progressive perspective to Czech politics. In contrast, all parties from Spolu have been part of our political spectrum for decades and have their own share of scandals and shortcomings. And especially with some of their infamous politicians getting elected back to power, I am not sure to which degree I can trust the promised change. Political commentator Petr Boháček said this well: *"The Pirates fought Babiš to the breaking point and uncovered all of his scandals; only so that the 'godfathers' from the Civic Democratic Party, who scraped taxes and increased debt with him a few months back, could suddenly come to save the Republic."*

So, how did this happen? The Czech public is not as overwhelmingly conservative as other post-communist countries. We are a largely irreligious country, and for example same-sex marriage is supported by 67% of the population. The truth is that Spolu voters voted for them to get rid of Babiš and because they are fiscally right-leaning, not because they are particularly interested in a Czech simulation of Poland or Hungary. I believe the reason why Pirates fell from 31% public support in the spring to just half that in the fall election is that they simply paid for their inexperience. They made many more missteps than the generally older and more experienced Spolu candidates, were a bit too honest, and did not always know how to diplomatically react to tough questions the way that would please the general public. They

failed to sell their steadfast past work in the parliament as their campaign was objectively weaker than Spolu's. The massive anti-Pirate campaign launched by Babiš and chain emails with anti-Pirate misinformation also undoubtedly helped their failure. Moreover, I cannot help but wonder whether the media also played their own part. Every controversial thing a Pirate said during the campaign was immediately blasted on the news. But when Civic Democratic Party member Ondřej Šimíček tweeted his admiration for the Chilean fascist dictator Augusto Pinochet, there was not a single mention to be found on any major news network.

Either way, we must now look ahead and give the new government a chance. Let's hope it succeeds in dealing with the many economic and post-pandemic problems our country and its citizens are currently facing. The right-wing parties should also keep in mind how their anti-social policies backfired and gave rise to populism in the past, so they do not forget about lower-income families this time around. And most importantly, whether it comes to corruption, social policy, or rights for minorities, we all must still be active citizens and hold the new government accountable. Do not fall asleep just because Babiš is gone.

ŠÁRKA NEUMANNOVÁ

BLEEDING EARDRUMS

Making art is one of the most vulnerable things a person can do. For most artists, this presents an interesting challenge in trying to find the right way to express their own thoughts, opinions, creativity, strengths, and weaknesses, all in a way which can be processed by most people. With music, most ends up sounding decent, because most albums go through tumultuous checking. So, what if an album did not get that check? What if someone made something that they thought was good, but to a vast majority of people, is completely awful? Well, I want to look at some examples through history and see their context, and even try to find something redeemable in them. So, let us start off on a good note: Child abuse!

Andrew Wiggin had received a palm reading from his mother in the mid-1960's which predicted that he would marry a blonde woman, have two daughters after she died, and that the daughters would form a popular band. After the first two came true, he naturally wanted the third prediction to happen as well. Would that mean getting his girls to be at least more interested in music, but being ok with them not wanting to form a band? Obviously not! He instead took the girls out of school, forced them to learn instruments (in a way later de-

scribed by the girls as 'disciplinarian') and make music. This resulted in the forming of The Shaggs and their 1969 debut album 'Philosophy of the World'. The album, to say the least, is not great. The drumming and guitar playing is completely uncoordinated, the singing often devolves into speaking and its song structures are almost incomprehensible. Shockingly though, there are genuinely pleasant things to say about this album. The lyrics, while remarkably simple, portray a childlike naivety, while acknowledging all the sad things that people must live with, and the song 'Who Are Parents?' is downright terrifying ('Parents are the ones who really care'). To give credit to the girls, if you focus on their individual playing, they seem to play fine, which gives credit to the idea that the girls intentionally recorded this album as bad as they could as revenge to their father, however, from the way the girls talk about it, it seems they were just trying to obey their father, which is undeniably sad. However, their impact is big even if you may not know it. Kurt Cobain famously mentioned The Shaggs as a huge inspiration, and Frank Zappa called them 'better than The Beatles'. But what if someone made music this way, but intentionally?

Don Van Viet, also known as Captain

Beefheart, was a very eclectic musician to say the least. Having some interesting and varied influences, he formed an ensemble called Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band. After releasing two albums and being dropped by two labels, they signed to Frank Zappa's Straight records, and released their seminal work, 1969's 'Trout Mask Replica.' Most people will be caught off guard by the cover with the weird fish mask, and the confusion will not disappear when they turn the album on and the polyrhythmic, almost atonal, guitar and bass playing comes in, along with the vocals that sound like a deranged man having a mental breakdown. Van Viet was hugely inspired by jazz, and he composed most of the songs on piano, an instrument he had never played before, and along with an environment which was so abusive that members of the ensemble were forced to submit themselves to Van Viet to survive in the band, this makes for an album that is unbelievably avant-garde and, at points, extremely hard to listen to. However, it has been viewed in a positive light in the music community, appearing on Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time list. It has also been unbelievably influential to avant-garde and art rock groups. While it is not for everyone, and a general audience will consider this the worst

album of all time, there is some credit to be given here to Van Viet and every member of the Magic Band for their dedication to their craft.

It is amazingly easy to look at all these albums and revel in their awfulness, but there is something to admire about these artists being so confident in their work, and not fearing what people are going to say at all. However, do not interpret that as a total invitation to celebrate all these acts, the one thing that links. The albums I have talked about here is reprehensible behavior of the people who spearheaded the projects. Andrew Wiggin's manipulation and exploitation of his daughters, and Don Van Viet's behavior towards his band members can clearly be heard in the recorded results of their work. What we can learn from this is that often, bad art (or even some good art) can often come from people who believe their own hype, to the point that any opposing opinion will be condemned as blasphemy. These types of artists have effectively created a wall of avid followers; and all the supporters are themselves. In conclusion: If you have any morbid curiosity either of these albums, then by all means, try them out! You will be entertained in some way and will definitely get a new appreciation for the music that you love.

IVAN PAVLOVEC



REVIEW: NO TIME TO DIE

Goodbye, Mr. Bond.

So, it is here. After two years of waiting, reshooting, and contradicting trailers, this fall the 25th movie about the most famous secret agent with licence to kill finally entered the theatres. This is the last movie that will terminate the era of Daniel Craig as 007 agent, and who knows, perhaps even the whole series.

The movie starts by depicting Bond and Madeleine enjoying their time in Italy as Bond resigns on the position of an agent in service of the crown in the previous movie. However, this idyll does not last long, as the two must face the attack of the Spectre henchmen. In this fascinating scene before the opening title sequence (which is the longest in the history of all James Bond movies as it is almost 30 minutes long) we get a perfectly choreographed shot featuring the iconic Aston Martin DB5 with new gadgets in contrast to the ancient city of Matera. Next the movie shows an ambush of a secret MI6 lab in London, when the terrorist group steals the new biological weapon based on lethal nanobots that can be programmed and encoded to human DNA to kill specific people while remaining harmless to others. After, MI6 must col-



SOURCE: <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20210928-five-stars-for-no-time-to-die>

laborate with the CIA to deal with this new threat, Bond agrees to help them to get back the Russian scientist who led the development of this weapon and was also kidnapped by the terrorists. In this process, Bond meets Nomi, the new agent who was assigned Bond's previous codename. Their rivalry over the position in MI6 together with the need of stopping the main villain Safin sets the dynamic phase of the film throughout its all 163 minutes, with which it is also the longest 007 movie so far.

However, was this long-expected climax of all previous movies starring Craig in the leading role any good, or was it just a ruthless use of a legendary character to push the political agenda to fit modern requirements? Well, fortunately not, despite the trailers which showed Bond as a weak, old, and pathetic guy

that is pushed from his own movies by his diverse and more modern fitting successor. Yet, the final piece was quite the opposite which means that the trailers were filled with this misleading information on purpose. On top of that, the makers learned the lesson from the first mostly negative reactions on these and just reshot some scenes so the film could tell a different and more intriguing story, as they had plenty of time to do so because of the pandemic. Anyway, the film succeeds for being respectful to the tradition of older movies and keeps all the things that made them so popular. For instance, Bond returns as an older, thus less impulsive agent, who is yet still very capable and effective, so when he interacts with Nomi, they both seem equally witty and interesting when they challenge each other without someone gaining the upper hand just because the script needs it to. This leads to some great and even humorous scenes, which are quite refreshing in this otherwise serious thriller.

This movie also explores Bond from his emotional side in the way that was never done before, as he becomes quite attached to Madeleine and her daughter. It contrasts with his adventurousness and a bit

of ruthlessness, and eventually he does anything to save them. The only minor weakness is the main villain Safin, who even though receives an interesting background at the beginning of the movie during a perfect frightening scene in the mountains, still lacks some bigger motivation for his generic plan of destroying the world.

Nevertheless, the movie delivers a great cinematic experience while providing an arch to the previous movies and their characters and events. The role of Felix Leither as well as the short memory about Vesper Lynd gives all the side plots a satisfying conclusion. Together with excellent casting and camera work, which looks awesome in the colourful settings of Cuban streets as well as in the misty forests of Norway, it creates a feel of one of the best 007 movie. To sum up, *No Time to Die* is a greatly written James Bond movie which delivers a pleasant and emotional experience even to those who had not seen the previous films. As it concludes the Craig era of James Bond, the only question remains. Who is going to be the next super-agent to drink dry martini?

NATAN KRATOCHVÍLA

HOW BEING VEGAN CHANGED MY LIFE?

I was watching YouTube as I always do before I go to bed and saw an advert for a documentary called Game Changers. I found out that it is about the topic of a plant-based diet and common misconceptions around it and its connection to professional sports. It caught my eye because of all the famous athletes that were featured in this documentary. If it were not for that, I would not watch it. This was the first documentary/movie I have ever seen based on an advert publicised on YouTube.

I felt like my eyes were finally opened after I watched it. There were so many great points on why going on a vegan/plant-based diet is beneficial to your body and that you can achieve impressive results in sports even without notorious diets with thousands of calories and one kilogram of eggs and meat. I wanted to be vegan! But after the first infatuation, I started to have second thoughts about the documentary. Why didn't anyone make it before? If most athletes achieved remarkable success while eating meat and dairy products, why would I have to stop eating them? Suddenly I found out so much information on this topic and I was enjoying learning about food and its effects on people's bodies, so I decided to try it out and wanted to stay vegan for at least 6 weeks. Here are my insights on this approach. Spoiler alert: it is worth trying.

The first week was filled with getting used to this diet. I never thought that I would think about what I will eat the next day so much in my life. That was my biggest struggle throughout week 1. My stomach was adjusting too, and I spend a lot of time in the restroom. The other 3 weeks were much easier. I already had diet plans for each day, and I felt much fresher and needed less time to regenerate after workouts and training. I visited the bathroom regularly, but I got used to it. I also discovered new types of food and meat alternatives like tofu, tempeh, and many others. In the start, I was worried that there will not be many vegan foods in supermarkets, but I was pleased by the variety each store offered and there was never a time when I did not have something new to try. Another thing that made me worry was the start of the school year. I have been in Open Gate for 10 years and knew that the school cafeteria was not really a vegan paradise. However, I was again shocked by how well the cafeteria managed and I always had something to eat. Even though the two main meals were always with something non-vegan, the isles with salads and other food always had something good and I was pleased about it.

From then on, it was not hard at all. I was enjoying new flavours and spices and

it felt great. From my body's standpoint, it was great. I have totally smashed my record time at the 6-kilometre track, beating it by 5 minutes. I was not as tired at training as some of my teammates and I felt better than ever. From the enjoyment side of things, it was also interesting to plan my food ahead and care about what I eat.

There were lots of positive things about this experiment and I learned a lot from it, but I would lie if I would not include some negatives about this topic. I was losing weight, which is great for many people, but for me, it was not exceptionally good because I thought I already could not be skinnier. The general rule in being vegan is that you must eat a lot to maintain the weight or to gain some and that is not how I operated. I cannot handle big portions very well. Also, I missed things like cheese and eggs. It is hard when you are used to eating cheese every day and eggs every Saturday and suddenly you stop, and I was very much looking forward to them while I was vegan. Surprisingly, I did not miss meat at all. It was not a problem at all. The other things like milk, cheese is what distinguish a vegan from a vegetarian.

I saw a quote that perfectly captured the general opinion on a plant-based diet: "Being vegan means people thinking you're extremely healthy and unhealthy at the

same time." All people were supportive on this journey, especially my mum and dad who went through this with me, and many acted exactly like in this quote and I believe it is because of how the society raises children and keep telling them how meat, milk and eggs will make you strong and healthy when the reality is much different. Most people die of cardiac diseases caused by eating too much meat and dairy. In a world where we are making electric cars to minimize gas emissions, but most of them come from domesticated animals with a primary purpose for consumption, there is only a matter of time when this will change. I recommend trying a vegan diet for at least a month. If you do not want to do it for the planet, do it for your body. Today, I eat less meat than before and more veggies and other foods like tofu and I eat the best of both worlds. I never felt better. I must warn you though, do your own research before trying it. It will be much easier to be prepared and it is not hard to find infinite sources online. It never hurts to try, especially when experiments like this are almost effortless, yet could change your life.

ADAM CHÁRA



WHAT IS LIFE LIKE UPSIDE DOWN?

Have you ever wondered what it is like to be upside down? Feeling the rush of adrenalin followed with blood filling your head? Losing the sense in your lower body? Now imagine you would have to endure this physical state and at the same time stay absolutely focused on making decisions separating life and death. This is a little exaggerated, but still realistic, description of what aerobatic pilots experience during each flight. The Czech Republic has around 200 aerobatic pilots, the most famous ones being Martin Sonka and Petr Kopfstein, yet you cannot reach the top straight away. Therefore, let me introduce you to Pavel Jiránek, my good friend, aerobatic pilot, and Czech vice-champion in the sportsman category.

First, tell us how did you decide to become a pilot? Was it your childhood dream or you came around by a chance and stuck to it?

Aviation has strong roots in my family, so the first time I visited an airfield was only a few days after I was born. And I never stopped coming back. As I was growing up, I worked my way through model airplanes, and I was taking every opportunity to jump into the

real ones for joy rides. So, once I was old enough, signing up for the pilot's course felt natural.

What are the steps you must undertake to become an aerobatic pilot?

Becoming an "ordinary" pilot of small airplanes is quite simple and affordable for most people. Becoming an aerobatic pilot is a bit more complicated. Assuming one has enough resources (time and money) and is physically fit, to begin with aerobatics, (s)he still needs to gain a lot of experience in the cockpit during the ordinary / levelled flight beforehand. In other words, the basic manoeuvring of the airplane must become fully automatic, before one can start undergoing increased G-forces. With that being said, I would still recommend everyone, who is at least mildly interested, to find the closest aerobatic school and try it. It is truly a thrilling experience!

And how can you then compete in this sport?

Although aerobatics is a very precise sport, it has an artsy element to it as well. The pilots are divided into four categories based on their skills, experience, and type of aircraft they fly. The pilots then must perform the pre-defined figures in a

virtual box (with a side of 1km) above the airfield and there are multiple judges on the ground grading the accuracy and positioning of the figures. The individual grades are then added up and who has the most points, wins. So, in a sense, one can compare aerobatics to ice-skating.

Is there anything that terrifies you about aerobatics? How do you feel while being upside down?

If a pilot gets terrified in an airplane, he did something seriously wrong. One of the most fundamental (though unwritten) rules in aviation is to always be "ahead of the airplane", so nothing should surprise, let alone terrify the pilot. What is truly thrilling, however, is the pure realization of how close one is to death while performing aerobatics. Although I will always argue that flying is a safe sport, if one stays humble and diligent, in aerobatics the margin for error narrows down significantly. So, the rule of being *ahead of the airplane* is even more important in this type of flying. If you do so, it is a safe sport and it offers some of the best feelings I have ever experienced.

Looking into the future, what are your aspirations in aviation?

One of the main reasons why I love

aviation is the fact that one can never master it. There are always new airplane types, new ratings, new skills to be learned. Although I do not want to become a professional pilot, I want to keep gaining new experiences and to enjoy every second I get to spend airborne.

Considering your vivid experience, what do you consider as the most important to become a successful pilot?

As cliché as it may sound, aviation is a lifestyle, which changes one's perspective on life. Every pilot is forced to become more humble, more diligent, and have good decision-making skills. If a want-to-be pilot has these characteristics already, (s)he has a solid foundation to be a good pilot with a long aviation career. Basic theoretical skills can be taught quite quickly.

Thanks Pavel and good luck in your upcoming competitions. As it's said by DaVinci: "When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return." So go and prove it yourself!

MICHAELA RENDLOVÁ

AUTHOR HIGHLIGHT: CELESTE NG

It's hard to be resentful of anyone once you understand their perspective and point of view. Author Celeste Ng (pronounced 'ing') demonstrates this perfectly in her writing. She has a way of



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captivating the intense emotions of one character, and giving you every perspective of the story. Her two compelling novels 'Little Fires Everywhere' and 'Everything I Never Told You', won numerous awards and titles including the Massachusetts Book Award, Asian/Pacific American Award for literature, the ALA's Alex Award, and named a #1 New York Times bestseller.

Celeste is Chinese American and grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Shaker Heights, Ohio. She graduated with a degree in English at Harvard University. Ever since high school she has been an advocate for racial equality and positive attitudes towards race. This is reflected in her novels, where race plays a significant role in her character's behaviors. She often includes Asian American representation among the diverse set of characters, and additionally, the complexity of family relationships and their dynamics. Her novels revolve around these two important themes, and she does an impressive job of incorporating them in her page-turning novels.

Her first novel "Everything I Never Told You" was published in 2014. This novel focuses on a Chinese American

family living in rural Ohio in the 1970's that is mourning the loss of their family member, the 16 year old Lydia Lee. She was the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and the family had many expectations of her and her prospects. Blond hair, blue eyed Marilyn, wished for Lydia to become a doctor, a dream that Marilyn once had but was unable to pursue. Marilyn is bitter of her role as a housewife, and is determined to make things different for Lydia without ever explicitly asking what Lydia desires for herself. She sees herself in the blue eyes of Lydia, and is resolute on living vicariously through her. James is a first generation Chinese who found himself trying to fit in the predominantly white school that he attended in his youth. He struggled to make friends, and projects his fear of not fitting in on Lydia who is a mixed raced girl in the middle of Ohio. Lydia has great difficulty balancing the expectations of her family, until it becomes too much for her and she winds up dead. The family finds themselves questioning the deceptive appearance of their "perfect" lives, as many secrets are revealed.

Ng's second novel, "Little Fires Everywhere" published in 2017, is just as entic-

ing as her first. This novel follows the intertwining stories of vastly different families. There is the Richardson family, the picture perfect family, with a large, neat, clean house, and many respectful and intelligent kids. Then there is the enigmatic single mother of one, Mia Warren, who is somewhat unconventional. The novel spotlights the contrast of the families as well as how things aren't always how they seem. It takes place in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a progressive and sheltered town that strives for excellence. The people of Shaker Heights have certain ideals, and when Mia Warren invades this perfect bubble, little 'fires' begin to sprout everywhere. In stark contrast to Mia, there is Mrs. Richardson, who is tenacious in maintaining order and control. As the story goes along, we learn more about the characters and the reasoning behind their actions, and come to understand them even if their actions are not commendable.

Definitely give Celeste's novels a read, they are bound to introduce you to a new and worthwhile world of literature.

ANESKA LEE



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