

2023/2024
Edition 1



The Opioid Crisis:
Understanding Fentanyl **8**

The Joy of Childbirth
(The Child is New Music) **20**

Czech Diplomacy on
the Global Stage **22**

Halloween and more!





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THE KREMLIN WINS SLOVAK ELECTIONS

Just weeks before the parliamentary elections in Poland, another European country on the crossroads between the East and West has held its early elections, Slovakia. The elections meant an overwhelming victory for the pro-Russian SMER party led by the charismatic conservative leader Robert Fico. Fico's new government heads to undermine Europe's unity in its support for Ukraine; many fear the return of widespread government corruption present during Fico's last government.

As Slovakia woke up into the first day of October, people were left confused looking at the election results. Many major news sources published during the night the exit polls which heavily favored the Progressive Slovakia party and predicted its victory, yet in the early morning, when official results were released, PS stood 5 percentage points below the right-wing SMER. The reason for the errors in exit polls is still not clear, but this is not the first time when exit polls failed to assess the strength of the PS party, as they falsely predicted their successful entry into the parliament in 2020.

The success of the anti-EU SMER was attributed to multiple factors. One of these factors is the effective use of social media where Fico was able to tap into the far-right echo chamber and exploit the idea of Slovak people losing due to the monetary support of Ukraine. After a persistence of far-right neo-nazi parties in Slovakia, none of them got into the parliament this year and many of their voters turned to Fico. This happened because of the fracturing of the far-right parties into many, so voters feared that their ballots would be lost as none of them could pass the 7% bar for getting into the parliament. Another major contributor is the arrest and imprisonment of the neo-nazi leader Marian Kotleba of the LSNS party, which led to the rapid decline of LSNS from being in the parliament to not reaching even 1% this year.

This election has been unprecedented in many aspects, one of them being the surprisingly high voter turnout which neared 70%. This meant that not only strongly opinionated people turned up to vote, but the majority were voters of more centrist political parties. This could be a great relief for those who fear the turn Slovakia could take towards Russia, becoming akin to the likes of Hungary and Serbia. Fico - despite receiving some 23% of the ballots - has to form a coalition with at least 2 other parties that could moderate his opinions. Fico was given a rather short two-week deadline to form the new government. The key political figure for those two weeks will ironically become the leader of the third most powerful party Peter Pellegrini as both SMER and PS will be fighting for their key alliance to Pellegrini. Despite Pellegrini's more subtle anti-Ukraine opinions, PS has openly offered him the role of the prime minister if he chooses PS over Fico to avoid Fico's presence in the government at any cost.

The president Zuzana Čaputová promptly stopped any military support for Ukraine (against her desire), as she commented on the fact that her actions should "reflect the will of the society", which has clearly spoken through the elections. This election - even though it likely won't decide the war in Ukraine - is greatly helping Kremlin and Russian dictator Vladimir Putin as even if Fico will be moderated by his coalition partners, his rhetoric will still spark a discussion about who is at fault for the war in Ukraine and whether we should spend our taxpayer's money on Ukraine. Many argue that this is what is destroying the unity in NATO and may lead to the eventual edge for Russia. This will all depend on the final makeup of the coalition and together with the Polish elections, it could greatly shift the stance of the Visegrad group.

Nicolas Ivanov



THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH

Mental illnesses and mental health have become more discussed today than ever before. While it is a huge step forward and generally a great thing, it becomes bad news when it comes to people on social media who can post anything they want in a matter of seconds. It is important to understand why teens especially seek comfort in social media and why they focus on specific problems, such as trivializing serious mental illnesses and self-diagnosing.



Teenagers of this generation often feel like adults do not understand them. It is understandable since the society the adults grew up in is very different from the current one. Another reason is many adults suppress teenagers' feelings by telling them they are too young to feel depressed or anxious etc. After hearing them say this, many teens do not want to continue to confide in them. Therefore, they start to seek comfort in social media by watching TikTok videos that are 'relatable' and posting about their problems.

Social media, especially TikTok, is known for its sophisticated algorithms, often making you watch similar videos. How is that an issue? Imagine struggling with mental health issues and watching numerous videos on the same problem. It will convince you your mental health problems are typical since everyone you see posting struggles with the same thing. And while it is common for teenagers to have mental health problems in today's society, it should not be seen as a normal thing to experience. When serious mental illnesses, such as depression, anorexia, anxiety, etc., get treated as a 'normal trait,' it can cause people to ignore the problem instead of addressing it and getting help. For example, eating disorders, anorexia more specifically, is an extremely dangerous mental illness. However, it has been so glorified on TikTok, that it is not taken very seriously and is viewed as 'teenagers dieting' or even as a new 'aesthetic'. Another issue with normalising mental illnesses is that people are not getting any help. Not treating mental health problems can then result in unhealthy and dangerous coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, self-harm, starving oneself etc. That itself is very serious; however, then they are viewed as 'attention' health problems. It is one of the reasons why we should not trivialise mental illnesses, starting with not posting unhelpful content about mental health problems on social media.



Another danger that comes with social media and seeing multiple videos on mental illnesses is self-diagnosing. Self-diagnosing is as simple as believing you have a specific mental illness, therefore 'diagnosing' yourself with it. Although it seems harmless, it has numerous harmful impacts on one's mental health, such as, what is sometimes referred to as 'the horoscope effect.' It is when you see these videos about mental illnesses and seem so connected to them that you believe you have it. It is the same as searching your symptoms to what is a common cold, but after searching more and more, you start thinking you have cancer, then later begin showing more symptoms of said cancer while still having just a cold. That is immensely dangerous because when you firmly believe you have a mental illness, you can start showing those specific symptoms. TikTok presents mental illnesses as untreatable, so when you are convinced you have a mental illness, there is a chance you may simply give up and not even talk about it with a professional because 'what difference would it make if there is no cure'. That is why it is always best to reach out to a professional and discuss your worries. It is amazing to have platforms where people can share their experiences, but it is not the most reliable source of information.



Social media is a spectacular innovation; however, it is important to treat the information as it is. Anyone can write and post (almost) anything, and we should all be firmly aware of that. Now we all know how many harmful impacts it can have on us and our mental health. Let's try to stop letting such content be posted and being seen by many by not sharing them, liking them, commenting on them, etc., and rather reporting the video when we realise it is not an informative video but a video idealising mental illness. It is in our power to stop letting social media negatively impact our mental health.

Andrea Grossová



SPANISH GIANT VS. ITALIAN AZZURRI: ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

On the date October third there was a match between Real Madrid and Napoli, and now I have the opportunity to share it with you. In the beginning, we could see the players and the starting elevens of both teams, followed by the iconic Champions League anthem. As the teams got on the field, we could notice changes in the standard formations of both teams.

Napoli had an important change as the new coach, Rudi Garcia, decided to replace the shorter defender Mario Rui with the taller Norwegian devil, Leo Ostigard. Madrid also had some changes from the beginning of the season with the arrival of star players Jude Bellingham and Arda Guler. However, Arda was injured along with important teammates such as Eder Militao and Thibaut Courtois, and these stars, apart from Jude Bellingham, did not play.

After the teams were set, the match began with a whistle. In the first fifteen minutes, both Real Madrid and Napoli had several chances. Napoli pressed hard and defended brilliantly, but the star offensive trio of Real Madrid, consisting of Brazilian wingers Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo, and English midfielder Jude Bellingham, created dangerous opportunities. Surprisingly, Rodrygo was not able to finish successfully.

Napoli was also dangerous, especially with the Nigerian giant Viktor Osimhen, who easily got past the Real Madrid defence. It was already clear that there would be a goal from one side. Then like a bolt from heaven, Napoli scored first with a header from a corner kick after a mistake by Real Madrid's goalkeeper, Kepa. This was a challenging moment for him, but I knew that Real Madrid would quickly equalize because they are known for taking advantage of opponents' mistakes.

As I thought, there was a wonderful action led by Jude Bellingham, who dribbled past several defenders and played a pass to Vinicius, who finished incredibly to the right post of the Italian goalkeeper Alex Meret. Then, both teams had many dangerous opportunities and tried to score again before halftime. After some close calls,



Real Madrid struck again with a brilliant goal from Jude Bellingham, who dribbled past four defenders and finished with a shot into the top right corner. He celebrated in front of the Napoli fans with his iconic celebration.

However, the match was far from over, and both teams played more cautiously for the rest of the half. There were still many chances from both sides, but none of the shots found the back of the net. At halftime, Real Madrid was leading 2-1, and both teams headed to the locker rooms to strategize for the second half.

The second half of the match started exactly the same as the first, both teams started with a very well-concentrated offense. However, Italian Napoli had a much better-organized attack and Viktor Osimhen, thanks to the excellent cooperation with the Slovak midfielder Lobotka, got into many quality chances, which the Spanish goalkeeper managed to save. But everything was ended by Osimhen's run into the penalty area of Real Madrid, where the defenders were not strong enough and were forced to make an illegal intervention with their hands. The defender reacted very surprised after the referee decided on a penalty kick after reviewing the video recording-VAR.

The penalty kick was kicked by the experienced Polish player Zeliensky and he finished uncompromisingly into the left corner, and the kick was impossible to be caught by Kepa. After this equalization, the Italian team regained the hope of winning and gaining important points. But Real Madrid didn't plan anything like giving them for free and started playing wonderful football.



Real Madrid showed us that their individual player quality is unmatched in modern football. At this moment, they had complete control over the ball and any pressure from the Italian team was completely unnecessary. The Real Madrid players incredibly switched the ball with each other within a couple of touches with incredible accuracy and it was as if their heads had switched for a few tens of minutes. Unexpectedly, despite all these advantages, the white ballet was not able to break through the Napoli defence. All of them retreated to their own half at every sign of pressure and Madrid had no chance of breaking through this stone wall.

The minutes flow incredibly fast. Both teams just changed the ball at each break and held it for another ten minutes only to lose it in the opponent's half. The pace of the match was tired, and it was because both teams started to play alibistic. That meant that it would end in a draw and each team would fairly take away one point. But it wouldn't be Real Madrid if it didn't surprise the opponents and spectators in the Champions League match.



Ten minutes before the end of the match, White Ballet received a corner kick. Tall players like Rudiger or Bellingham threatened Napoli in the penalty area. However, the defenders successfully backed off this threat and the ball flew out of the penalty area. But they were not good enough to stop the geniously positioned midfielder Valverde, who managed to finish from a long distance directly into the right corner of the Italian team's goal with amazing accuracy and power. The whole Real Madrid squad celebrated, and teammates hugged their hero. The entire stadium of Diego Maradona was silenced by this unbelievable hit.

There were only ten minutes to the end of the match and Real Madrid pulled back very well and did not try to take the ball into the opponent's half. They were just impatiently waiting for the end of the match. The players of the Italian team have already given up and did not get to Madrid's goal. Due to tension, both teams committed a lot of fouls, and the referee gave four yellow cards. After an aggressive end, the referee whistled and marked the end of the match.

The Napoli players were very disappointed that they were not able to beat White Ballet at home and did not take a single point. Real Madrid celebrated and took home three points and will host the Italian team at home in the second round.

Frederick Bawia



THE OPIOID CRISIS: UNDERSTANDING FENTANYL

The opioid crisis has spread through nations, leaving behind a trail of devastation. It's a crisis that plagues communities worldwide, affecting people from all walks of life. At the core of this substance epidemic lies a dangerous drug: fentanyl.

Fentanyl is a robust synthetic opioid that shares its origins with morphine, a non-synthetic narcotic derived from the same opium poppy plant. Fentanyl is a human-made substance carefully synthesized in laboratories to mimic and intensify the effects of existing illicit drugs. While opioids have found a crucial place in medicine thanks to pain-relieving properties, specifically in helping patients ease severe post-surgery or chronic pain, opioids have gained a reputation for their subjection to addiction and misuse.

Now, what makes fentanyl so appealing? The answer lies in its price and effectiveness. Washington State Standard reported that a single pill of illicit fentanyl sold on the streets can cost you anywhere from 50 cents to 5 dollars, which is quite cheap when considering the price at the local CVS can mark you up from \$27 all the way up to \$100+. Following that, illicitly made fentanyl is often mixed with other drugs to strengthen its effects and lower production costs. Because of this, users are more inclined to buy the street version of the drug since it gives them more satisfaction and relief.

Finally, the opioid crisis has massively impacted the world across all aspects of government and life. It mostly centers around the opium drug called fentanyl; a potent pain relief drug manufactured to intensify the effects of previous opioids. While serving a significant purpose in the field of medicine, it has also become the leading cause of drug overdose in countries like the United States. The crisis has also been fueled by foreign drug cartels supplying nations with illicitly made substances hidden within regular counterfeit pills, creating a dangerous mix of fentanyl and heroin, amongst many others. The crisis raises the need for heightened awareness regarding drug abuse, urgent government action, and, finally, regulations to lower the societal and economic impacts of opioid drugs.

The role of fentanyl in this crisis remains quite complex. The opioid is mainly known for its unique potency; compared to other opioids, such as morphine, researchers discovered fentanyl to be 50 to 100 times more potent or strong (Volpe et al., 2011) (Higashikawa & Suzuki, 2008). While this extraordinary property allows for effective legal pain relief medication, it also dramatically increases the risk of overdoses if misused. The border between the safe and fatal amount is relatively low, and a dosage as small as 0.5mL may prove too much. Even the slightest miscalculation in dosage or quantity of illegally made fentanyl can shift the balance between relief and tragedy.

Many experts believe that the opioid epidemic primarily began with the overprescription of legal pain medications, including fentanyl, oxycodone, or morphine. Opioids have been used for centuries as a form of pain relief. However, modern opioid pharmacology was born in the early 19th century, but it became more widespread in the 2000s. In the 2000s, it was common for a physician to treat patients with chronic pain or illness using opioids to manage pain relief.

The dangers of opioid abuse are well-known and disturbing. One of the greatest dangers of opioid abuse is the high potential for addiction. Its users can easily find themselves stuck in a vicious cycle of dependence, driven by the drug's intense euphoria and pain relief effects and the need to achieve the same state over and over. Furthermore, the high potency of fentanyl specifically greatly increases the risk of overdose. Due to its strength and effectiveness, fentanyl, in particular, is commonly mixed with other drugs, such as heroin or methamphetamine, and made to look like standard opioid relief drugs without the buyer's knowledge.

Calista Maříková

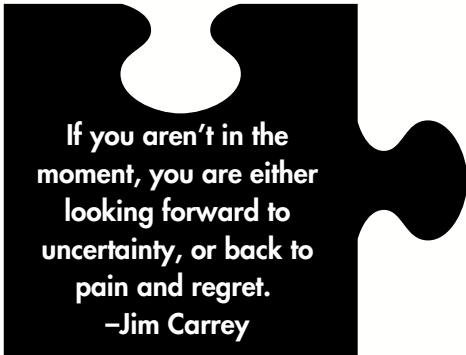


WHAT IF?

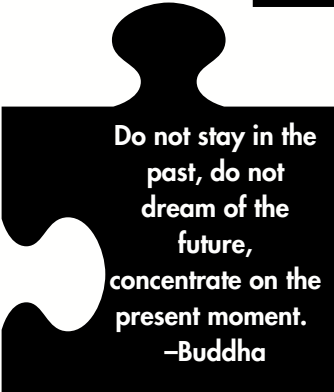
Have you ever wondered what would have happened had you done something differently? Or what about if it hadn't happened at all? Almost everyone has asked themselves these questions at least once in their life. Whether we think about the past and the regret we carry from it or the future and the hope it brings, we all ponder the consequences of our actions and how much they shaped our future.

What If - Regret

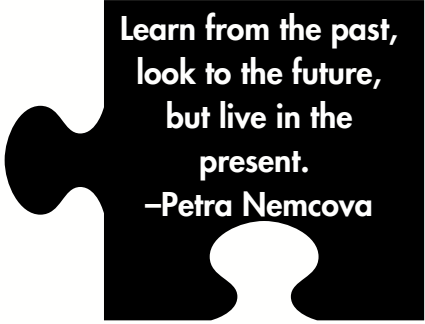
We all know the terrible feeling of regret. This feeling seems to follow you and haunt your thoughts, constantly reminding you of that one event and what you could have done differently. Your brain ends up filled with questions and all the possible outcomes if you had done one thing differently. Thoughts like "What if I should have done that? Or was I supposed to say this?" occupy your thinking and prevent you from 'living.' Living in the moment without dwelling on regrets or pain can be liberating. Last Friday, I lost my bag with documents and headphones, a situation that could have consumed me. However, I didn't just wait for the police to find my documents or drown in regret. I have gathered the strength to solve the problem. While I did feel some regret, I didn't let it overwhelm me. In conclusion, I've learned to tackle life's challenges without getting lost in time or regrets.



If you aren't in the moment, you are either looking forward to uncertainty, or back to pain and regret.
—Jim Carrey



Do not stay in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate on the present moment.
—Buddha



Learn from the past, look to the future, but live in the present.
—Petra Nemcova

What If - Hope

Have you ever heard the phrase "There is no harm in dreaming?" Many of us did and consider it to be true for the most part. Although it gives us hope and allows us to dream of a better future, we waste so much time doing so. When you focus on a thing that concerns the future, you automatically think of many ways it will be and always think about how it can happen. But that's the problem - you never know what will happen, and it's almost impossible to predict it accurately. Make a plan that will take you into the future, but do not think too deeply about it and hope that it will happen the way you predicted or expected. That's life and you never know what it has in store for you.

The Golden Middle

How should I act? – if you ask me, I will answer: find "The Golden Middle". It combines all the past, present, and future elements and allows you to live peacefully. Taking your experience, using it not to fail, and putting forward an ambitious goal will lead you to a successful and pleasant future.

Live in the Moment

Life is a challenging and complicated; many situations will stay in our minds for a long time, but you can make it easier. Do not focus (at least try) on your pain and regret, do not think about the future all the time, just be here. Be here in this moment, in this minute, in this second. Be here while you read the articles, be here and enjoy what is happening right now. All of these things are about living and admiring every moment.

Oleksandra Supylnyk

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The number of cases of domestic violence in the Czech Republic increased by 50% during the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that the government did not even notice the trend is a testament of the fundamental deficiencies in the Czech support system for gender-based violence (GBV).

What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)?

GBV is an umbrella term for all types of violence based on the power imbalance between genders, including domestic, physical, psychological and sexual violence. It takes different forms around the world, which is shaped by the history, culture, level of development and many other factors. As part of my Global Politics Engagement Activity, I focused on researching this topic in the context of the Czech Republic and conducted interviews with representatives of Czech NGOs.

GBV in the Czech Republic

Even though 70% of the Czech population sees the status quo as problematic, the government doesn't respond appropriately. This often leaves victims of GBV without sufficient support- both legal and care-wise- as well as the society does not see the importance of this political issue. In the Czech Republic, there is still a huge amount of stigma about GBV as many negative stereotypes about both victims and perpetrators are still believed. Two thirds of women (EU average is 53%) don't go to certain places or avoid certain situations purely because of fear of both physical and sexual violence. Throughout this article, there will be focus on the above-mentioned areas (legal and care centres), which are crucial for tackling GBV in the Czech Republic.

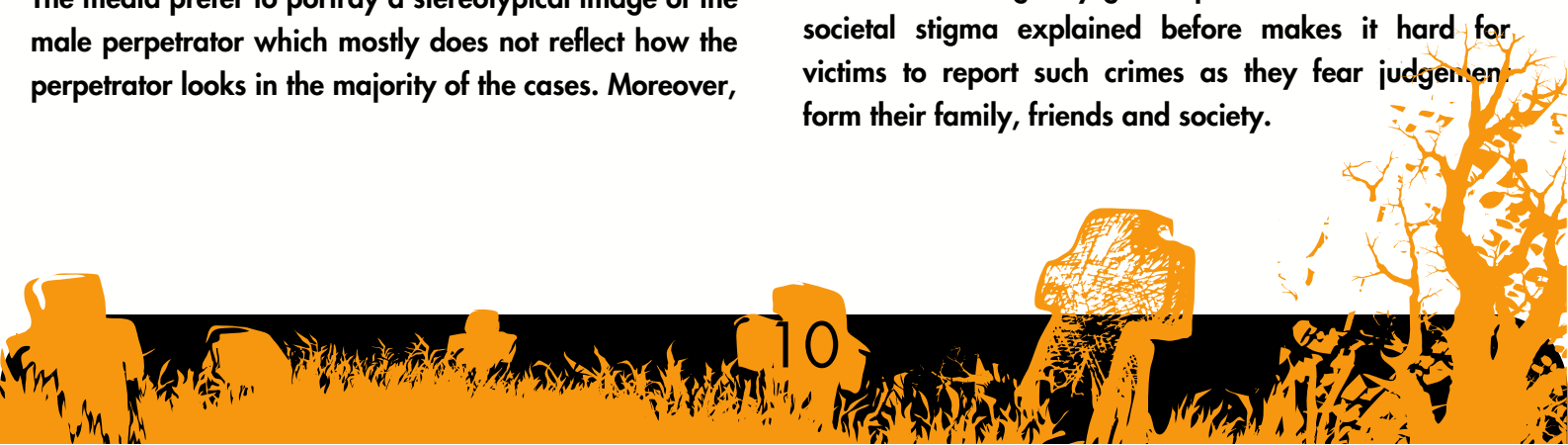
Stereotypes of Victims and Perpetrators Alike

The media prefer to portray a stereotypical image of the male perpetrator which mostly does not reflect how the perpetrator looks in the majority of the cases. Moreover,

in the media, there are many attempts trying to make the testimonies of the victims less credible, confirming to the common misunderstanding of GBV, that the victim is somehow responsible for what happened to them. Because the media has the trust of people and the power to spread information swiftly, it leads to the normalisation of such misinterpreted beliefs. This is especially problematic since the government doesn't actively oversee sexual education, so the media are the primary source of information about GBV for many Czech citizens. This dissuades, via the false beliefs and normalization of inappropriate behaviour, 79% of victims from pursuing support and approaching any institution after experiencing sexual violence and less than a half of them (35%) not even talking about the experience with anybody at all.

Rape in the Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, only approximately 5% (600) of rape cases are reported to the police out of the 12000 of rapes committed each year. As the Konsent representative explained and other interviewed representatives mentioned, as much as 70% of rapes do not fall under the current legal definition of rape because the victims just freeze and do not actively fight back the perpetrators. But as 70-80% of women are raped by someone they know (in 50% it is their partner/husband) it is hard for them to act rationally in the specific moment. It is hard to talk about the experience when in the court you should be standing against someone you know and love and even if you do speak up, it is very hard to prove what actually happened. And what is it that they are expected to relive their traumatic experiences for? In almost half of cases the perpetrator gets away with a suspended sentence meaning they get no prison time. This and the societal stigma explained before makes it hard for victims to report such crimes as they fear judgement from their family, friends and society.



Why the Current System Doesn't Work

Societal stigma and insufficient law system lead to GBV not being taken seriously by both the society and the government. Since victims do not contact authorities or speak out about GBV, the state does not give the problematic enough attention and has yet to implement preventative measures and support mechanisms. The NGO sector is trying to step in by raising awareness and starting political discussion but as GBV is not the main election issue, it rarely reaches the target group in regard to prevention. NGO's mostly try to work with the victims of GB crimes, but still their support is inadequate to the high demand due to lack of resources.



Support Mechanisms

Moreover, when the women combat their fear of stigmatization and are willing to ask for help, the issue within the Czech support system is, that there is an insufficient number of places, where victims can stay and find help. In Czechia, there are just 5 long-stay services for victims of domestic violence, and they are only in Prague and Brno with their combined capacity being only 3% of the European Council policy recommendation. On top of there not being enough support, also 27% of women feel too ashamed or embarrassed to contact those services, yet 97% of the women that experienced sexual violence would recommend such services to a random victim. This illustrates that even though it seems obvious for outsiders that those women need help (and they themselves would help their friends or family in the same situation) being victim of such crimes, it is hard to speak up for both personal and societal reasons.

How Support Systems Currently Work

The organizations I was in contact with that are also providing help to victims are Persefona, ProFem, ACORUS or ROSA. They provide various forms of services for different types of victims- some focus on victims of rape, other GBV and domestic violence- with the support ranging from free therapy sessions to help with writing a legal case or short-term anonymous accommodation for those who escape but have nowhere to go to. As mentioned before, the issue is that due to the lack of these kinds of services, they usually operate on full capacity, thus making some of the services inaccessible to women in need.

How to Help Someone Who Experienced GBV

It is key to hear that person out and avoid secondary victimization and blaming the victim for what happened to them. Talk to them about if they are ready to talk about their experience with professionals and you can either decide to contact some of the organizations mentioned above or join an anonymous session with the NGO Konsent which connects the victims of GBV and provides them a safe space to talk about their experiences. Overall, it is good to be aware that GBV is part of our society and as 1/3 of women experience it in their lifetime, it is highly likely that some of your closest friends or family will have such negative experience.

Focus Areas for Progress in this Field

It is regrettable to conclude that the victims who involuntarily go through the traumatising experience of GBV often don't have where to ask for help and seek asylum. Normalising the GBV leads to its mischaracterization which results in the scarcity of specialised services many citizens also don't even know that they exist. The most prominent area for improvement is prevention- demolishing stereotypes of how the "model victim" and "model perpetrator" looks like and being truthful and clear when addressing the topic. Focusing on improving the legal system, establishing new specialised services and better regulating media are just little steps to help combat GBV and reduce gender inequality.

Barbora Votlučková



ELITE FIRM HIRING

Over the past 30 years, sociologists, who study patterns in human relationships and social interactions, have often suggested a link between culture and the hiring process, especially in elite firms. An occupation in such a firm, no matter how individualistic, is always at least partly social, it becomes crucial that a firm chooses its employees carefully in order to maintain a specific atmosphere throughout their firm. This is the hypothesis that Lauren A. Rivera, a Yale and Harvard alumnus, set out to answer with hard data in her 2012 sociological paper: *Hiring as Cultural Matching: The Case of Elite Professional Service Firms*.

Understanding *culture* is crucial in understanding sociological literature, viewing the world through a more logical and programmatic lens, and understanding the article as a whole. *Culture*, as defined by sociologists, is everything we make and consume. It's the material objects, symbols, language, beliefs, and values that define our societies. It's the ideas, attitudes, traditions, and practices that we use to see, interpret, and change the world around us.



The paper, published in the *American Sociological Review*, sets out to explore the link between culture and the hiring process in elite firms. It emphasizes the current lack of data examining the role of culture during the hiring process, as sociologists have, in the past, mostly examined the role of sex and gender. It is therefore the goal of this article to summarize the main focal point through which candidates are selected in Ms. Rivera's paper in the hope of creating a comprehensive guide that can aid you in your future!



The article first establishes the relationship between the job applicant and the firm. Many, if not all of the high-level companies in which the study was concluded, those being legal and consulting firms along with investment banks, had their own distinct culture. Some firms were described as very posh and polished, while others were "scrappy and rough", such as that of the legal hiring manager Mary (an interviewee cited in the paper), who examined a mock candidate. The examined candidate met all of the grade requirements in her firm, yet she rejected him based on perceived extracurricular misfit, saying: "I'm looking at the interests [on his résumé]—lacrosse, squash, crew [laughs]. I'm sort of giving him a personality type here, and I don't think he's going to fit in well here ... we're more rough and tumble... I'm going to let him go." This is one of a dozen examples provided where potential candidates were screened and subsequently swiftly rejected due to an apparent surface-level mismatch between them and their firm's culture.



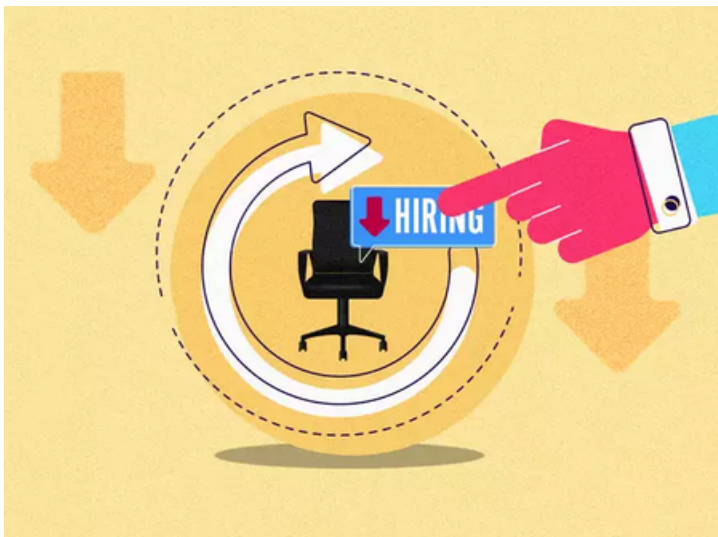
On the surface, it may seem unjust to disregard a candidate due to a seeming surface-level misfit, and yet, the interviewed hiring managers gave an elaborate justification for their and their firms' prejudice. Considering that working at such elite-level firms often involves highly tense situations, it becomes obvious that recruiters have to make sure that the employees in the firm are "the type of people you could be sitting across the table from at 2 a.m." Such situations can involve working late into the morning, without sleep, or getting stuck at an airport halfway across the world. Evaluators also pointed out that while working at these firms, "you will see more of your co-workers than your wife, your kids, your friends, and even your family. So you can be the smartest guy ever, but I don't care. I need to be comfortable working every day with you, and then going for a beer after. You need chemistry. Not only that the person is smart, but that you like him." Under these circumstances, it becomes understandable that a firm would need to hire new employees with the realities of their field in mind. As one manager wrote about a potential candidate: "[he] will quickly become everyone's best friend.' . . . That's what I call a good fit. But quite frankly, his case performance wasn't the best. But because his personality and presence were so strong, I forwarded him on [to second-round interviews]."



Despite the limited range of the study, as it only examined 'top of the line' consulting firms along with investment banks, it set a fascinating precedent that has the capacity to have far-reaching consequences for the job market. The key similarities between these three types of firms were the long and gruelling work hours along with their competitive candidate pool. This means that this study has the potential to extend to other jobs with similar characteristics.

The point of this article was to educate and empower the reader to use these lessons in their future. The lesson can be summarized as follows: when applying for these positions, it becomes more a matter of what kind of person you are outside of work, your personality, and your demeanour, rather than grades. Therefore, do your research before applying. Instead of making a single resume and sending it to every company you're applying to, do your due diligence and find out what kind of companies you're appealing to. Analyse their website, and the social media of their workers, or go in and ask yourself about their environment. With this in mind, craft a perfectly tailored resume for each firm, greatly increasing your odds of getting through the first stage of the hiring process, and then subsequently use your crafted persona to secure yourself an occupation in your dream firm.

Daniel Adamec



THE CRISIS CORNER: THE MEANING OF NOTHING

Have you ever thought about 'nothing'? Not an empty mind, but the idea of 'nothingness.' It's the idea that an absence exists, a void, a state where existence seems to vanish, leaving behind... well, nothing. Simply put, it's when everything disappears, leaving only emptiness behind.

We can generally approach the concept of nothing in many ways, for example, from the mathematical perspective, where nothing is represented as 0. However, I want to focus on the more complicated point of view, the philosophical concept of 'nothing.' We often think of this concept to understand life when it starts to feel empty and lacks meaning. We tend to look at 'nothing' to explore the absence of something, whether it's physical objects, meaning, value, or purpose in life. But for all of us, it is an immense puzzle that raises questions about the nature of existence and our significance, just like a blank canvas awaits the artist's creative touch to give it meaning and purpose. Hence, this Chronicle's Crisis Corner invites us to ponder the most thought-provoking ideas, to delve into the depths of existence, and question the essence of life itself. So, how should you see 'nothing'?

Let us start by focusing on one lens through which we can understand this concept of nothingness: existentialism. Existentialism dives deep into questions about human existence, meaning, and the daunting idea of nothingness, which is our focus. There are many existentialist thinkers, but there are two thinkers whose perspectives I'd like to share: Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

Imagine waking up one day and realizing that you are entirely free to make choices, but with that freedom comes a heavy burden. This is precisely how Jean-Paul Sartre saw human existence. He believed that we are condemned to be free, meaning that we have the ultimate freedom to define our lives, values, and meaning, and basically to shape our lives into something. However, Sartre also explored the idea that when we confront the emptiness of existence, we may experience a strange sense of 'discomfort,' when we realize there is no preordained meaning or purpose in the universe. Due to this, our human pursuits, ambitions, and quests for meaning can seem futile and senseless when viewed against the backdrop of a seemingly indifferent universe. To help you

grasp this idea, Let's revisit my canvas analogy. Imagine that you are given a blank canvas and are told to paint and search for a meaning. You'd start drawing on the canvas, creating unique art with your original meaning and value, thus becoming authors of our own stories in a universe that may seem indifferent.

In contrast, Albert Camus took a slightly different route in his exploration of existentialism and nothingness. In his best-known essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus," he tells the story of Sisyphus, a character condemned to roll a boulder up a hill for eternity. This task probably seems utterly meaningless, yet Camus finds meaning in it. He suggests that Sisyphus can find purpose and happiness in embracing the absurdity of his burden. For Camus, life itself is absurd, devoid of meaning, and filled with nothingness. And life can often feel like that, like we're pushing our own boulders, facing the seemingly never-ending struggle. But rather than seeking to escape this absurdity, Camus encourages us to 'revolt' against it. This revolt doesn't mean denying the absurdity of life; instead, it's about confronting it head-on and finding our meaning and values in the face of nothingness.

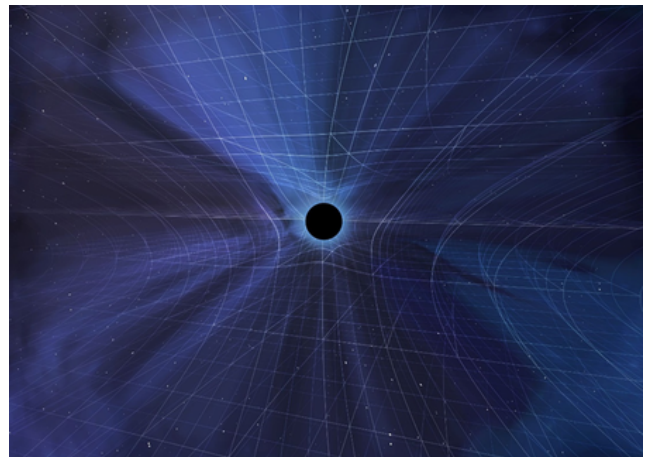
However, even though existentialism offers a fascinating perspective on human existence and the concept of nothingness, it's not without criticism. Essentially, the critics suggest that while we have the freedom to define our lives, our decisions and actions are often influenced by the world around us as well – our upbringing, culture, and the circumstances we find ourselves in. They fear existentialism might oversimplify the complex relationship between personal purpose and external forces. And, well, understanding human existence is a multifaceted puzzle with various perspectives to explore, so there are many other ways to think about nothingness.



Following that, a rather grim way to look at nothingness is through the eyes of a nihilist. Nihilists believe that life is devoid of any inherent meaning or purpose and that when we look at the grand scheme of the universe, we find no evidence of any objective purpose or meaning. While it may sound depressing, it makes sense. There really is no justification for our existence, why we are self-aware, or why we are here when there is no concrete evidence for a purpose. From the viewpoint of a nihilist, everything we do, all our endeavors and pursuits, seem pointless. It's as if we're in a vast, empty room with no guiding principles or goals. They argue that the universe, in its vastness, is indifferent to our presence, and no cosmic forces or divine plans grant our lives inherent significance. To simply sum it up, nihilists argue there is no grand plan, goal, or predefined value system that gives our lives significance. I think Nihilism can be described nicely in only three words, "life is meaningless." However, acknowledging the absence of inherent meaning can also be liberating. It can free individuals from the pressure to conform to preexisting value systems and encourage them to explore their passions and pursuits. Hence, whilst it has its benefits, be careful with nihilism.

Let's talk about religion for a second. If you were to define a religion, how would you describe it? I would say it is a way of living that provides its followers with meaning, purpose, and a sense of belonging. Religion often begins with our search for meaning in life. We ask questions, such as "Why are we here?", "What is the purpose of life?" and "What happens after we die?" Religion provides these answers, *BUT* different religions offer different reasons for these questions. For example, Christianity teaches that life's purpose is to love and serve God, Buddhism focuses on the alleviating suffering through enlightenment, and so on. But why are they all so different? Why are there so many different religions with so many ways of thinking about life? If all of them are correct, then why are there multiple ones? Well, in my view, religion is just that, a way to think about life, to assign a meaning to it that suits a specific person. What one person finds meaningful and purposeful in their religion may not necessarily resonate with you, and that's perfectly okay. In my eyes, religion provides us with narratives of eternal existence, divine purpose, and the promise of spiritual fulfilment. They provide a guiding light that helps individuals navigate the complexities of existence and find peace and purpose in an indifferent universe.

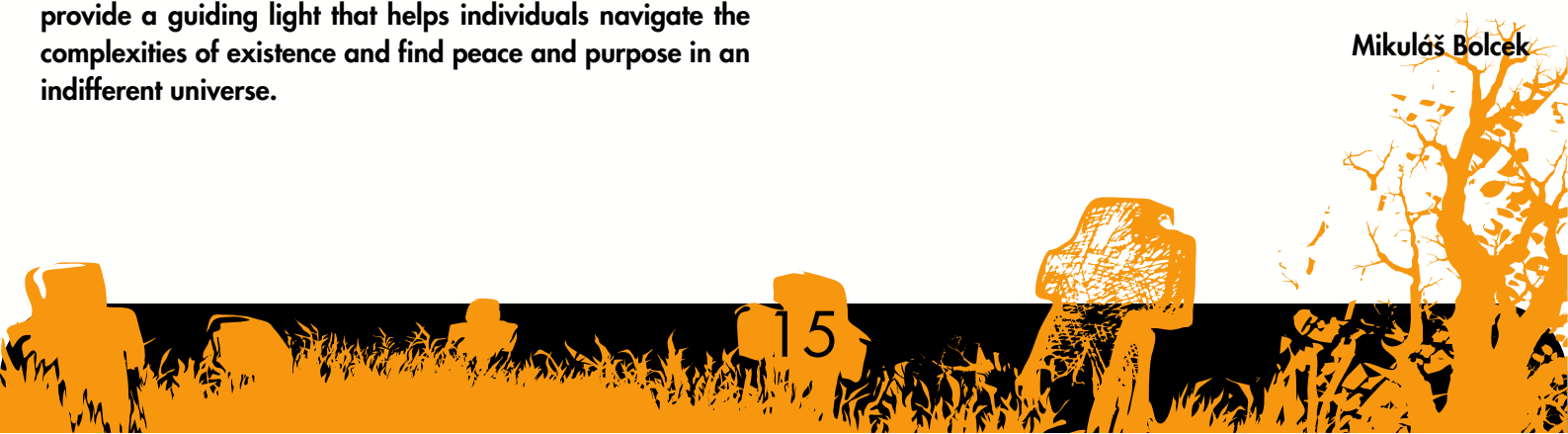
Finally, where does this leave us? This exploration of 'nothing' took us on a profound journey through the realms of existentialism, nihilism, and religion. And as we contemplate on the void of nothingness, perhaps we should remember that life's meaning is essentially what we make of it. These philosophies provide us with valuable tools to grapple with the fundamental questions of existence, meaning, and purpose. But these discussions aren't confined to the pages of philosophical texts; they have a profound impact on our daily lives. Existentialism reminds us of our capacity to shape our own stories, even in the face of absurdity. Nihilism forces us to confront the lack of inherent purpose and the power of our subjective perspectives. Religion offers solace and transcendence, providing meaning amid existential challenges. We craft our own narratives, question conventional wisdom, and seek solace in our beliefs. Ultimately, whether we align with existentialism's call to embrace our freedom, nihilism's challenging view of life's meaninglessness, or the comfort of religious narratives, we engage with these ideas in ways that shape our own personal philosophies.



So, how will you see 'nothing?' How will you shape your nothingness? Ultimately, the definition of nothing is as diverse as the individuals contemplating it. It's your turn to explore, so continue this journey.

This has been the Crisis Corner, and I need some sleep.

Mikuláš Bolcek



THE MURDER BOOK

Sadie wakes up one day, a very special day for it is her birthday! She was so excited she couldn't even sleep properly. She eagerly hops out of bed and runs downstairs, nearly tripping over and falling on her face. After she makes it downstairs, her mom gives her a box. She says that her dad had left it for her. It was his last wish before he passed away that Sadie should open it on her 16th birthday and today's the day. She opens the box and finds a black notebook in it with a letter from her dad. She doesn't have the guts to read the letter, so she places it on her desk. Sadie eventually decides to open the notebook, and starts writing in it. She puts down all her feelings and doubts, everything she can think of. For some reason she feels like she is safe, like nothing in the world can stop her, it gives her a feeling of control, of power. She decides to go to sleep and leaves the notebook on her desk. She sleeps like a baby but wakes up to her mom yelling in the kitchen for her to come down to eat so she isn't late for school. "Coming!" Sadie shouts. Sadie runs downstairs and finds her mom. She is holding something in her hand. It is a plastic bag full of weed. Oh fuck. Sadie immediately knows it's Axel's and goes into complete shock.

That morning Sadie has her biggest fight yet with her mom. When she gets home after school, she starts writing uncontrollably in the notebook. As she angrily scribbles, she writes that she wishes her mom were dead. Of course, she doesn't mean it but in the heat of the moment that is what she writes. After she is done writing her life problems, she then goes to sleep with a peaceful feeling again. But that feeling doesn't last for long. The nightmare has started. Sadie is in the kitchen and in her hand is a knife. She feels some kind of magnetic force pulling her towards her mom. Her mom is calmly washing the dishes and listening to music. Sadie stops for a moment. She feels like she knows what is about to happen. But it's too late to stop it. Sadie starts running directly at her mom. Sadie cries but she still can't stop. She stabs her mom in the back of her head. Sadie sobs even more but she can't contain herself and starts stabbing her again and again. There is obscure anger that is filling her body. Her mom is already long dead but that isn't stopping her either. Nothing is stopping her. Sadie's vision starts to blur, and she falls to the ground.



She wakes up the next morning. The morning seems quieter than usual. Sadie gets up and goes to check if everything is alright downstairs, but it certainly isn't. Her mom is lying dead on the kitchen floor with a bloody knife stuck in the back of her head.

Sadie stares as tears flood her eyes, "Mom!" she screams. She falls to her knees. Suddenly something hits her. She can't be seen like this. She runs up to her room and packs her bag. When she's about to leave her room, she looks behind her. There it is, on her desk, the notebook. She quickly shoves it into her bag and runs out the front door. She has nowhere to go. She definitely can't stay in her house.

She thinks of only one place to go: her best friend's house. Her best friend Axel opens the front door and stands in shock. Sadie can't blame him for his reaction. She is standing in front of his front door covered in blood with a bloody notebook in her hand. What did she expect. "What happened?!" he yells. "My mom she's dead I don't know what to do!" Sadie cries as she runs to Axel and hugs him tight. "It's gonna be okay I swear" he comforts her. Once she was in the house, she tells Axel everything, even how she thinks she might have killed her own mother. Luckily instead of calling the police Axel comforts her and lets her stay over. And that is one of the many, many, many reasons why Sadie has a huge crush on him. He is just so sweet and was there for her even when she had lost her dad. Sometimes Sadie feels like she owes him something, but she just tries to ignore that feeling. Instead, she just imagines their future kids and their happily ever after. She has been friends with him for well over 10 years. Axel is quite a loner and lives alone because his mom left him shortly after his father had died.





The next morning Sadie wakes up and talks everything over with Axel. He seems more captivated than afraid. After Sadie explains everything, he makes a risky suggestion.

"Why don't you like try writing in it again?"

"What! Are you crazy?! What if I kill someone?"

"No, you're not gonna kill anyone. I mean you could just test if your theory is right."

"Nope, I'm not doing that, even if there's a slight possibility of me killing someone. Nope not gonna happen."

"Why do u have to be such a buzzkill."

"Oh, I'm sorry that I don't wanna kill anyone."

"Sadie stop being so dramatic. I didn't mean it like that!"

"Sure, you didn't. You know what, I'm leaving."

"Fine! It's not like I care!" Axel shouts as Sadie slams the door in his face. How could he ask her to try and write in it? What if her theory is right? What if it would all be her fault if someone died. She cannot deal with that again. She already feels responsible enough for her mom's murder. She can't be responsible for another one. Sadie doesn't know what to do so she just walks down the streets of her hometown and wonders what would happen to her when she went home. Would she be arrested and sent to juvie? She can't let that happen. Sadie takes a sharp turn into an alley. She unzips her bag and takes out the notebook. She throws the notebook into a dumpster in the alley and also takes one other thing out of her bag. The dumpster goes up in flames. Sadie stares at the notebook as it burns piece by piece. She watches as the pages slowly shrivel up and disappear into ashes.

After that was done Sadie decides to make up an alibi. If the police were to ask her where she was when the murder happened, she would just say that she was over at Axel's house. She walks back home. And as she expects police cars are roaming around her house. Sadie goes inside and starts crying at the sight of her mother on the kitchen floor. She can feel all the guilt coming back. It sends shivers down her spine. The tears she cries are supposed to be of sadness but all she can feel is guilt. She did this and it was all her fault. Though she did not have the best relationship with her mother she still loved her, and it still hurt so much to see her dead on the floor. But Sadie knew bringing her back wasn't an option. She had already lost her dad and now her mom was dead too. She didn't know if she could take it all. As she stands in the kitchen crying, she doesn't even notice that a police officer had come over to her and told her she should go upstairs while they investigate. Sadie jumps back to reality and listens to the officer.

As she goes up the stairs every step is giving her a weird feeling like she should turn back while she still can, but she can't. Something is calling her. Something bad. She slowly opens the door to her room. When she looks behind the door, she sees something that makes her get goosebumps in less than a second. On her desk is the notebook. The notebook she watched go up in flames. The notebook that had killed her mother. She screams at the top of her lungs. Her knees start feeling weak, as she falls to the ground. Her eyes flooding with tears. The police quickly run up the stairs to check what had happened but all they see is Sadie kneeling on the ground crying and staring at the notebook on her desk. I-I-I c-can't get r-rid of I-it.

Alžběta Čapková & Ivana Orlichová



A LOVE LETTER TO FLOG – MY “LAST DANCE”

The start of the school year provides a lot of excitement for us for many reasons, and not only academically – as you may have noticed, the 19th season of the school’s floorball league, FLOG, is already underway, full of intriguing matchups, incredible displays of skill, but most importantly the joy of playing a game together for everyone involved. Even as a regular FLOG competitor and even the captain of one of the teams this year, though, one thing has always puzzled me: How in the world is it possible that our most popular, you could even say ‘flagship’ sport, is floorball?

What even is floorball? I’m pretty sure I haven’t known that such a sport exists before I came to Open Gate! How come we don’t play football as much? Or basketball, or baseball for all I know? Why are we hitting a ball with holes, yes, a ball with holes with sticks? Okay, I might be exaggerating, but seriously, how has this obscure game made its way into our school, I thought, when I first gave it a shot.

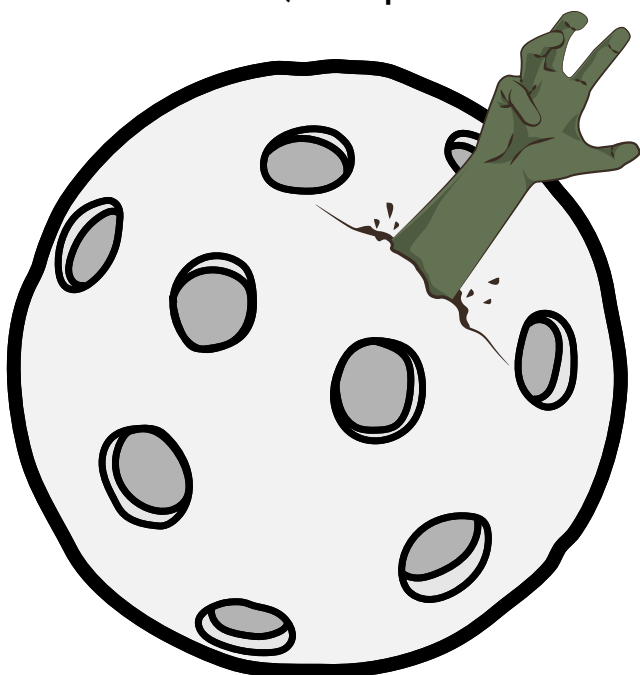
Actually, floorball, a relatively ‘young’ sport (invented in Sweden in the 1960s) has been growing in the Czech Republic for quite some time now – and the only valid reason I can see for that is our undisputed love for hockey combined with the lack of accessibility to the beloved game on ice – floorball is in fact a cool, simpler alternative, and it is much cheaper – no skates, no ice rink, just a nice little stick (which doesn’t cost more than 1500 CZK in Decathlon) and a pair of indoor shoes.



Don’t get me wrong – I love playing floorball at school and can’t even imagine a different kind of OG sports league, but in a way, it still baffles me that our school with great outdoor facilities still developed an intense relationship towards precisely this sport.

For that reason, I presented other FLOG players, regular visitors, and even experts with the question: What makes floorball all that interesting?

“Floorball became popular thanks to Mr. Kašpar some time ago, and it still keeps going for the reason that even teachers and housemasters take part, and at the same time, each team contains students from different classes, and I think that makes it really interesting, seeing a Prima student take on experienced Oktava students, for example...” says Ms. Šedivá, a long-time supporter and regular visitor to FLOG evenings.





“It’s about the tradition, honestly,” says Dan Strnad, “which started a long time ago, and sort of passed on from generation to generation... Also, we have this large, beautiful sports hall, which is ideal for floorball, I think. So it’s better to play floorball inside, in front of the spectators, which can be done any time of the year!”

Mr. Klauz, FLOG’s organizer, replies: “Apart from the tradition, obviously, floorball is attractive to play and watch because it is fast. There are more goals, than in football, for example, and the best thing is that people of different skill levels can join in – if it were, let’s say, basketball, there would be a much wider gap between someone who already plays or played it and a rookie.”

“Why such a weird sport? Because we are weird,” notes Filip Gross, “And it’s all about the community - we play week in, week out, which is just great.”

As you can see, the role of floorball and its impact on the OG community is simply undeniable. Whether you’re a student or a teacher, top-level or occasional athlete, FLOG unites everyone – there is just something special about this game, and I think that everyone involved can agree that if you never tried, it’s time to do it!

For me, this season will be the last – but these eight years could never be the same without the passion, drama and fun memories of playing floorball with my classmates and teachers.

Lastly, a big thank you belongs to Mr. Kašpar, whose tremendous effort and enthusiasm promoted floorball at OG since the very start, Mr. Klauz, who, despite the needed changes in the league’s format and other issues with organisation, kept the tradition going, and most importantly all the players. Whatever comes next, FLOG remains an irreplaceable part of Open Gate and I will never forget all those Thursday evenings under the bright lights of the sports hall.

Pavel Galyaš



THE JOY OF CHILDBIRTH (THE CHILD IS NEW MUSIC)

Listening to and following musicians has never been easier than right now. With the invention of streaming platforms like Spotify, Apple Music and Tidal, and social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, artists can not only be heard much more accessibly across the globe, but they can also be much closer with their fans and be able to communicate with them much better. Gone are the days when you would have no idea who your favourite artists are and when you'll be able to hear them again, now you have access to all of their news, right in your hands. Even if the process of artists releasing their work has become relatively routine to music listeners, many people still have no idea how they can make sure to not miss out on their favourite artists releasing a new piece of work. For that, I am here to help! I will walk you through the entire process of a musician releasing an album, from announcement to release, and maybe help you prepare better for when an artist you really like releases a new project. Keep in mind that this is just a general guide that does not apply to every single album rollout in the world, as some artists may disregard some of these traditions and release their albums in a non-traditional way. However, this is a good general guide for most releases of musical projects.

As has been mentioned, social media allows artists to let their fans know about any upcoming work and updates on it. While the amount of time individual artists spend on it varies wildly, it is still useful to follow them in case they do drop hints of new material coming. The breadcrumbs can be posted in many ways. You can have pictures or videos of the artists working in the studio, vague art that will only make sense when the project's general art direction gets shown more, or even a noticeable uptick in post frequency. Usually, the main giveaway that an artist is preparing to release something is the announcement of a tour. This is because of the general musician cycle of recording music and then touring with it, which guarantees that artists on tour are testing out unreleased material on the road or playing newly released material. So, if an artist has not announced an album but has released new tour dates, keep your eyes and ears peeled for an explicit message.

But now comes the time for actual music! After all these breadcrumbs, artists will finally christen it all with a single song from their upcoming project. Singles can have a predetermined date, but they usually come out of the blue. Their most common release day is Tuesday, but there is no agreed upon day for singles, so they can come out any day. Additionally, not all singles are part of a bigger project, so check if the artist has formally announced that an album is coming, with this song as part of it, or if this is just a one-off song they released. The release day of the album will usually be about 3-5 months after the release of the first single, which is a pretty long time, but it gives you time to do another fun part of an album rollout: Relistening to older work! Comparing new singles to work you already love, seeing if the artists are heading in a direction you enjoy, or talking with other fans of said artist for new perspectives on said work can be greatly eye-opening and can mull you over while you wait for other singles to release. And eventually, that destined day when an artist's labour is revealed to the world, comes.

A majority of albums are released on a Friday. In fact, it is so common that music nerds have coined the term "New Music Friday" to describe this day, when people gather up and listen to albums that have just been released. And since you, the reader, are most likely a student, who is likely relieved by the thought of escaping to something more easily enjoyable than school, you will be pleased to know that your favourites artists will release on the days when you most feel the need to rest. So, kick back, enjoy the new music, recommend it to other people and talk with other people about it! The joy of seeing an artist's full vision finally unfold right before your very ears is wonderful. I have had some of my best experiences with music by being there from the start with the first single and following the process until release. It is a truly satisfying and gratifying process that I hope I have enlightened you to start being a part of.



Ivan Pavlovec

OG CHRONICLE INTERVIEW: MS. NAIDOO

If you meet her in the hallway, she will definitely smile. Joyful Ms. Naidoo teaches English and runs the Drama club. Being a teacher was her dream, but when she was young, she thought about studying journalism. Why did she move to the Czech Republic and most importantly why is she a keen fan of Liverpool? During this year's first OG Chronicle teacher interview, I inquired further as we took our seats in the school hall.

Was being a teacher your dream job when you were young?

Yes, but not from the start. I went through a lot of different careers, I considered journalism, psychology and then law, but it was hard to make the decision. I spoke to my cousin, who is a criminal lawyer, and she gave me some good advice: You love traveling. If you do love it, you won't be able to practice law in every country, because the law differs. My love of traveling was greater than my love of law. That is when I decided: Okay, go back to the other love, which is teaching. Today I can travel and be a teacher.

You are not only an English teacher, you also lead the Drama club. What do you want the students to learn?

Part of the reason why I wanted the Drama club is because I am also a drama teacher, this was a way to bring it back into my life. It helps students, especially those who suffer from social anxiety and need a little bit more confidence, to come out of their shells, they can be as weird as possible without being looked down upon, and then they feel nothing to stand in front of the class and do a ten-minute presentation.

Being the Prima class teacher, how has the experience been so far?

Amazing. My students seem to be real angels and I have not heard any complains, I have not heard anything from other teachers about any problematic situations or bad behavior and so on, they seem to be quite lovely.



Is Open Gate special, and if yes, how?

Firstly because people here are open, friendly and the environment is different. I've taught in other Czech schools, not to criticize or say anything bad about them, but I can see the difference. It is not just the structure, and management, also the students are different and I think it is because of the friendly and supportive environment that we have here.

What brought you to the Czech Republic?

I ended up here because of football, because I love it and I am a supporter of the Czech national team. When I was looking at which European countries are good at football, Czechia became one of them, and what was interesting, it was the country I knew nothing about, therefore this was a chance to undertake an adventure and learn something about a new country.

What are the Czechs like?

I would say interesting and contradictory. The majority of my friends are Czech, so I spent a lot of time with Czech people, I can see the contrast. Some people can be very friendly, and welcoming, inviting you to their home, but then you get some Czechs who shout at you: Why can't you speak in Czech? Go back to your country, foreigners are crazy...

I am going to India in November with Mr. Marks and my classmates. What should we expect? Is it a completely different world?

Yes, it is. Even for me as an Indian, when I spent a month there with my family, I felt the culture shock as well. But it was amazing, the colours and the sounds, you just have to completely immerse yourself in it, and be very open-minded.

We've talked about football already. You are a big supporter of Liverpool. Why?

As a child I grew up in a very sporty family, we loved football, because my dad used to play it. We always watched the Premier League (English football league) and whenever I saw Liverpool, there was something special about them, the stadium – Anfield, the atmosphere. There is not a supporter like a Liverpool supporter.

Ondřej Galyáš

CZECH DIPLOMACY ON THE GLOBAL STAGE IN NEW YORK

Between the 19th and 26th of September, the United Nations General Assembly held its 78th session. One of the six main bodies of the world's biggest Inter-Governmental Organization has met annually ever since its establishment in 1945. The main goals of the General Assembly are to elect new non-permanent members of the security council, approve the budget and elect new leadership. Other than the formal duties of the UN body, it also provides a platform for representatives of all of the 193 member states to gather and discuss other diplomatic issues. The General Assembly aims to be the body, where all of the member states no matter the size or power are heard, however, what exactly do smaller states like the Czech Republic aim to achieve during the diplomatic week in New York?

The 2023 General Assembly was the first one in the newly elected President, Petr Pavel, who was joined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Lipavský and the Czech Delegate to the United Nations, Jakub Kulháněk. This was the first time, since 2017, when the Czech Head of State was present at the GA.

The Czech delegation began their mission by participating in the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) Summit on Monday. Afterwards, the General Assembly started, where the President held a speech. He focused his speech on Russia, which was represented by Sergei Lavrov, and their aggressions towards Ukraine. He referred to the ongoing conflict as a breach of international law. Later Pavel continued his agenda, when holding a speech towards the highest body of the IGO, the Security Council. He described the atmosphere of the negotiations as extremely tense, due to the presence of both Lavrov and Zelenskyj.

The president and his delegation also plan to secure a seat in the Security Council, by running to become a non-permanent member between the years 2032-2033, as one of the ten members. The Security Council is the highest body of the UN and is the only one that is allowed to make legally binding decisions, becoming a member of the council would allow Czech Diplomacy to be heard on the global stage regularly for the 2-year term.

During the negotiations other major political issues were raised. These included climate change, prevention of global pandemics and financing development projects. These were largely brought up by Charles Michel, the representative of the EU, who has held an observer seat in the GA since 1974. The EU also engaged in bilateral negotiations with potential new members of their IGO, including Georgia and Ukraine. The potential expansion of the EU would go hand in hand with the priorities of the Czech Republic, as it would unite European countries against a common threat, in the form of the Russian Federation.

In summary, the United Nations General Assembly welcomed the presence of the Czech Head of State for the first time in many years. This occasion was leveraged to the fullest extent, with fruitful bilateral negotiations and active participation in separate council sessions, all geared towards advancing Czech and common European diplomatic efforts aimed at securing the safety and stability of the region. This assembly exemplified the commitment to global cooperation and the pursuit of peace and security.

Filip Gross



HALLOWEEN DANGER

While Halloween is known for its spooky and creative treats, there haven't been many outrageous incidents of harmful objects being hidden in candy bars. However, there have been occasional urban legends and reports of unusual or concerning items being found in Halloween candy.

One particularly notorious case occurred in the early 1970s when rumors spread about razor blades being hidden in Halloween candy. This legend terrified parents and led to concerns about trick-or-treating safety. The incident that sparked these fears involved a young boy in Detroit who allegedly found a razor blade in an apple he received while trick-or-treating. While the razor blade incident turned out to be a hoax, it left a lasting impact on Halloween traditions and safety precautions.

To prevent such scares, many communities began implementing safety measures, like X-ray scanning of Halloween candy at local hospitals, which is still practiced in some places today. These urban legends and the occasional isolated incident have made people more careful about checking their children's Halloween candy, but the majority of Halloween treats are harmless and enjoyed without any concerns.

Danny Smíšek



THE MAN WHO CURSED THE WORLD

Let me tell you a story,
the one you have probably heard before,
it is about monsters with fame and glory,
who wanted more and more.

It started with one hopeless man,
Who was less than nothing.
But this changed when he had a plan,
And started pretending.

He acted as if he weren't afraid,
And from fear people thought he was brave.
His soul was the thing he had to trade,
To become fears' slave.

But as time went by,
He became the very thing he used to fear.
A monster he had inside made him die,
And no one seemed to shed a tear.

The horrible monster spread hatred
around the world,
Some people seemed to like it, but the
smart ones stayed quiet.
So this planet became a dead world,
Even if you deny it.

Valentina Berková

COLD WOMAN

I have never seen you cry
And your laugh was always too
Embellished
You are too beautiful to
Love anyone
So people only come to see you
From afar

You are such a cold woman
Covered in sadness
and when they come closer
And kiss you in the dark
You turn into a little puppy
And you follow them without
Knowing where

If only my love could save you
I would hide you in my veins
So no one can touch you
anymore

Andrea Kočová



GAD

Looking, at people through reflections of glass
Hearing their laughter, in an echo it lasts
Hearing their voices, but I'm deafened by silence
In my mind I'm somewhere beyond

In my room, with impending doom
Eerie, it shrieks through my glasses
Scratching at the corner of my eye
Itching to be seen sitting awry like

Slithers it slithers, whispering doubts
Quickens it quickens, haunting it daunts
Pounding hearts which each sound like darts
Hiding it's hiding, where are its whereabouts?

Breathe in and breathe out, I beg for bailout
Petrified yet restless to run, it has begun
My mind it won't stop, lest I pray to impiety
The entirety of psychiatry won't help me.

Sergej Žukov

IT COMES IN THE AUTUMN

My name is Lila Chapman, I am 16 years old, and if you are reading this entry, I am either already dead or still wandering in the world, alive, perhaps not. It all began on that fateful weekend in October when I was 6 years old. It was one of those weekends when we were still a normal family living in a small apartment. My father was not exceptionally drugged up, and my mother and brother were still alive.

So, that Saturday, they took me to the Darkwood amusement park. After just an hour, my parents had already wandered off to the beer stand and my brother with them, so I decided to explore the rides on my own. I was only 6 years old at the time, but I've blamed myself for that decision throughout my short life ever since.

I was always fascinated by the darkness, but that night, I became desperate. Sometimes, my parents would forget me at family parties, and I feared it would happen again.

Hours passed, and I didn't know what to do. The park was already empty and closed, with no way to get home. Overwhelmed by sadness and exhaustion, I fell asleep leaning against a colourful chair near the entrance to the haunted house. I was lucky that day was really hot; otherwise, I might have frozen in my little blue dress. That night, it all began.

Suddenly an icy breeze blew on me. I woke up. I didn't see my parents and my brother anywhere. I didn't have a better idea than to go alone into the closed haunted house where no one was supposed to be.

I walked and walked and out of nowhere I was in a dark room with nothing else than just my own fear. I stood there frozen. And all of a sudden, I felt like someone was watching me. I could feel its breath on my shoulder. I started shivering. I was so scared that I couldn't even move. I don't know how I got out, because the only thing I can remember is passing out and waking up next to my teddy bears on my bed in our apartment.

Since that day I could feel it. Its breath. I can feel it move more often than when I was just a little innocent girl. It is everywhere. In my room, in school, at the dining table. Everywhere. Of course, I didn't tell my parents or anybody, they wouldn't believe me, or they would think I'm crazy and send me to freak house. Honestly, I don't even want to tell anyone. What would I tell them: "Hi, my name is Lila Chapman, and I can feel some strange breath on my shoulder". Really, it doesn't work that way.

My whole life has been a nightmare ever since that day. I am also scared of sleeping and being in the dark all alone again. I can't focus on studying; it won't leave me alone. That is also why it is my only company.

I am not a very sensitive person at all. How could I be, I am the centre of all this terror, and I must survive somehow. I chose to not make any emotional connection.

I am like a magnet for death. Death is all around me, so much had happened and still I am just sixteen years old. My short life was already long enough to scare the hell out of me. And out of curiosity I want to tell you my top three deaths that I enjoy.

Three years ago, when I was only thirteen, I started dating a really cool guy from my class. His name was Michael, he was so hot and had a motorcycle, so obviously every girl in the school wanted to date him. We often went to the graveyard and sometimes to parks at night, but every time I looked at him, I had a sense of horror and fear of something very dark. And one day my worry came true.

We had a small fight, and then he did not message me again. Days passed, and I didn't receive any messages. The strangest thing was that during those nights the breath was gone.

One evening the police called me. Micheal was found in the bushes near my house. He was reportedly strangled and had a bouquet of red roses in his hand. In his jeans pocket, there was a note with an apology he had written to me. It was a nightmare, and on top of that, the night after the discovery, I heard whispers and breathing again next to my head. I was absolutely desperate.

Another one is about my mother. She died in a car accident when I was about 10 years old. This happened when we were going home from some trip or something. I don't remember it anymore.

As we were driving in the endless silence, I felt the breath on my neck again. I was only 10 years old, so this didn't happen very often, so obviously I yelled. And as I interrupted the quiet, my mother got scared and sharply turned the car wheel to the nearest tree that was around.

The whole car was upside down. We were stuck there for a bit of time and when the help finally came my mother was already dead. When they pulled me out, I swear to God, I saw a figure in the distance and felt the breath again. I blame myself for this death ever since.

The third one is not about a person at all. This one is about my first pet, my first dog called Madame. I don't remember the breed anymore, but I remember that the dog was small and had soft white fur.

I loved him. From the bottom of my heart, but unfortunately one day he decided to disappear. I couldn't find him for a whole week I was crying so much because I thought that he is dead. And remember the day that I heard him bark. It felt like he was barking in my ear. I got this weird feeling as always. Then I heard it again but now at my front door I ran there as fast as I could but when I opened the door there was just his collar lying on the ground. And again, and again all around the house.

Suddenly the barking stopped. I heard something or someone moving in our garden. I got curious and went there. I couldn't believe my eyes. I immediately started crying hysterically.

There was the head of my dog covered in blood impaled on a stick that was hanging from my bedroom. He was surely dead this time. I immediately felt the horrible and disgusting breath next to my head.

After all this horror I decided that I can't keep running anymore I feel exhausted. I can't do this anymore.

As Lila jumped from a bridge the breath went with her.

Eliška Bastařová & Klauďie Kratochvílová





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