

EDITORIAL

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE Megatrends & Media 2014

In the summer of 2005, professor Milos Mistrik, one of my colleagues and the member of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, charged me with a difficult task. The assignment sounded clear: make all arrangements for the international scientific conference in the field of mass media communication, with the spring of 2006 as a deadline. For me, at that time just a junior lecturer, a beginner in the academic field, it was a big challenge and also a large responsibility.

For the start, I (together with my colleagues) began looking for a presentable location that would not be far from our university's headquarters in Trnava. We had a number of options. Finally, we made up our minds and chose Smolenice Castle.

There were three reasons for our decision. The first was its attractive historical image. The Smolenice Castle surroundings, due to the location and atmosphere, have been attracting people since ancient prehistoric times. The Molpir hill near the village was already populated in the Neolithic Age. However, its most glorious times were in the Old Iron Age. A large fortified settlement was in existence there at that time (approximately from the 7th until the beginning of the 6th century B.C). It is considered to be one of the most important excavations from that time in Central Europe. The findings prove that it must have been a very important power and political centre with a highly developed economical as well as religious and cultic life. This place also had a very advantageous strategic position. It was located on the intersection of important trade roads by which south-eastern and northern parts of Europe were connected. It was exactly in this area that, in the Old Iron Age, the beginnings of the first cultural unification of Central Europe took place. Our intention was to follow up with this historical tradition. We wanted our conferences to become a place where Central European scientific discussions and academic potential are concentrated.

There were two additional reasons, which were purely practical. Smolenice Castle is under the administration of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Thus Professor Mistrik, as its member, was able to negotiate better rental terms. Miss Koltaiova's (our colleague's) father had been working in the Castle as a gardener and a driver for a long time. He knew the place, people and the management system there very well. Therefore he became our communication contact-man. Following in the spirit of Thierry Gaudin's motto

that “the thoughts and ideas are born from the hope they will come true”, we (a small group of my colleagues and I) got down to work. We did not have any database of contacts at our disposal, so it took us nearly half a year just to create it and send out all our invitations.

The remaining months were spent in the process of responding to e-mails and organizing the agenda as well as the cultural program. The day before conference, shaking in our shoes, we arrived at an empty Count Palffy’s castle hoping that we would not embarrass this place as well as our university. Indeed, we didn’t. From 2006 on, every spring there has been a conference held in the Smolenice Castle, dedicated to answering current questions, solving relevant trends and problems of mass media communication. Scientists, academics, experts and experienced professionals dealt with problems like: ‘Mass media communication in the interdisciplinary research’ (2006), ‘Media competences in the information society’ (2007), ‘Media, society and media fiction’ (2008), ‘Mass media communication and reality’ (2009) and ‘On the problems of media communication’ (2010). In 2011, the name of the conference was changed to Megatrends and Media (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014). Many changes have occurred since. The conference is not organized by a few enthusiastic lecturers any more, but by a team of teachers and graduate students under supervision of our colleague Martin Solik. They work with a database of several thousand contacts. Not only the conference organizers, but also its participants have become more professional. All contributions have first to pass the strict control of a relevant section referee and only then they are assessed by anonymous reviewers.

The tradition of Smolenice Castle conferences started with a dream that many people thought was too daring. We were dreaming of the attendees who would come with contributions on such a high level that they would be accepted for publishing in some important and highly regarded journals. This dream is just now coming true.

Dear readers, we are very happy that, in the current issue - the one you are holding in your hands - we were able to present to you several selected contributions that we heard at the Megatrends and Media 2014 conference. Contributions were presented in the following five sections: Democratization function of media – the ideal and the reality, Cognitive processes in media communication, Perspectives of media audience protection, Market globalization and collapse of the time-space in media, and Humanization aspects of electronic media.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Iulian Rusu, Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Science and Theology* for his professional, fair approach and his strict, but just directing. Many thanks to Associate Professor Magal and Professor Mistrik, who started our conference’s tradition and took it under their protection, making sure that it sustains a high quality and high professional standards. My thanks go to all the colleagues and students helping to prepare the conference, who devoted all their time, energies and enthusiasm to it. Above all, I would like to thank all who are confident of the Megatrend and Media conference’s significance and its future successes.

Several years ago we used a questionnaire to find out why the participants attend our conference. Actually, more than 50% of Central European participants attend the conference every year. In addition to their wish to learn something new, become familiar with current research results and to be able to compare their own findings with their colleagues, we have learned something interesting. Close to three quarters of them attend the Smolenice conference to see their friends again, to spend time conversing informally, to establish cooperation, and also to have a good time – dance to Slovak folk tunes and enjoy the taste of different gastronomy specialties. Our conference is well established in the Central European academic milieu not only due to its special program, but also because it is held in the spirit of friendship, constructive working atmosphere, kindness and helpfulness.

What was at the beginning just a strict assignment – to organize an international scientific conference - in the course of time gained its content and its spirit. In the Iron Age, Smolenice was at the intersection of the trade roads; at the present time, it has become the crossroads and the place where scientists from all over the world gather together.

Dear readers, I wish you an interesting and enriching reading. It may also inspire you to come to Slovakia in a near future. We are firmly resolved to continue our conference tradition, constantly improving it. This journal is dedicated to Science and Theology. You have to keep in mind that everything that is essential for Science can be found in the specialized sections of the conference. All that is essential for life, people and love, can be found in the castle's Chapel of Saint Cross. It was built by Count Tomas Erdody in 1596. In the 18th century, the castle became desolate. The altar and paintings of Mary Magdalene, Virgin Mary, Saint Thomas, and all paintings depicting Christ's torture were removed to a safer place. The chapel stood empty and unused for a long time, until we came up with an excellent idea about how to utilize it properly. If you want to find out, come to the chapel's door on the first day of the conference at six o'clock in the evening. Most probably you will meet all the people, mentioned in this editorial, there.

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