

THE STORIES BEHIND THE NEWS

Václav Moravec is one of the most striking¹ personalities in Czech television journalism. You may know him as the presenter of the well-known discussion programme, *Václav Moravec's Questions (Otázky Václava Moravce)*, which is broadcast on Sundays at noon. We asked him about his career, experiences and stories from behind the scenes.

Who was the most interesting guest that you have ever met?

You might expect me to name some president or top prime minister, but for me it is always very interesting to meet the so-called "ordinary people" that give me energy for my work.

Has any guest ever surprised you?

There have been many people who have. I remember meeting Václav Havel, who used to do a regular programme on TV. He was very short and a very nice person who managed to win favour* with everybody in the studio. He was able to think about things, and also able to keep some distance² from himself and his own view.

Who would you like to interview?

I would enjoy interviewing someone like Aaron Sorkin, who I find to be a great scriptwriter.

Is it difficult for you not to express your opinion if you know a guest is not answering clearly or not telling the truth?

I think sometimes this can be seen in non-verbal communication. Sometimes I start to roll my eyes or point at my watch.

What do you do to keep a neutral attitude?

The longer you do this job, the more you need a sense of humour.

Some of your recent programmes look like they are broadcast from Žižkov Tower (Žižkovská věž). Is that real?

Yes, it is. We moved the programme to Žižkov Tower in September last year because our studio was being renovated. If you watch any other programmes, such as *Události* or *Objektiv*, they are broadcast from a virtual



The longer you do this job, the more you need a sense of humour.

studio, which means that the background is animated by computer. The only real objects are the table and the large screen. Everything else is green from the ceiling to the floor. Imagine spending two hours in a green room with your guests.

You broadcast *Václav Moravec's Questions from Afghanistan* several times. Can you tell us more about that experience?

It makes you think. I have visited Afghanistan five times after the US army had it. The Czech army was in a province called Lógar, south of Kabul. I had a small team with me and we found ourselves in a completely different

world, just like the Middle Ages³. People die at the age of 35, on average, and 70% of the population is illiterate⁴. Being there makes you think about whether it's possible to adapt our culture and behaviour into a different cultural background. You think about the problems society has, and then you think about what we complain about.

Were you scared?

No. I might be a strange adventurer or maybe a fatalist. I say that if the end is going to come, it doesn't matter if you are shot dead in Afghanistan or die in a car accident on the D1 highway.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to be successful?

Interest in a subject is the most important thing. Read books on the subject and get a broad cultural overview. A desire⁵ for information and knowledge is one of the most beautiful human desires.

Klára Sedláčková (CR)

VOCABULARY

- 1 **striking** ['straɪkɪŋ] – nápadný
- 2 **to keep some distance** ['dɪst(ə)ns] – udržovat si odstup
- 3 **Middle Ages** – středověk
- 4 **illiterate** [ɪ'lɪt(ə)rət] – negramotný
- 5 **desire** [dɪ'zaɪə] – touha

GLOSSARY

to win favour – to make people like sth

LANGUAGE POINT

to broadcast (irregular verb): broadcast – broadcast – broadcast (*vysílat*)