

Czech bestseller: Not Kafka, but a mysterious blogger

When taking their seats at an Ostrava-based theatre to see a brand new show Friday night, spectators will surely look around. They will undoubtedly try to find out who is the anonymous blogger whose ever-popular tales actors are just about to stage.

But this loser, who goes by the name of Ostravak Ostravski, has become the Czech Republic's latest hit.

According to Jiri Nemecek, the publisher who turned Ostravak's musings into six popular paperbacks, the blogger's contract is safely locked up in a bank safe, and the person 'who would like to know who it is would have to send a robber.'

Ostravak, who only communicates with reporters via e-mail, mostly enjoys the guessing game, except when he makes his way - anonymously - through the crowds to observe public book readings of his blunders.

'I felt there was a red arrow above me with a sign THIS IS HIM,' Ostravak wrote.

In late January, an investigative blog entitled who is Ostravak? Appeared in the blogosphere with a plan to examine Ostravak's entries and collect information from his fans and city connoisseurs.

'I expected that people who work in the media would understand that they have a job to do,' its author, who declined to reveal his identity, told DPA in an e-mail. 'When nothing happened I was left with doing it myself.'

And while Ostravak - to heartbroken cries from his fans - abandoned his two-year-old creation in December, his musings have become more than an online phenomenon.

The paperbacks filled with his painfully funny tales have proved Czech bestsellers, trailed by the likes of Dan Brown's 'Da Vinci Code'. The sixth and final volume hit bookstores in mid February, its official book launch planned for March 1.

And besides the theatre show based on his stories, famous Czech actors read from his blog on Tuesday-night television. Spilling over from pop-culture to academia, 29-year-old Prague-based media student and blog follower Monika Millianova persuaded her professors to let her write a thesis on 'how come a blog written in a dialect has a national reach.'

Not only Ostravak's blog, but also popular television commercials and radio programmes in dialects spoken in the Moravian cities of Ostrava and Brno have revealed that once-mocked regional metropolises and their language have become trendy.

'It starts turning into fashion,' Millianova said.

For his part, Ostravak has certainly pumped up the patriotic pride circulating in his fellow Ostravaks' blood.

'Everybody used to laugh at how people speak here,' said Josef Noga of Repronis, the publishing

house that prints Ostravak. 'Only now (the dialect) has become something special.'

According to Marcela Stehlikova, the editor who is said to have discovered Ostravak for the publisher, the locals are no longer ashamed of their origin.

'People used to be angry that Ostrava has been perceived poorly, even though the mines have been shut for ten years now,' she said. 'Ostravak cast this city in the light it deserves.'

Her boss Nemec summed it up. 'A guy from Ostrava is simply no longer a moron,' he said with a smile.

(© IANS / India eNews)