

INTERVIEW

**MATT APUZZO:
AMERICAN PEOPLE TRUST
BIG COMPANIES, IN EUROPE
PEOPLE TRUST THEIR
GOVERNMENTS**

Matt Apuzzo, three-time Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times reporter, visited Comenius University, where he lectured on Real Threats to Real News. In an interview for Naša Univerzita he talked about his college experiences, the challenges of modern journalism and the European Union.

Mr. Apuzzo, you have won the Pulitzer prize not once, not twice, but three times. However, some people may not know that you started as a student of biology.

I did. I was a Pre-Med student, and I thought I would be a doctor one day.

By the end of your studies, you were the editor of your college newspaper. Would you say that you have found your true calling in journalism, even though you majored in something else?

I for sure did. I've also realized that I was not nearly as good scientist as I hoped I'd be. I took organic chemistry and did very, very poorly. Just barely passed. That was the final sign that maybe medical school was not for me. I had been working for the school paper and it always seemed like a fun to me. It never felt like work. I had an internship at the local paper in my university town and that never felt like work neither. It just sort of occurred to me – maybe if I could find a way to do that, then all the better.

Basically, your hobby has become your job. And then it brought you a few Pulitzer Prizes.

It's funny. When you're starting off, you think of the Pulitzer Prize as the award for the most valuable player. But once you've been in this job for a while, you realize it's more like winning the Champions League. No matter whose name is on it, it's all about teamwork. The times I've won, it was always thanks to group of people. It's hard work. A reporter needs colleagues who work as hard as he does. I was very lucky.

What advice would you give to students who are thinking about switching their major or taking different career path? Because, obviously, such a change has worked out for you.

That's a great question. In the United States people change their major all the time. I don't know how it works in Slovakia, but I know that in European

schools you tend to apply for a program and that's the program you're in. You can't just say: "Oh, I don't want to do Economics anymore, I want to try Literature". But in the United States it's very common, because who knows as 17-year-old, where they want to be for the rest of their life? To this extend our students have more ability to learn something new that pushes them out of their comfort zone. It only increases the chance they're going to find something they are truly passionate about. I would say, if you discover that you're not passionate about the thing you're doing right now – you want to be passionate about something else, or you already are passionate about something else – follow that. University is short, life is long and if you're not excited about the road you're on, it's probably not worth it.

What would you recommend to future journalists? Is there one specific skill or strategy on how to write Pulitzer winning material?

Read a lot. Read journalists that you admire and see how they structure their stories. See how they built their story from the ground up and really study that. Try to put those lessons into your own writing. If you have people in this world whose work you admire, reach out to them. Don't be afraid to ask for advice, don't be afraid to ask for help. Be curious and read a lot.

So, is it necessary to find a tutor or mentor who will guide, teach, and help us?

That's exactly right. Be somebody who loves to learn and find somebody who loves to teach..

You also taught at Georgetown University in Washington.

Yes, and I'm still affiliated with Georgetown University. I haven't taught in a few years because I've been abroad, but I love it! It was amazing to be in class again when we had a workshop at the Department of Journalism here in Bratislava.

You are currently working in Brussels as an investigative correspondent for The New York Times. How does it feel compared to your previous experiences in Washington, which you covered for more than ten years?

It's different. I was really feeling like I needed to grow. It doesn't matter where you are in your career, you need to constantly be growing and learning new things. So, I'm learning a lot, which is really important to me. The obstacles are different in my current job – obstacles of language, obstacles of understanding the politics of all the European countries. Wherever I might go, there are new challenges, but they are all very exciting challenges.

What have you learned about Europe? What makes Europe different from the rest of the world or at least from the United States?

I will say one thing that I think is interesting. In Europe, I find that in general, people are much more suspicious of companies, big industries and much more trusting of their governments.

Much more trusting?

Right. In the United States it's the opposite. Nobody trusts their



Prorektor pre vonkajšie vzťahy Radomír Masaryk odovzdal Mattovi Apuzzovi v mene rektora Pamätnú medailu UK.