

Inews Letter

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CONTENTS:

ČTK LAUNCHES VIDEO SERVICE

SLOVAK LANGUAGE SERVICE

AGENCY NEWS IN YOUR POCKET

NEW SPORTS SERVICE SOFTWARE – V-SPORTEN

NEW MULTIMEDIA SERVICE – 3D ANIMATIONS

ČTK SELLS ITS SHARE IN NEWTON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

IMPROVING AUDIO NEWS SERVICE

SEMINARS ON WORKING WITH ČTK SERVICE

80-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ČTK PHOTOGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT

ČTK launches video service



The new service of the Czech News Agency, the role of which is to prepare news videos for ČTK clients, celebrates the first three months of „full“ operation. Besides text, infographics and audio, ČTK started the production of another news format and thus completed the complex multimedialization of its news service.

ČTK has its own video staff, travelling from its headquarters in Opletalova Street to Prague and its surroundings to capture not only political but also entertainment stories. The monthly number of video

Team of ČTK video reporters.

news features is about 120 with topics spread evenly between politics and lighter news material. Besides the news features, ČTK also provides information on upcoming movies. A collection of international video news is also being prepared. This collection will benefit from the photographic services of a major international news agency.

ČTK video service is mainly designed for Internet clients, web news servers, which, just this year, launched a presentation of video production. Our clients are mainly

„common“ TV channels and inclusion of the agency video production in the offer of mobile phone operators is expected. The video news production unit will certainly adapt the amount and video content to client demands.

The daily offer of video features will be available in the ČTK database, which clients can access using a standard Internet browser.

Before ordering the video news feature, ČTK clients can preview it and if interested, they can „download“ it to their PC. As part of the service, Internet clients can benefit from automatic delivery of video news to their servers.



*Video reporters in action.
David Vozdecký and Kateřina Procházková (right).*



Slovak language service

On March 4, ČTK launched its news service from Slovakia in the Slovak language in order to respond to the demands of its Slovak media clients.

The Slovak news service was founded by reporters mainly experienced in reporting international and economic events. Currently there are nine reporters in Bratislava, one in Žilina, one in Banská Bystrica and one in Košice. The news service in Slovak is published in Bratislava by four editors. Five photographers work for ČTK in Slovakia.

The Slovak news service mainly focuses on general, economic and cultural news and on most important events in our neighbouring country. It also covers occasional sports events. The average daily news output is between 20 and 30 news pieces per day and sometimes even double that amount. ČTK in Slovakia also provides its clients with regular overviews of upcoming events.

Within the first six months of its launch, the Slovak editorial desk delivered to its clients over 4000 news items, more than 2000

photographs, 150 audio recordings, 80 info-graphic diagrams and 70 profiles.

Despite the fact that there are already two local news agencies established in Slovakia, the news service in Slovak has - in a short time - become very popular. The news regularly appears in Slovak newspapers and is taken up every day by TV and radio stations. Clients mainly appreciate the professional data processing, search for topics, the speed and the efforts to meet requirements in lead time event planning. This was evident during the Parliamentary elections in Slovakia last June. Back then, the ČTK news service in Slovak attracted attention by its instantaneous reporting. ČTK's approach and information processing became a guideline even for renowned international news agencies.

The successful start on the Slovak information market is also supported by the fact that immediately after its launch, the new service was purchased by practically all important Slovak media, e.g. the absolute majority of the most important ČTK clients in Slovakia. Last summer, the ČTK editorial desk in Bratislava moved into larger premises so that it may then gradually expand and meet further requests of Slovak customers. Some Czech clients have already shown interest in receiving the news service in Slovak.

Agency news in your pocket

This year is marked by several local „mobile communication“ anniversaries. Fifteen years ago, the first cellular radio telephone network, as it was known and used in agency news, was launched by the Eurotel company.

The phone call between František Mikloško, chairman of the Slovak National Council and Dagmar Burešová, chairwoman of the Czech National Council, on 12 September 1991, represented the festive launch of the analogue NMT network, which no longer runs today. Five years later, the digital GSM network - its younger sister - was launched. This network also opened the gateway to agency news service provision.

The first information from ČTK to end clients was transferred on April 1, 1997, as part of the InfoText service provided by EuroTel. A year later, Paegas Info was launched on the rival RadioMobil network. The client had to order every news item by sending the relevant key word to the customer centre.

The evolution of information services for mobile devices has been closely linked to technology development and also to growing competition on the mobile network operator market. As a result, the range of offered services became broader and the prices for end clients went down. The agency also responded to the changing requirements of its clients. At first, SMS messages were sent

as headlines of the standard agency news, directly from the editorial system. With more diversity of contents, important editorial adjustments and non-automatic content distribution became necessary. Since 1999 this task has been transferred to Neris (agency for Internet and new media), a ČTK subsidiary. Nowadays, all three local mobile operators offer agency news service. Currently, 30 topic SMS channels are available. These channels are created by Neris from the ČTK news service. This service allows customers to get instant and operational access to basic general information, based on their preferences. The news topics include „top“ politics, international and local news, financial and macroeconomic information and the results of sports events.

However, mobile news services are not made up merely of SMS messages. Since December 1999, it has been possible to read the ČTK news using WAP, which has gradually changed from a purely text environment into full multimedia mobile Internet.

The first multimedia messages (MMS) were sent to clients in 2002. Thanks to falling prices and more open possibilities in comparison to SMS, MMS messages are becoming increasingly popular with users. At present, Neris has created 19 topic channels,



Modern mobile phones are no longer used just for making calls such as the first Nokia MD59 (left).



including special topics such as online news reports from international football matches.

A modern mobile phone no longer weighs 4.5 kilograms, as did the first Nokia MD59, and is no longer used just for making calls. Today, your mobile allows you to read e-mails, connect to high-speed Internet, display high quality photographs, play videos, monitor news from your favourite webs using a so-called RSS channel reader, etc. The potential of agency news is far from being used up.

In recent years, Neris has acquired a great portion of the Czech mobile information service market. The company's SMS and MMS news services, provided to users by all Czech mobile phone operators, are the biggest in the Czech Republic and among the largest in Europe. Details about our available services, including detailed ordering instructions, can be found on the website of your mobile communication provider.

New sports service software – V-Sporten

Since the beginning of the new season, the Czech News Agency has become one of the news agencies using the special V-Sporten program for processing results of sports events. This software, developed by a Danish company, allows us to process sports

tables both faster and in a more comprehensive way, including very complex tables such as NHL tables.

As the ČTK sports editorial desk regularly publishes tables of about 50 long-term contests, the new program is expected to speed up the table generation process considerably, which will certainly be highly valued by our clients, who constantly face time and publishing deadline problems.

New multimedia service – 3D animations

Info-graphics has been one of the basic services provided by ČTK to its clients since the 1990's. Since June, visitors to some Czech sports websites may have come across the latest product of the info-graphics agency service, 3D animations. Using a special program, the agency's graphics create files with animated graphics, which show both real and virtual scenes.

The 3D file player works in the Macromedia Shockwave environment. The service is designed to be used in the web page environment, where the user has the possibility to interact with the picture, for instance, stop or accelerate the movement or even set the exact angle of view. After export to one of the supported formats, animations may also be played in the same way as any video file.

3D graphics were first used to capture the key moments of World Cup football matches and now are being used to capture key moments of Gambrinus football league matches. Our offer will be enlarged to animations from other than football or sports environments. This new service has some apparent advantages: it is not only able to graphically illustrate motion or a real situation for which no video is available or would be impossible or too dangerous to obtain, but it is also able to prepare motion graphics of a virtual scene, which are very difficult to



demonstrate in another way, such as three-dimensional simulations of the weather forecast or simulations from the micro-world environment.

3D animations display real life situations as well as virtual scenes. User can stop or accelerate the movement, or even set the exact angle of view.



ČTK sells its share in Newton Information Technology, s.r.o.

ČTK sold its 50% share in the Newton Information Technology to Newton Holding last May. The main reason for its sale was that the agency intends to focus on strengthening and improving its core business, i.e. news production from all areas of life.

Newton Information Technology focuses on media monitoring and analyses. The company operates in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and also in Poland, where it has a daughter company. The Newton IT company was founded in 1995. Since 1997, ČTK has held a 50% share in the company.



Improving the audio service

For six years, we have been publishing 25–30 audio recordings of statements from well known people. These recordings are purchased by nearly 50 clients, including radio or TV stations and Internet publishers.

By the end of this year all our reporters working with audio recording will be given new digital recorders made by the Spanish company AEQ, which is a renowned manufacturer of the highest quality audio equipment. The main advantage of this new equipment is the considerable improvement in audio recording quality.

Due to the fact that the new dictaphones store the recordings directly according to industry standard formats and have a bigger internal memory, the processing of recordings will become easier and faster, including their distribution to clients.

Seminars on working with ČTK service



Our clients are welcome to participate in seminars on working with the ČTK service. The seminars will be held on 31. 10. 2006 and 28. 11. 2006 at 10:00 a.m., at ČTK headquarters in Opletalova 5/7, Praha 1.

Besides traditional content user seminars, we will be happy to respond to any questions related to changes in the ČTK service. We can also arrange for the ČTK Infobank seminar to be held at our client's premises. The topic and date of the seminars will be selected based upon your needs.

Please send your application forms to: docekalova@mail.ctk.cz.

80th anniversary of ČTK Photographic department

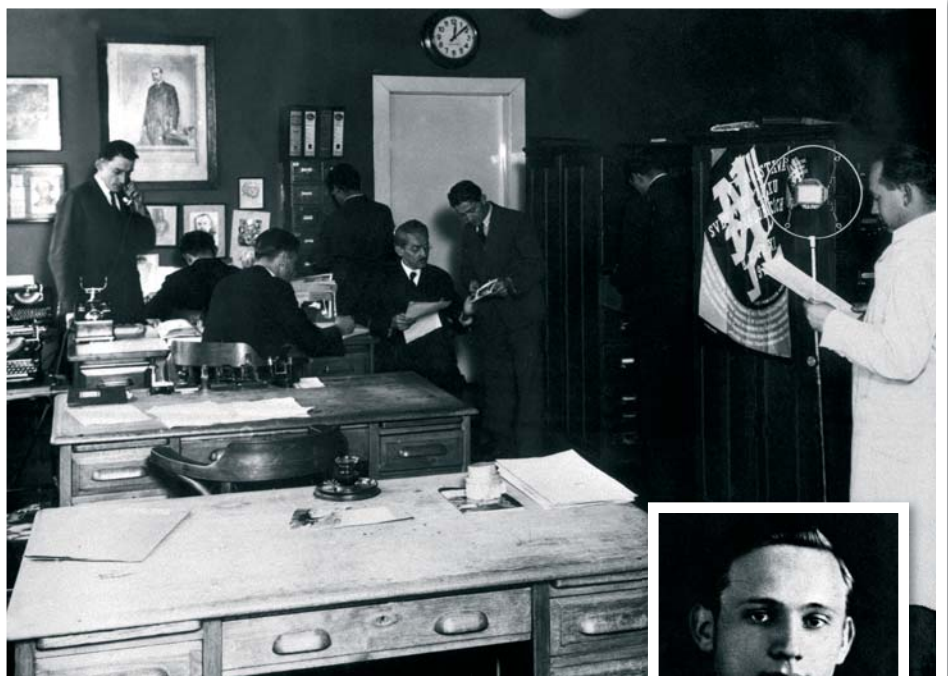
It is 80 years this year since ČTK first met the poet, reporter and film critic Artuš Černík, who is considered to be one of the founders of the ČTK photographic department. Artuš Černík started to work in ČTK in 1926, after he had completed his „Pásmo“ project. This project was published by the publisher Devětsil from Brno and concerned mainly news from the international cultural scene. Černík was both its editor and publisher. After leaving Devětsil, he approached Evžen Markalous, a photographer, whose father Bohumil Markalous (writer Jaromír John) had been working in the press department of the Parliamentary presidium, the institution, to which ČTK reported. Černík applied for a job in ČTK. In his application he used, among others, these words: «...I will be happy with a six-month trial and 600 CZK per month». Černík got the job and worked in ČTK from March to September 1926.

Between 1929 and 1945 Černík returned to ČTK and thanks to his organizational capabilities and contacts in the local and international cultural sector, he soon became the head of the editorial desk and had a serious impact on the quality of its production. Artuš Černík, whose significance, both artistic and journalistic, has not so far been fully acknowledged, laid significant foundations for further work and development of the photographic department.

Currently there are about 25 photographers employed at the photographic department creating a news service consisting of more than one hundred photographs per day from all over the Czech Republic. As far as the international part of the service is concerned, it is created by using

the AP Photo service, which comprises more than one thousand photographs per day. ČTK provides daily satellite image services to local daily newspapers, major TV stations, selected magazines and Internet clients. Other media can access the agency production using the electronic photobank. The photographic department is also in close contact with foreign partners throughout the world.

The archive of photographic service contains more than 5 million photographs, which are gradually being digitalized and made available online to all users.



*Illustration (photographic) department room in 1935.
Artuš Černík in front of the microphone.*

*Artuš Černík, theater and film critique.
One of the founders of ČTK photo department.*



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