

A man with long hair and a black sweater is sitting at a wooden table in a library. He is looking towards the camera with a serious expression. On the table in front of him is a large, colorful photograph of a landscape. The background is filled with bookshelves and a window with a white frame.

Documentary project

Ladislav Jakl

Photojournalism class assignment, part of group exhibition accompanying political congress. Shot from February to August 2015.

We intuitively look at politicians through a flat prism of their medial image, far from an ordinary life, their hobbies or family. But when we look closer, we often find that our notion of “talking head” disappears and more plastic view emerges - just like in case of very distinctive figure of Czech political scene, one of the closest co-workers of expresident Václav Klaus, Ladislav Jakl. Series of days spent by his side completes a portrait of a man, who despite spending a lot of years in the top-level politics managed to keep authenticity of a village patriot, who remained true to his principles.

This photoessay is a journey behind a curtain of ordinary political spectacle, behind Ladislav Jakl's medial image of a beer-drinking redneck. Because behind every politician, despite possible differences in our worldviews, lies a full-fledged personality.





Ladislav Jakl's presence on the Czech political scene started in 1990, when he became a deputy of the Czechoslovakian parliament. After his mandate ended, he spent a few years as a journalist, in 1997 his work life became bound with one of the most prominent czech politicians - expresident Václav Klaus. Together with Petr Hájek and Jiří Weigel (in picture) Ladislav Jakl belongs to Klaus' closest co-workers.



His service to Václav Klaus began at a time, when Klaus was still holding the prime minister's seat, after his election as a head of state Jakl functioned as president's secretary and chief of political branch of presidential office. A book interview with Ladislav Jakl focused on his work at Prague Castle was released, it's called "Rocker na Hradě" (Rocker at the Castle).



Ladislav Jekl doesn't engage in many hobbies, but he gives full energy to those few he has. His long-time love is beer, which he not only drinks, but also rates - he is a part of První pivní extraliga (First beer extraleague) contest jury, which together rates taste of majority of czech regularly sold beers.



After switching between a few bands, he finally created his own - a rock group called Folimanka Blues. He is a front-man, songwriter and an occasional guitarist. In 2013 the band celebrated its 20th anniversary.



Even though he was born in Cheb, heart of Ladislav Jakl beats for Prague. After graduating in journalism at Charles University, he chose Czech capital as his home. “My acquaintances travel to Croatia for holiday, I have rented a room at a hotel in the Old Town,” he says.



Also, almost each thursday for more than 30 years he sets out on a journey from Národní třída to Magister Kelley pub, located in Nusle city district, where the bar company called Grand Prix Folimanka regularly meets. It is no coincidence, that with 98 percent Ladislav Jakl is a leader of company's attendance chart: he does not travel abroad for vacation, so he can order cooled beer in Magiter Kelley each thursday.



Ladislav Ják shot during our first meeting at the library of Václav Klaus Institute, which aims to “spread ideas of freedom, free market, protect traditional values and political democracy” as well as “develop political and ideological heritage of Václav Klaus. He has been a part of Institute since its founding in 2012. He carries out media monitoring and prepares backgrounds for research. He publishes in Institute’s magazines and takes part in its public events.



“I don’t belong to anyone,” he smiles when I want to take his picture in front of expresident’s portrait. And even though he is seen as Klaus’s servant by some, in life of Ladislav Jekl just like anything else a job choice also reflects his life philosophy and beliefs - maybe that’s the reason, why when he chooses something, he holds on to it with conservative obstinacy.