

Attention Mrs. Monica R. Antunes.

Dear Monica!

Following are the questions to Mr. Paulo Coelho. We are planning to distribute his interview in several Russian newspapers and magazines, and via news agencies. We also plan to publish extracts of this interview in the press-release we are sending to journalists and politicians on the eve of Mr. Coelho's arrival in Moscow.

Thus, the aim of this interview, as far as we see it, is to present Mr. Coelho's opinion on some of the questions that are of vast importance to the Russian people, to present his vision of the problems facing Russian political and cultural elite, possibly - to make different accents on the more common things. Actually, we will be happy if our questions and Mr. Coelho's answers, and the interview as a whole, helps the Russian audience get an understanding of what kind of personality a modern best-selling writer would be. Why the most powerful persons and millions of other people in the world read his books and are happy to talk to him. Thus, attracting people's attention to his writings.

We propose that we in this interview touch several larger matters, formulating several relating questions inside the theme. If you or Mr. Coelho feel necessary to cover any other item, do not hesitate to include this theme in the interview.

Yours,

Andrei Martynov, Oleg Vavilov.

1) The influence - may be sometimes exaggerated - of one writer's works on public life used to be one of the deeper Russian and Soviet traditions (Alexander Pushkin, Leo Tolstoy, Alexander Solzhenytsyn, dozens others). This tradition is seemed to be over nowadays in our country. Your books are published in millions and millions of copies worldwide.

- Do you feel your works have any impact in people's mind? What kind of?

I believe that a writer acts as a catalyst, connecting people that have the same attitude towards life. A book cannot change anything, but the idea that we are not alone can give us extra strength to pursue whatever we feel as important to us.

After all - is it possible to reach this kind of influence deliberately?

At least in my case, I don't think so. To begin with, when I wrote my first books, I did not even have the possibility of dreaming to be translated, let alone to be published all over the world. When I write, I try to understand myself – writing is, for me, a kind of self-discovery. Therefore, I am the first and only reader. But Leon Tolstoy once said that what happens in any village, happens all over the world; we can deduce that what happens in any soul happen also in everybody's soul, regardless the cultural differences.

Who of the world's writers could you mention that had - or have - during their lifetime affected the public life (in their countries, internationally).

The Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges helped me to understand the simbolical language of humankind . The Brazilian Jorge Amado made me understand the Brazilian soul. The American Henry Miller made me understand that writing must be expontaneous. The English William Blake showed me the visionary aspect of writing.

- Did you have any kind of presentiment, while working on your "Alqimista", that this book is going to have such a popularity? Were you surprised? Satisfied? What kind of feeling is that (being popular writer)?

When I wrote "The Alchemist", I was trying to understand my own life, and the only way that I could do it was through a metaphor. Then, the book – with no support of the press, because the media normally refuses to publish anything about an unknown writer – the readers start to discover that we share the same questions. Little by little, the book started to travel abroad, and today is one of the best seller books of all times. But this success came slowly, based on a word-of-mouth promotion, and this gives me the sensation, the wonderful sensation that I am not alone. Of course, by being a well known author, I never feel myself as a strange in a strange land, and I am pleased with the idea that several persons, all over the world, share a kind of very modern perspective of life.

- While working on "Alqimista", were you intently changing anything that could be - seemingly - hard to understand by a common reader?

No. Even if you lived intensely your life (as I did), you need innocence to write a book (and don't understand innocence as naivety). The book must be an expontaneous act of creation, and you must not try to guide it.

- What are the those words that you are listening to from Presidents, Prime-Ministers, business moguls, celebrities, when they are talking to you about your works, about "Alqimista" especially? Are the estimates different? Are the estimates: interesting, boring, funny to you (other)? What are the most specific reactions you remember of?

They are human beings, like I am.

2) Politics. Most of the "common" people used to think that presidents and dictators or other "Fathers of the Nations" are something extraordinary. They used to be seen like Gods by most of the people. Now this way of thinking is being replaced, and we see a lot of examples of this tendency: "Gods come - or better to say: are put - down to Earth" (Pinochet's trial, "Clintongate", humiliation of Gorbachev...). What happens? Have the leaders become weaker? Is this an impact of democracy, revolution in information, evolution in minds? Is it good or bad?

It is very good that people is realizing that the real power is the power of the common human being. I believe that Internet is solidifying this revolution, and we are not passive spectators anymore, but people who take the decisions. With Internet, each one has a private TV channel, home page, etc., and we can share what is important for us.

- What is the difference you feel after you get acquainted with the world's leaders personally? Will it be a shock for any "common" man to see what the leaders look like at home, or going to a sauna, or just fishing or watching football, compared to what they are presented on TV-screens?

From the very beginning, even before being famous, I never made this difference between "powerful" and "not powerful" human beings. This helped me to overcome some barriers, like the feeling that I am not worthy.

- Can you remember your vision of the world's future 30 years ago? What were your predictions then? Is it disappointing or encouraging you to see what goes on in the world (politics, standards of life, culture, science, other)? What shall we see in year 2030?

The present moment was always so intense in my life, that I could not concentrate in either the past or the future. Everything that will happen in 2030 will be the results of what we do now, therefore I try to behave as someone who is responsible, and we should all think as the Indians do, when we have to take an important decision: "how will this affect my 5th generation?"

- What is your vision of the thesis "war is inevitable and must be used deliberately (consciously) and openly"? (We mean examples like Russia and Chechnya, NATO and Yugoslavia, USA and Iraq, Britain and Falklands - wars with press-conferences, with reporters sent to a battlefield before troops, etc.).

This is pathetic. And this happens because mankind confound "war" with "confrontation". Confrontation is in our nature: we need to fight against obstacles, we need to accept that death and resurrection happen several times during our lifetime. Like a seed that must die to allow a plant to grow, we also need to allow this process to take place in our soul. But this is an individual movement, and when we stop it, we tend to sublimate it through a collective movement, like war, gangs, etc.

3) Mass culture. The best TV ratings in Russia have the programs on crime, sex and political corruption. The largest circulations do have newspapers and books devoted to the same items. The situation in most of the countries are very much similar. The owners of TV-channels say: this is the people's choice, they will not watch anything else and let them better see violence on TV rather than participate in that in the streets. Why people are so fond of blood? Will it last forever? The generation of the 60-ies meanwhile say: remember 1968? Drugs, violence, social unrest - and we are O'K now and we are representing the establishment in our countries. Everything will be all right by itself?

If you take my books, for example, they don't talk about these subjects - and nevertheless they are very successful. I do believe that the perception of humankind is changing, we are in the middle of a silent revolution, the revolution of the soul. Perhaps you don't see this in the TVs all over the world, but even though it is happening. Spirituality and sports (a healthy substitute for the collective tendency of violence) are the major new tendencies. The day will come that we will reach a critical mass, and everything will change. For now, instead of criticizing what do we see in TV, it is better to create alternatives, because they work

4) Religions versus Ezotherics.

Religion was rehabilitated in Russia not so long ago and has already become a significant part of the public life in the country. At the same time what we would call here the "shaman culture" exploded in the society, especially among younger generation. Ezotherics, magicians and shamans are prospering.

A lot of young people are confused. In your "Prelude" to the book "Alquimista" you shortly describe your way to your understanding of life. Nowadays would you recommend anything different from your experiences (back 30 years) to yourself?

I recommend experience itself. Nothing can substitute experience. A man or woman can read a book, can see a movie, can talk, but he/she must experience life.

- Do you see any deeper conflict between major religions and alternative teachings?
I am a Catholic myself, and I always tried to be open to other people's beliefs and search. To each one his/her path

- Your opinion of Carlos Castaneda's works (who is extremely popular in Russia now)?
He influenced me a lot, mostly with his first three books. Then, he became complicated, and I believe the the spiritual search is not complicated.

5) Russia and Russian literature. Any comments on the Russian literature are welcome. Do you have any favourites here?

Dostoyewski is one of the fathers of modern literature., and a master who

6) Other questions:

- Can famous writers (after they became famous) read anything and be delighted?
Famous writers who don't read and be delighted, don't deserve to be famous. Literature is a living body, and every single day you can find a masterpiece.

- Whom would you like to meet in Russia?
The Russians. You contributed a lot, in several fields, to make us understand the soul of the world.

- Is there anything unclear for you in man's types like Stalin? If you interview him, what could you ask him about?

I would never meet Stalin, as I always refused to meet Pinochet, even after he said that he was one of my readers.

Thank you.