

Evolution of the Media Law in the Czech Republic

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Czech journalism during 20th & 21st century

JAK VOLAD OPOMOC



1918-1938: following the
journalistic tradition

1945-1989: communist journalism
& samizdat

1990-now: democratic journalism

During the communism

- only state approved media could inform
- content carefully controlled by communist committee
- distribution of paper as a way to influence the press release
- educational, persuasive and propagandist dimension of media
- Czechoslovak radio & Czech Press Office = state property

During the communism

- Act no. 184/1950 on magazines' publishing and the Union of Czechoslovak journalists:

„The mission of the press is to assist efforts and struggle of the Czechoslovak people for peace and to cooperate on his upbringing toward socialism“



During the communism / 1968

- stricter rules
- newly founded Czech Office for press and information
- notices to media which topics should be covered more or which should not be published at all
- Marxism-Leninism set as new leading principle for culture and education

During the communism / samizdat

- producing censored and underground publications by hand and passing the documents from reader to reader
- high(er) quality journalism
- intensified especially during the 80s
- in 1987 first samizdat newspapers Lidové noviny orientated on humanistic and democratic journalism released

Transformation process in 90s / new challenges

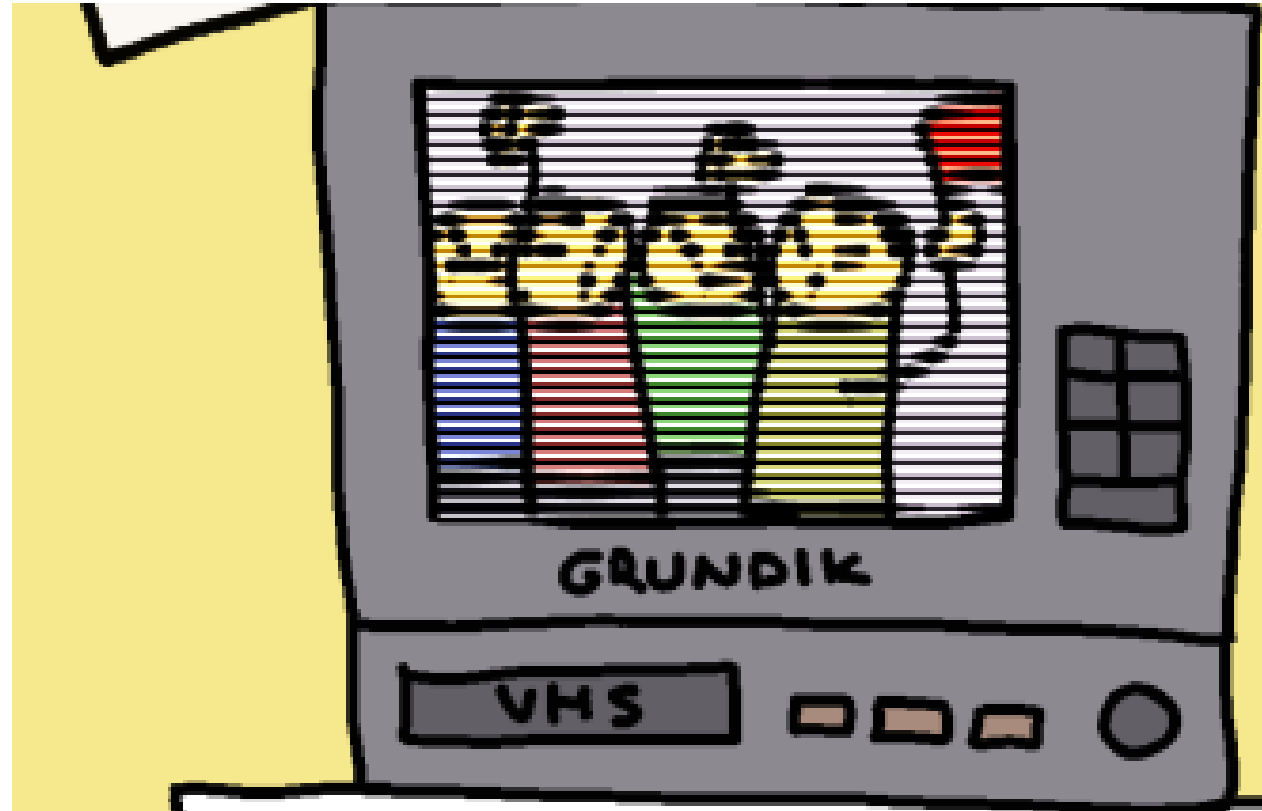
- no *existing* tradition:
 - communist journalists discredited
 - new and free media born with no experience
 - no publishing strategy
 - no valid journalistic education
- everything allowed to publish - period of enthusiasm and vivid activism
- no applicable regulation
- media transformation according the democratic principles
- only newspaper explicitly connected to a political party till nowadays: Haló noviny

Transformation process in 90s / legal background

- communist press act from 1966 in force until 2000
 - but political statements deleted in 1990
- new Press Act (2000) designed according to the international treaties
 - freedom of expression and information
 - freedom to hold opinions and to share the information or thoughts
 - no state interventions
 - principle of press evidence instead of authorization principle

Transformation process in 90s / professionalism & ownership

- came quickly during 90s
- praxis from the Western countries
- foreign investment to the media



1990 and later on

- joy of numerous newspapers celebrating freedom of speech quickly vanished with shocks, traumas and frustration
- print media facing the internet and digital media



Czech media nowadays / ownership

- “oligarchization” of the media
- ownership nowadays: Zdeněk Bakala, Andrej Babiš, Daniel Křetínský & Patrik Tkáč (= businessmen, one politician)
- content set by powerful people

The future?

- respect to freedom of expression of citizens – *or more restrictions?*
(e.g. freedom of expression vs. national security; new dilemmas ahead)
- protection of independent and critical reporting by journalists & NGOs
- access to information and transparency
- new kinds of transformation - audiovisual, technological, mixed content, converging viewers (consumers), illegal downloading...
- revision of AVMSD on the European level
 - to avoid undue media concentrations
 - to compensate for market failures
 - to ensure legal framework and conditions and funding for PSM
 - to clearly label the content (protection of minors...)

Thank you for your attention!

