The State of the State : A Qualitative Meta-Analysis of State Involvement in Television Broadcasting in the Former Czechoslovakia

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For my family. Related or not, with us or gone.

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ABSTRACT

With the collapse of Communism in Europe, the geopolitical terrain of the east and central portion of the continent was redrawn according to the changes caused by the implosion of the Warsaw Pact. Czechoslovakia is unique in that this change actually resulted in the vivisection of the nation into two separate countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. As every other aspect of post-communist nations was up for change and scrutiny, so were broadcast media in these countries. In this thesis, I will employ a qualitative meta-analysis in order to compare changes in the respective broadcast systems of the two newly formed countries by analyzing existing academic literature and research on the subject.

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INTRODUCTION

Europe has become more united as a continent because of the advent of the European Union and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and Communism. However, far from being a monoculture, Europe is made up of different regions representing different peoples that do not always share the same characteristics in how they regard the state and its involvement in society. Although geographically connected, some regions (and the states within them) have a different history that has shaped their culture in more autocratic ways than the nations in other parts of the continent. This difference of ways has included rules regarding the media and its independence from state interference. These countries typically are found in the central and eastern regions as common empires and outside powers of various sorts once absorbed them and thus share common historical experiences.

Although a broad view of Europe and its different cultures is a fascinating subject, for the purposes of this thesis I focus on a unique and anecdotal case in central Europe. By that, I mean the former Czechoslovakia (which of course at this point has split into the two nations of Slovakia and the Czech Republic). What's special about this former nation is that during its short periods of independence it was typically one of the more democratic and pluralistic societies in Central/Eastern Europe, but mainly on the part of the Czechs as opposed to their Slovak neighbors. This pluralism extended to the field of media and its position as a free entity in society. After the fall of Communism and the Velvet Revolution, the new countries of the Czech Republic and Slovakia began to develop their own systems of media and philosophies of how they relate to the state. In this thesis, I explore the existing academic, governmental, and otherwise peer-reviewed literature on the changing environment in broadcast media post-Communism

in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To do this I utilize a qualitative meta-analysis of these publications regarding broadcast media and its place in the evolving societies of the two nations. I chose this topic out of interest in communism and television broadcasting in general terms, but as I'm half Slovak it has been of special interest for me to investigate this part of my past. There are other good examples of communism's effects on state boundaries besides Czechoslovakia. These include countries that were split by the Cold War and were eventually reunited (such as Germany or Vietnam), or of another country which suffered a national schism and is in that situation presently (like North and South Korea). The Czech Republic and Slovakia interest me for not only being part of the original Eastern Bloc, but because the reunification of Czechoslovakia is beyond a shadow of a doubt impossible. No matter the temporary divisions, it is widely acknowledged that Germany, Vietnam, and Korea are all, and always have been, one nation unto themselves. Czechoslovakia's situation is irrevocable, and therefore is of much personal interest to me.

BACKGROUND

In order to have a complete understanding of broadcast media's place in the societies of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, one must have an idea of the background of the two countries. Czechoslovakia, their precursor nation, was officially established on 28 October in 1918. Blanka Kudej (1996) wrote that "The new Czechoslovakia emerged as one of several multinational states that were created in Central and Eastern Europe after the First World War…While its creation was based on certain historical precedents…it was nevertheless a new country carved out of disparate parts of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire" (pg. 73). Jan Culik (2004) goes a step further in elaborating on Czechoslovakia's chaotic pedigree by calling the country's inception as a direct byproduct of the sheer "…disintegration of Austria-Hungary at the end of the First World War" (pg. 31). As mentioned before, the two main peoples united in modern Czechoslovakia were the Slovaks and the Czechs. Kudej (1996) elaborates:

> Although these two peoples, both Slavs, were closely related, they have undergone different historical experiences. In the ninth century A.D., the ancestors of the Czechs and Slovaks were united in the Great Moravian Empire, but by the tenth Century the Hungarians had conquered Slovakia and incorporated it into the Kingdom of Hungary. For the next millennium the Slovaks were under rule of the Hungarians. (pg. 71).

Although the two nations are both Slavic, with the conquering of Slovakia the two peoples began to separate culturally. Kudej (1996) elaborates:

> The Czechs had a much richer tradition of self-rule. From the tenth to the sixteenth century, the Czech-inhabited Bohemian Kingdom was a powerful political and military entity. However, at the battle of White Mountain in 1620, the Czechs were defeated by the Habsburgs, the Bohemian Kingdom was incorporated into Austria and for the next three hundred years, the Czechs were under the rule of Austria. So as the history shows, the story of Czechs and Slovaks is the story of different peoples whose fates sometimes have touched and sometimes have intertwined. (pg. 71).

The length of the Czechs' autonomy left an impression on their society, but independence remained a common goal with the Slovaks. Jozef Lettrich (1985) wrote "Cultural and personal contact between Czechs and Slovaks…acted as a stimulant to Slovak ideas and brought about Slovak political and cultural activism" (pg. 44). After their unification into the modern nation of Czechoslovakia, independence only lasted 20 years. In 1938, the country fell under the veil of Fascism, with much of Europe to follow. During the occupation the Nazi party and their lackeys, which included the media, governed all sectors of society. Broadcast and news content were regulated absolutely in all parts of occupied Europe. Czechoslovakia's experience as an independent country was stunted during this time. After 1945, the country again enjoyed independence for a time. Although Slovakia had joined the Axis powers in 1940, after the end of the war Czechoslovakia was again considered pluralistic, but only for about three years.

In 1948, the Communist party seized control of Czechoslovakia, molding it into a Soviet-style republic and transforming it into a part of the Soviet bloc. Kudej (1996) notes that "The Communists usurped the complete power in February 1948 and immediately began to restructure the conditions of life in Czechoslovakia along Soviet lines…They removed all existing laws and replaced them by the new laws modeled on those of the Soviet Union" (pg. 78). Jozef Lettrich (1985) wrote, "The imposition of a Communist regime extinguished civil liberties and democratic institutions," including that of an independent media (pg. 261). This falls in line with one of the Four Theories of the Press. The Four Theories are the authoritarian, libertarian, communist, and social responsibility theories, with the applicable theory being communist. According to Praveen Karthik (2012) "The mass media in a communist society…[was] to function

basically to perpetuate and expand the socialist system." The media again served to become a mouthpiece of the satellite regime which Czechoslovakia had once more become, with Lettrich (1985) stating that "Propaganda to force the Russian language, Soviet opinions, and Soviet ways of thinking upon the people [have] been incessant" (pg. 263). This is except for a brief period of liberalization in 1968, the so-called "Prague Spring." Culik (2004) elaborates on this important period:

> Approximately from the mid-1960s the communist regime found itself on the defensive: reformers within the system initiated a sustained push for freedom, using contemporary literature and culture as an instrument of democratization. This campaign for democratic reform culminated in the so-called Prague Spring of 1968, a period of several months when Czechoslovakia enjoyed almost absolute freedom of expression and engaged upon an intensive debate about the totalitarian excesses of its immediate past and the alternatives for its political future. (pg. 31)

The Prague Spring woke up long dormant feelings of nationalism as an air of change filled those few months. This freedom of expression and the debate that it had started also took place in media. Non-state sponsored media content for the first time spilled out of the illicit samizdat realm into the broader written media scene, with radio and broadcast following in tow. However, this brief liberalizing period of the country, its ability to freely express itself, and the loosening of official control of the previously Soviet-controlled media was not to last. On 21 August 1968, the Soviet Union and members of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia and put a brutal end to the short-lived period of liberalization. According to Culik (2004) the Czechoslovakian nation and in a much-targeted way its media were blasted back into the repression of the past:

> In the 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia suffered a revenge for the liberalizing 1960s and their culmination, the Prague Spring. The Soviet Union threw the country into a harsh, neo-Stalinist mode and instigated a direct assault on the intelligentsia. The media system was purged of all reformists and was turned into a machine which spouted emotional,

ideological propaganda whose intensity remained practically unchanged until the fall of communism in 1989. (pg. 31)

Culik (2004) also seems to think this revenge might have been even more personal than mere regime support, noting "Oppression in the 1970s and 1980s was much stronger than in the other Central European communist countries" (pg. 31). This domination of the nation and its media continued unabated until the collapse of Communism across Eastern Europe in 1989. The fall of Communism itself within Czechoslovakia was nicknamed the Velvet Revolution, partly because of its largely peaceful and bloodless nature. Kudej (1996) wrote that "After the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, Czechoslovakia returned to democracy and to the free world...New legislation was promulgated which repealed and replaced the old communist laws" (pg. 79). However, it was during the flurry of reorganization, litigious and otherwise, occurring in a nation that never really got past a nascent stage in cultural development that fractures began to be seen between the Czech and Slovak populations, as slumbering nationalistic urges were reawakened in the vacuum that Communism had left in its collapse. A fuse leading to national dissolution had been lit, and it soon became apparent to the new political elite in the Czech and Slovak regions during talks at the federal level. Kudej (1996) neatly summarizes the last days of the intact Czechoslovakian nation:

> It was at the meeting between the chiefs of Czech and Slovak Government, Mr. Klaus and Mr. Meciar, on June 19, 1992 in Bratislava, when the inevitability of a separation of the two nations was fully recognized. Both prime ministers agreed that the separation must be carried out in a constitutional manner and September 30, 1992 was set as a dead-line for a specific agreement on the form of coexistence between the two independent states. Immediately both Czech and Slovak sides started to explore ways of carrying out an orderly separation. On November 13, the Federal Assembly passed a Constitutional law providing for the division of property of the Federal Republic and its transfer to the Czech and Slovak Republics. Then

on November 25, it passed another Constitutional law concerning the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. This Constitutional law stated: "At midnight on December 31, 1992, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic will cease to exist." With this decision, at midnight on the last day of 1992 Czechoslovakia disappeared from the map of Europe... (pg. 79-80)

There were certainly those that cheered the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the nationalists had led again to the reduction and division that had plagued the former nation as an entity during its short history. The former oppositionists soon found themselves in an odd position; without the threat of the Communist overseers, these former oppositionists and newly minted political elite found a need to radically reinvent themselves as they sought to synthesize new nations from the vivisected former Czechoslovakia. There is a bittersweet ending in regards to the splitting of the Czech Republic and Slovakia (the so-called "Velvet Divorce") after the semi-continuous trauma that had been a historical fact for decades. Lettrich (1985) lauded the positives of the former union (at that time intact) of the now separate nations while at the same time lamenting what could have been if not for the hand of history:

> [T]he Czechoslovak Republic...grew from a neglected, backward and spiritually and economically oppressed land into a modern highly developed area. The progress it made...has seldom been equaled even during several generations in states that had been free for centuries. These were the blessings of liberty the Slovaks found in the Czechoslovak Republic, as well as the fruits of the vitality and hard work of the people, supported in every respect by the Czech Nation, which, in turn, derived great benefit from its unity with the Slovaks. And yet, economic development was greatly hindered at that time by an endless chain of obstacles such as the consequences of the First World War, the depression in the thirties, an attitude of opposition...the exorbitant costs of armaments during the years that preceded the Second World War, the territorial losses suffered by Slovakia after Munich, the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Second World War which made all Slovakia a battlefield and then the final blow of Communist dictatorship... (pg. 66)

It is because of this checkered history that the need to analyze academic literature on broadcast media in the two countries lies. Not only is it a unique opportunity to study two countries whose paths culturally and in terms of national sovereignty have intertwined for centuries, sometimes conjoined and sometimes independent, but it is important as an example to understand the evolving broadcast media situation in other post-Soviet client states. This is particularly important as the political landscape in Europe in some ways has again shifted into an East versus West mindset, and the winds of a new Cold War begin to chill the hearts of those who once lived within the old Soviet sphere of influence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Tomas Trampota (2016) on the European Journalism Centre's website:

> The contemporary Czech media system is the outcome of 20 years of history, starting with the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Until November 1989 all mass media in Czechoslovakia were governed by the state, state organizations or political parties in the National Front under the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. (pg. 1).

After the breakup of the country, content became more diversified, with the Czech Republic having more variety of broadcast media. Andrej Skolkay (2016), also taken from the European Journalism Centre's website, notes that "A common history and shared language skills allows for easy penetration of Czech-language media, including broadcasts in both languages…" (pg. 1). Thus, like much of their history the Czechs and Slovaks share a common thread, this time in media content. However, also like much of their history, the paths that the Czech Republic and Slovakia took with disentangling the broadcast media from the state became different (if not diametric). The Czech Republic, in line with its democratic traditions, embraced an independent broadcast media through the lens of western-style free market capitalism. However, this was not always beneficial in its outcome. Jan Jirak and Barbara Kopplova (2008) assert:

> …the presumed and declared desirable role of the media…in the early 1990s became just a front for a rapid, uncompromising privatization of the media (subordinated to the logics of accumulation of profit and power). A strong industrial sector of media emerged, which was not restrained by any feeling of responsibility towards society, whether at the economic, cultural or ethical, let alone aesthetic level. Czech society quickly and without reflection accepted innovations in content, form and technology which the development of media communication has been offering ever since the late 1980s. (pg. 8).

The media in the Czech Republic during the 90s merely changed one master (the Communist party) for another (the wild impetus for pure profit). This was part of a general transition in the country from state media to (ostensibly) public broadcasting, with a powerful private sector. State media, such as under communism, is run absolutely by means of control of funding as well as by final editorial say of content by the state. Public broadcasting shares some diluted characteristics of state broadcasting. Regarding public broadcasting, in the words of Monika Metykova (2004) the "general characteristics of [public broadcasting]…share the following defining elements: some form of accountability to the public, some element of public finance, regulation of content…and regulated entrance [limits to the number of competing channels]" (pg. 224). The Czech Republic sought to weaken public broadcasting even further through its encouragement of private broadcasting, which is television broadcasting owned by individuals or entities outside of the state entirely (and therefore independently funded by non-governmental means).

There were attempts at maintaining political control, but these were not as savage as some of the other former Soviet-vassal states. Revisiting the subject five years after, Jirak and Kopplova (2013) write:

> Though politicians do seek to control public service media, Czech media in general operate in very liberal political and legal environments. Comparing the contemporary development with the media situation prior to 1989, Czech society has reached more or less all the objectives which were articulated in 1989, including freedom of expression, media content produced independently of the state, unrestricted access to information, [and] lack of political control… (pg. 185).

Slovakia, on the other hand, went the opposite way in many cases. This is not necessarily surprising, as Slovakia has proven not to fit neatly into the mold of some of her neighbors. Skolkay (2004) noted that although "Slovakia became a fully

independent state on 1 January 1993…its economic and cultural development was different from other regions of the states it was part of during the twentieth century," and that "Consequently…broadcast media have reflected this difference" (pg. 205). Private broadcast media (as opposed to saturating the market) were not, and to a certain extent have not, been allowed to run rampant like the Czech Republic circa 1990s. Furthermore, a number of rollback measures have crept up from time to time, seeking to return the broadcast media back to a more state-controlled entity. This devolution fits in more so with the traditional mold of central and eastern Europe. Matus Minarik (2000) observes that:

> The talk of state-censorship, individual freedom, deregulation and market competition is not old-fashioned at all in Slovakia and other Central and East European countries. Recent experience of state-censorship and strict regulation during communism, and a total absence of individual political freedoms and market competition turned these terms into a powerful and topical language in Slovakia and elsewhere. (pg. 5).

The Czech Republic and Slovakia had certainly begun taking different paths towards broadcast media and its relationship to the state. Andrew K. Milton (2001) writes that "…the persistence of institutional connection between the media and the government, state, and political parties has left the media in a politically dependent position," going on to say that "This dependence is manipulated by politicians across the political spectrum in an effort to sustain electoral success and political authority" (pg. 493). Even as recently as 2007, well after Slovakia was to bring its laws on broadcast media's autonomy in line with the rest of the E.U., problems persisted with government interference. Milton (2007) revisited the issue and concluded, "Since its separation from the Czech Republic, Slovakia has been a particularly difficult place for the operation of the newly free media" (pg. 19).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Taking into account the common genealogy of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, I analyze existing research and documents that relates to the two countries and their broadcast media systems. As there has been no direct comparison between the two nations on this subject, I believe it is a worthwhile contribution to academia. I examine what the literature says about the state's role in broadcast media and how it compares between the two countries. In order to do so I have three research questions that I apply to the literature (such as books, peer-reviewed journal publications, and government documents) on both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

1. What has been the legal connection of the state to broadcast media?
2. What has been the role of political appointments regarding media licensing and oversight boards?
3. What has been the nature of the state's involvement in public television broadcast?

I will conduct my analysis by segmenting my thesis into separate sections for the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with each section segmented towards each of the three research questions. Finally, I will include a section on how these relate to the region at large.

LITERATURE AND BACKGROUND OF QUALITATIVE META-ANALYSIS

This thesis utilizes academic publications on the previously discussed subject matter. I employ a qualitative meta-analysis of the existing body of literature and research in order to provide a better understanding of the broadcast media environment in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as their media development after the Velvet Revolution (when they were both still one nation), through the Velvet Divorce (when Czechoslovakia split into the two separate countries), and on through the 90s and early 2000s. According to Rita Schreiber, Dauna Crooks, and Phyllis Noerager Stern (1997) "The term *qualitative meta-analysis* was first used by Stern and Harris in 1985 to refer to the synthesis of a group of qualitative research *findings* into one explanatory interpretative end product," which in other words is "...a way of knowing-what-we-know and further extending findings" (pg. 312). Margarete Sandelowski (2004) elaborates:

> Also referred to as qualitative meta-synthesis, qualitative meta-data-analysis, and meta-ethnography, qualitative meta-analysis is a distinctive category of synthesis in which the findings from completed qualitative studies in a target area are formally combined. Both an analytic process and an interpretive product, qualitative meta-analysis is...intent to ascertain systematically, comprehensively, and transparently the state of knowledge in a field of study (pg. 892).

A qualitative meta-analysis should not be confused with a content analysis. Steve Stemler (2001) states that "Content analysis has been defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding" (pg. 137). According to an article ("Research and Methodology," 2012) on the website of the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business; "*Content analyses* is a research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material...By systematically evaluating texts (e.g. documents, oral communication, and graphics), qualitative data can be converted into

quantitative data." This distillation of meaning by use of coding and the conversion of qualitative to quantitative differs from qualitative meta-analysis, as Sandelowski (2004) notes that "...the goal of qualitative meta-analysis is to preserve the particulars of experience represented in individual studies" (pg.892). Denis Walsh and Soo Downe (2004) summarize this well by saying that "...bringing together qualitative studies in a related area enables the nuances, taken-for-granted assumptions, and textured milieu of varying accounts to be exposed, described and explained in ways that bring fresh insights" (pg. 205). So, for example, instead of counting and analyzing the frequency that a term of interest is mentioned by a television program or academic publication (like a content analysis), a qualitative meta-analysis looks at the article as a whole and not just a set of components and parts which can be converted to numbers for the simple sake of crunching them to infer conclusions like that of a content analysis. Instead, utilizing qualitative meta-analysis I will analyze the literature as an aggregate instead of as mere converted quantitative components derived using qualitative methodology such as with a content analysis.

Qualitative meta-analysis is a nascent method of study in the social sciences but it has been utilized in medicine in recent times. This has allowed medical practitioners to benefit from the same largesse of information gleaned from a quantitative meta-analysis but making use instead of qualitative studies that can prove to be more holistic. Walsh and Downe (2004) wrote that qualitative meta-analysis "...is a relatively new technique for examining qualitative research...It has been applied in areas as diverse as transformational leadership, experience of chronic illness, diabetes, concepts of caring, adaptation to motherhood and midwifery care" (pg. 204). Pointing out the distinction between quantitative and qualitative meta-analysis in medicine, Schreiber et al (1997)

wrote that "Methods for quantitative meta-analysis techniques are well developed and described...However, in qualitative research the purpose of meta-analysis is not to evaluate treatment effects or causal relationships but to develop theory at the grand or midrange level or to develop theoretical description" (pg. 311). Walsh and Downe (2004) reaffirm this:

> This highlights one of the key differences between the [qualitative meta-analysis] method and meta-analysis of quantitative studies. The latter aims to increase certainty in cause and effect conclusions in a particular area, while the former is more hermeneutic, seeking to understand and explain phenomena. (pg. 204)

In my view, this is akin to the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, as the information that is engendered upon the researcher through meta-analysis has been crafted from qualitative studies and documents that have survived the skepticism and study of their peers and thus represent a more validated viewpoint if compiled correctly. Despite this, Fengfeng Ke (2009) writes that "Qualitative meta-analysis basically followed the same, replicable procedure of a quantitative meta-analysis, but was more interpretative than aggregative...Instead of a statistical data analysis; the researcher [analyzes] textual reports, creating new interpretations in the analysis process" (pg. 6). Ke (2009) also notes that qualitative meta-analysis "...has been used specifically because it is an approach towards formulating a complete depiction of the subject and because a quantitative meta-analysis will exclude qualitative evaluation that is a major grouping in the literature" (pg. 6).

Although having been used in medicine and other fields for some time, qualitative meta-analysis has begun to be taken seriously as a tool in the social sciences. However, Barbara L. Paterson, Sally E. Thorne, Connie Canam, and Carol Jillings (2001) wrote that in the past meta-analysis in "...qualitative research was relatively

unusual and not well understood in many...social science disciplines" (pg. 7), and that

there needs to be more of a "...focus on sociocultural and historical context in meta-

study research" (pg.15). Therefore, although qualitative meta-analysis is a new

approach in social sciences, there is a healthy concern to its limitations as well as

thoughts on how to solve them. Mike Weed (2005) voices these apprehensions by

noting that "On a broader plain, there is a general concern that too little use is made of

existing research in the social sciences, a point made by C. Wright Mills almost half a

century ago: 'There are never enough bricks and there are too few...who wish to search

out the bricks and thus put the wall together'" (pgs. 2-3). Part of the issue with this is

the impetus for researchers to carry out their own particular original research as

opposed to building on top of existing research. Weed (2005) elaborates:

> 'Most research effort is expended on new primary research and yet, on
> virtually any topic you can name, there is a vast body of past research that
> may have some continuing value but mostly remains ignored. Social
> Science is very bad at the accumulation and re-use of past research results.'
> Yet...there has been an increasing interest in both research synthesis and
> 'the fuller exploitation of existing data and research findings.' (pg. 3)

With this increase in interest, the winds of change are beginning to blow. The

veritable treasure trove of previously collected qualitative research in the social sciences

field that has gone unnoticed for so long has begun to accrue some second glances.

Margarete Sandelowski, Sharron Dochety, and Carolyn Emden (1997) observe that

"Efforts to synthesize existing qualitative research studies are seen as essential to

reaching higher analytic goals and also to enhancing the generalizability of qualitative

research" (pg. 367). One of the particular fields in the social sciences blazing the trail of

qualitative meta-analysis is that of psychology. Weed (2005) affirms this by saying that

"Leading the way...has been the field of psychology, which has made widespread use of

the *meta-analysis technique…"* in a variety of manners to further research in the field.

Weed (2005) notes that (regarding a qualitative approach):

> As such…meta-analytical techniques are seen by psychologists as not only offering a more objective means of synthesizing the findings of previous research, but also as a way of moving literature reviews closer to the standards of scientific enquiry and repeatability that are applied to individual studies. (pg. 2)

As the social sciences inherently have some overlap due to the nature of their grouping, psychology is not the only field that has begun to dip the proverbial toe into the qualitative meta-analysis swimming pool. A number of other fields have begun to take an interest in this research method, including sociology. Paterson et al (2001) notes that "In sociology, insights gained at the level of meta-study have been acknowledged as necessary for developing an integrated canon and a practical application in social research," and that this acknowledgment "…represents an attempt to analyze primary research results but also to reflect on the perspectives and processes involved in those primary studies in terms of 'where we are and where we are going'" (pg. 6).

Qualitative meta-analysis is not a homogenous research method altogether, however. There are different approaches. One of which is the theoretical development approach, which according to Schreiber et al (1997) "…involves the synthesis of findings into a final product that is thickly descriptive, and comprehensive—somewhat like a meta-phenomenology or ethnography…In this way, the final product is more complete and comprehensive than any of the original studies" (pg. 315).

METHODOLOGY

It is the theoretical development approach of qualitative meta-analysis that I will employ for my thesis. In this way I provide a thesis which clearly articulates the differences between the two sister nations of the Czech Republic and Slovakia by analyzing the existing literature and research on their broadcast media. It is correct that I am using a research methodology that shares qualitative aspects with content analysis. However, as opposed to crunching numbers based on qualitative data converted into quantitative data using coding like a content analysis, I am looking at the articles and academic literature as an aggregate whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Therefore, my unit of analysis is my thoroughly researched and unsparingly acquired (qualitative) peer-reviewed academic publications.

In order to collect my research, I conducted an exhaustive search for non-Slovak language literature using all means available to me in order to track down everything I could find on the subject of the former Czechoslovakia's political and television broadcasting systems and cultures after the fall of communism in 1989. The reason that I am conducting this qualitative meta-analysis on this particular subject is that there is a need for English language research publications (as there is a paucity of them available). Over the course of more than nine months of research gathering I made wide use of the Interlibrary Loan system available to students, the computer laboratories in the university library scouring databases, personal loans of applicable academic publications from several professors' personal collections, as well as simply purchasing resources out of my personal funds when all else failed and I had found a good source. I deployed this wide net to collect information because, if I had not, I would not have accrued the necessary units of analysis (English language academic peer-reviewed

publications of the qualitative variety) in order to conduct a proper qualitative meta-analysis. If I had not acquired a vast body of qualitative data, then deriving a large, aggregate, macro-type conclusion based on my literature would have been exceedingly difficult.

Furthermore, my research has also cited sources that appeared in the bibliographies of previous academic publications, thus establishing a reputable pedigree of research and peer-reviewed publications. My objective is to present my analysis in a way that makes a valuable and original contribution to academia in the field of mass communications. To this end, I am going to examine what has been written in the television-broadcasting arena in the former Czechoslovakia in the three areas outlined by my aforementioned research questions.

SLOVAKIA

(Figure 1. Political Map of Slovakia.)

What has been the legal connection of the state to broadcast media?

As stated before, this study is a meta-analysis of the existing body of academic literature and research in order to answer my three research questions regarding the state's role in broadcast television within the former Czechoslovakia. It should be noted that, although splitting from the Czech Republic partly based on different cultural background from the Czechs, Slovakia itself is not purely a homogenous nation. According to a description on the Slovak state on the European Journalists Centre's website, Andrej Skolkay (1992) wrote, "Slovakia has 5.4 million citizens. Almost 20 percent of its population is comprised of minorities" (pg. 1). The diversity of minorities within Slovakia is in part due to the region being part of the now defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, the preponderance of the Slovak language and other cultural overlaps bind Slovakia as a nation state. At this point, some background on the previously mentioned academic, Andrej Skolkay, is needed. Skolkay is a luminaire in the field of Slovakia and political communications. As such, his work is quoted regularly in this section on a span of time ranging from 1996-2016 in numerous separate articles. According to Andras Koltay et al (2016):

> Andrej Skolkay is Research Director of School of Communication and Media in Bratislava...He published widely on media and politics, especially on political communication, and also on ethics and media law, in Slovakia and abroad...He was leader of national research teams...and a member of the Press Council of Slovakia in 2005-2008. (pg. 305)

Skolkay being both an expert on Slovakia as well as media law, it would be impossible not to mention his work and background. Slovakia as a state of course has ties within the legal realm that dictate the interaction of the state and television broadcast media. But from Slovakia's independence on through the 1990s the role of the broadcast media in Slovakian society and the government's role in broadcast media

itself has at times regressed towards more autocratic tendencies from Slovakia's not so distant past. Skolkay (2010) stated in his article *Media and Politics Relations in Slovakia* that "...the majority of post-communist Slovak top politicians sooner or later gained ambivalent, often openly negative, sometimes even extremely negative attitudes towards the mass media" (pg. 1). Minarik (2000) ruminates that this is not exclusive to just Slovakia:

> However, mass media in any country are very vulnerable to manipulation, either by political authorities motivated by ideological zeal or crude self-interest or by economic forces. The relationship between media and democracy in Slovakia has been even more vulnerable, because the country has been going through a radical process of political transition to democracy and economic transition to market economy. (pg. 1)

Indeed, Skolkay (2010) states that "There were macro-factors (historical and sociological) that contributed to this trend...Two generations of post-communist citizens had never experienced the three most important features of the new social order: the liberal democracy, market economy, and free media" (pg. 1). Aside from Slovakia's status as a post-communist country with citizens who were ill prepared to take full advantage of their newly found freedom, there is more of a tradition in Slovakia for autocracy. Again referencing Skolkay (2010):

> The Czech culture was more liberal and more anti-communist, while Slovak culture was more parochial, ambivalent, and divided in its fundamental values. Although Slovak intellectuals from the first [post-communist] political elite represented probably the best that one could find at that time in Slovakia, negative characteristics were still evident such as those outlined, self-critically, by Ladislav Kovac (1991): amateurism, lack of self-consciousness and little resistance toward external pressure. Without doubt, other characteristics of Slovak intellectual culture (lack of innovative thinking, obsolete (very traditional) character of the group's worldviews and lack of personal ethical integrity) could be applied... (pg. 3)

In much of the literature, this seems to be the case. Slovakia (due to its cultural heritage or due to its communist past) seems to veer towards a more authoritarian

mindset, and this has not changed just due to the collapse of the Soviet client-state system. Those sorts of tendencies run a bit deeper than whatever ideology happens to be the one in charge. Skolkay (1996), in his article *Slovak Government Tightens its Grip on the Airwaves*, states that:

> Since the "Gentle Revolution" [Velvet Revolution] of November 1989, Slovak politicians have taken a keen interest in the media, and their attentions were only magnified when the Czech Republic and Slovakia parted ways in January 1993—partially due to a logical need to facilitate nation building but also because of the ruling elite's desire to dominate all aspects of Slovak society, including mass media. (pg. 18)

Therefore, the authoritarian lean seems to be deeper than recent political memories in the Slovakian cultural psyche, and this of course bleeds over into the realm of television broadcast media and its legal standing regarding the Slovakian state. In fact, Minarik (2000) asserts that "…there has been also a strong impact of the most recent experience of authoritarian methods, massive manipulation of public media and intimidation of private media in the 1994-1998 period of government dominated by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)" (pg. 5). The HZDS deserve a special mention, as they (and their founder Vladimir Meciar) led the charge of returning Slovakia towards autocratic tendencies in broadcast media's legal relation to the state. In fact, Meciar is a reoccurring player throughout much of the literature written on Slovakia and its television broadcasting media. More than any other post-communist leader in Slovakia, Meciar has cast a long shadow on the country's development. According to Matthew Rhodes (2001), Meciar had a colorful upbringing, which surely influenced his governing style:

> Born during World War Two, he was a sometime boxer and communist youth leader in the 1960s, but was purged from the Party for making a pro-reform speech in 1969, the year after a Warsaw Pact invasion had aborted Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring movement. Working as a lawyer over the

next two decades, Meciar reemerged as a prominent figure in the Public Against Violence (VPN) movement, the Slovak counterpart to the Czech Civic Forum, which led the Velvet Revolution in late 1989. Meciar's tenures as Slovakia's prime minister (June 1990 to April 1991, June 1992 to March 1994, and December 1994 to October 1998) spanned a period of tumultuous change. The simultaneous challenges of establishing self-governance, a modern market economy, and independent statehood in a country with only thin experience of any of these things would have severely tested even the most liberally minded leader. Nevertheless, three increasingly pronounced features of Meciar's political style—chauvinistic nationalism, endemic cronyism, and no-holds-barred vendettas—aggravated Slovakia's internal tensions and undercut its efforts toward Euro-Atlantic integration. (pg. 4)

This is not an anecdotal account of Meciar and his ruling style. Dissent was routinely crushed, and broadcast media were firmly placed under the government thumb of Meciar and his cronies. During his longest stretch in power, from 1994-1998, Meciar made a point of going out of his way in any way possible to bring broadcast media under Slovakian state control. Some of these ways bordered on the creative and the cunning, and it was a period that shaped Slovakian society in many ways to this day. According to Minarik (2000):

> The 1994-1998 period was the term of the office of the government led by Vladimir Meciar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS). The observed period was marked by authoritarian tendencies, submission and use of the public media by the government and conflicts with the private media independent from the state. Andrej Skolkay listed several authoritarian methods in regard to the mass media that were applied in Slovakia. The list included changes in the legal system, technical arguments against the renewal of broadcasting license, economic pressure, dismissal of management and journalists working in public broadcasting institutions and the state news agency...direct and indirect financial support of loyal media, appointment of government supporters into supervisory boards of public broadcasting institutions, refusals to give information or access to information...awards to loyal media and journalists, and collection of damaging information about and intimidation of critical journalists. (pg. 14)

Some of these methods of control, such as the appointment of government supporters into supervisory boards and the nature of the Slovakian state's relationship

with public broadcasting, will be covered later in this thesis. Minarik (2000) also states

that "The political development in Slovakia has often been quoted as a departure from

the promising and more smooth transition of other Central European countries towards

democracy," and that as a result "Slovakia was the only post-communist country

described as a 'particularly difficult place for the operation of the newly free media' in a

comparative study of mass media in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe" (pg.

14). Meciar himself seemed to be someone who thrived on conflict, as his personality

and his ruling style were intertwined through a strange sort of nationalistic/personal

pride hybrid arrangement. According to Rhodes (2001):

> Meciar's sometimes violent vendettas against those he regarded as political
> enemies were what generated the greatest controversy, however. The
> country's mass media were a frequent target. Having ensured sympathetic
> coverage by state television…Meciar's governments applied selective
> economic pressure…through lawsuits, ownership buyouts, control
> over…facilities, distribution networks, and advertisers. (pg. 4).

According to the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (1994) "Meciar…proceeded to

treat state institutions, not as a public trust, but as his private weapons in a political war

against 'the opposition'…The Meciar government, through its Ministry of Culture,

cultivated institutions…dedicated to fighting a ferociously nationalist propaganda

campaign" (pg. 26). As an example of broadcast media's troubled legal relationship with

the Slovakian state during this time period Rhodes (2001) notes that "In 1998

restrictions were imposed on campaign reporting by private broadcast media, and just

before the elections the government attempted to take over Slovakia's most popular TV

station, Markiza" after an ownership struggle with the private company Gamatex, who

succeeded in assuming control of the station through court litigation (pg. 4). HZDS

arose from the ashes of communism and was not afraid to wield the same levers of

power that their former communist overseers had done before them when they themselves ruled unchallenged. Skolkay (1996), in a wide-ranging and comprehensive article entitled *Journalists, Political Elites, and the Post-Communist Public: The Case of Slovakia* wrote:

> With its eventual disintegration and the subsequent break-up of Czechoslovakia, the populist Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, or HZDS, built to a large degree on the charismatic personality of the Machiavellian Vladimir Meciar came to dominate the politics of an independent Slovakia…since its rise to power the government has clearly sought to establish control over the media, and has so far been quite successful, stunting the creation of independent media. (pg. 65).

> Of course, this cannot all be laid directly at one man or one party's feet entirely.

As discussed earlier there seems to be a cultural and civic tendency towards authoritarianism that the Slovaks hold onto their own, essentially that HZDS and Meciar did not force authoritarianism onto Slovakia. Rather, Slovakian culture created the perfect incubator to inculcate the creation of a party like HZDS and an autocrat like Meciar. Skolkay (1996) reflected on this generalization:

> In the period since the collapse of communism (which included the establishment of Slovakia as an independent state), there have been significant changes in the media institutions in the country, but the absence of an established civil society has made the media vulnerable to attempts at political control. State involvement remains particularly high in the broadcasting media. Lack of clarity has characterized legislation on the media, and financial and other pressure has been applied to media deemed hostile to the government. The involvement of leading media figures in politics further undermines the independence of communications media. There is serious debate about the proper role of mass media in the process of building democracy, and…it seems clear that government influence will remain for some time to come. (pg. 61)

> The aforementioned absence of an established civil society in the contemporary western sense of the phrase is in large part due to Slovak cultural issues and views of authority, with the phenomenon of communism resting on top of the cradle of broader

regional cultural tendencies. According to Skolkay (1996) "For example, the first post-communist director of Slovak Television, Roman Kalisky, emphasized the need for impartiality in television broadcasts, but he also noted at the same time that Slovak Television was 'an important informational medium of the Slovak parliament and Slovak government' to serve the democratization of Slovak society" (pg. 67). The strange thing about this line of thinking, strongly encouraged by Meciar and his coterie, was that broadcast media were expected to serve an undemocratic government in order to help build democracy. If need be, however, other legal means were used by the Slovakian government to reign in non-compliant entities in television broadcast media. When the state had no direct legal control over broadcast media to bring to bear, then it would use its legal control over monetary resources to throw its weight around. Skolkay (1996) offers this example:

> In 1993, the government refused to allocate money from the approved state budget for...Slovak Television, with the aim of forcing the institution to revise the content of its broadcasts...Throughout the transition from communism, the financial dependence of the electronic media on state support has been one of the main obstacles to...independence. This was compounded by...the reluctance of parliament to pass laws enacting and enforcing compulsory fees that would secure a regular income for state television... (pg. 74)

Strong-arm tactics have been a hallmark of eastern European leaders for hundreds of years, and Meciar was no different. So thoroughly did he and HZDS dominate Slovakian society from the decade that followed the partition of Czechoslovakia that it is impossible to not give credit (for better or worse) over the scale of impact that was made on Slovakian television broadcasting media. As far as the legal umbilical that connected television with the Slovakian state, Meciar was quite

comfortable and boastful of how he would conduct business. According to Human

Rights Watch/Helsinki (1994):

> Shortly after Meciar's appointment in 1992, it became clear that he wanted
> Slovak television to be decidedly pro-government...and to serve as a non-
> critical forum for the presentation of government policies. In August 1992,
> he told a crowd of supporters that 'the state of Slovak television is not
> normal' and that representatives of opposition parties, 'who had lost their
> credibility already,' appeared too often. 'If this is how they [the governors
> of Slovak television] understand objectivity, they will be dismissed,' Meciar
> said. (pg. 5)

What did Meciar understand and the HZDS was that if they controlled the

national television broadcast media's narrative then they could ensure the survival of

their governing coalition by keeping the electorate in a state of complacence where the

good news is that there is no bad news. This is not the sole preserve of the HZDS either,

as Slovakian politicians between and after Meciar's tenures in power have dragged their

collective feet when it came to the loosening of the legal connection between the Slovak

state and television broadcast media. This boils down to the adage of knowledge being

power. In his comprehensive article *Journalists, Political Elites, and the Post-*

Communist Public... Skolkay (1996) notes that:

> Control over public opinion expresses itself through ethical norms. If state
> authorities create norms for the public instead of the public themselves, it
> turns the relationship between the two on its head. In this way the state
> decides the content and scope of ethical norms through which citizens
> influence public authority, and in doing so it predetermines the method,
> condition, and scope of control for the state itself. (pg. 75)

This type of real politicking seems counter-intuitive to what westerners think of

when we consider the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, although it does reveal a

good amount of eastern European thinking. According to Andrej Skolkay, Maria Hong,

and Radoslav Kutas (2011), in a case study sponsored by the European Commission

entitled *Does Media Policy Promote Media Freedom and Independence? The Case of*

Slovakia, "The protection and promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of information is certainly neither a key element in, nor a long-term strategy for the development and implementation of media policy…in Slovakia" (pg. 8). There are nominal controls and constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of expression and protections from state control and censorship, of course. That being said, Skolkay et al (2011) note that "…in themselves, constitutional rules concerning the freedom of expression and freedom of information do not seem to influence the adoption of particular regulatory patterns for the media in Slovakia…More influential is tradition…and state pressure to regulate" (pg. 8). The roles of tradition and state pressure, and the tradition in Slovakia that *is* state pressure, have had just as much to do with the changes in Slovak television broadcast media as the fall of communism, although the fall of communism certainly shook things up a bit. According to Owen V. Johnson et al in the article *Media Legislation and Media Policy in Slovakia: EU Accession and the Second Wave of Reform* (2005):

> As a result, the legal system for Slovak media went through fundamental changes in the early 1990s and significant but not so crucial changes in the late 1990s. The first legal changes in the media section resulted from the fall of the communist regime. Later changes related to Slovakia's EU integration efforts. In the intervening years, minor changes in media legislation were driven by internal political struggles…In other words, media legislation…became a major political tool in attempts to influence media output, especially by Slovak public television, through financial penalties, limiting access to advertising and necessary technical equipment, by denying broadcast licenses or by personnel purges in public media and supervisory councils. (pg. 68)

Therefore, it can be seen that during the decade or so which followed the fall of communism that the Slovak state has been willing to go to creative legal ways to bring television broadcast media to heel. Two of those main ways, the management of

supervisory councils and public broadcasting, will be explored in the next two research questions.

What has been the role of political appointments regarding media licensing and oversight boards?

In this section, I will explore the nature of Slovakian state control and influence over the management as well as members of the boards of the entities involved in broadcast television regulation and bureaucracy. After the Velvet Revolution and the subsequent Velvet Divorce, Slovakian government officials were tasked with the creation of a broadcast media system to replace the oppressive communist system that was now in tatters. The communist media system, especially post-Prague Spring, had been a harsh mouthpiece of the Soviet Union and was still very much Stalinist in nature while in operation. Reflecting on the newly (at the time of his publication) defunct communist media system, Karol Jakubowicz (1995) wrote:

> In terms of institutional politics, the Communist system clearly sought full subordination of the media, and, to that end, created what has been called the centralized command media system, the main features of which were state monopoly of the media (or a ban on opposition media), financial control, administrative control (of appointments, goals, allocation of frequencies...monopoly of...distribution),...political censorship (leading to self-censorship)...and barriers to international information flows...The media fulfilled for the state the hegemonic functions of dominance, ideological homogenization of the audience, and reproduction of the existing social order. (pg. 127)

To this end, and with this goal in mind, the communists set up redundant control mechanisms over the mass media bureaucracy in order to secure complete dominance of information (both inflow and outflow). According to Skolkay (1996) the heads of federal television in communist Czechoslovakia:

> ...were nominated by the central government, while directors of regional...television channels in Slovakia were elected by the presidium of the Slovak parliament on the proposal of central directors...In this way overlapping lines of control were established not only from central institutions but also through local communist power structures. (pg. 62)

Skolkay (1996) later in the same article notes that during the communists' time in power "Directors of television were also regular participants in weekly meetings of central party committees...In this way top communist leaders were able to use the chain of authority to control the mass media directly" (pg. 64). Once the communists fell from power followed by the subsequent split-up of Czechoslovakia much of the legacy and mindset of state media control remained intact in Slovakia (though moves to reform it have been made). As such, according to Branislav Ondrasik (2013) there has been much suspicion regarding the Slovak state and "...the background of the relations between politicians and the media since the fall of communism in 1989" (pg. 1). There is wide belief that with the fall of the Eastern Bloc former communist countries turned broadly into pluralistic democracies in the model of the nations in the west of the continent. However, this belief does not take into account differences in cultures between the east and west. In the words of Milton (2001); "On the contrary, post-Communist actors' attempts to institutionally manipulate the media have been very similar to those of Communists, Nazis, and earlier nationalists" in post-Velvet Divorce Slovakia (pg. 495). Perhaps some of these controlling tendencies are direct byproducts of the historically recent conquests of Slovakia by these aforementioned groups. However, Johnson (2013) feels that in Slovakia "Societal leaders have sought media freedom for themselves so that they can use it to advance their goals," and that this is indicative of "...Slovakia's long-standing character of being fundamentally parochial" (pg. 151). Nowhere can this fundamentally parochial tendency be seen better than in the character of Vladimir

Meciar and the HZDS and how they dealt with and treated Slovakia's nascent television broadcast media's oversight committees and boards of directors upon their rise to power. According to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki (1994):

> The Board for...Television Broadcasting was created by law in May 1992. It oversees the work of...Slovak television...and the hiring and firing of its directors. It also awards licenses to private broadcasters, sets the conditions of those licenses, and periodically reviews whether private broadcasters have met the conditions. After its electoral victory, Meciar's political party frequently changed the structure and membership of the Board for Slovak Television for purely political reasons, creating chaos and dismay at the stations and among private investors. (pg. 5)

By controlling the board that controls licensing for private television broadcasters the Slovakian government had the final say on which private broadcasters received the permits and rights to the few terrestrial frequencies available in Slovakia, which meant that the Slovak government essentially controlled the broadcast media narrative on both the private as well as the public fronts. Indeed, according to Minarik (2000):

> Independent and 'public' status of Slovak Television...became only a formal attribute to cover indirect submission to and control by the government through its parliamentary majority. Transition from a state broadcaster to a truly independent public service operator was successfully blocked. The public broadcasters became controlled and even run by the government. The institutional modification [made after the 1992 victory of Meciar and HZDS] allowed the government to carry out changes in personnel not only at the board level, but also within the broadcasters and their...programs. The right to appoint the directors of Slovak Television...was transferred to the HZDS-dominated parliament. Several observers of the Slovak media concluded that, as a consequence of the institutional changes, Slovak Television worked as a tool of HZDS propaganda in the 1994-1998 period, and particularly in the run-up to the 1998 elections. (pg. 20)

After the fall of communism, there was a lot of intent and will for change. As such on paper, there are nominal nods to democratic ideals. The top television oversight entity, the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission, has plenty of liberal sophistry woven into its charter. In a later research paper, Minarik (2003) states that:

...the objective of the Council is 'to enforce the interests of the public in the exercise of the rights to information and freedom of speech, and rights of access to cultural values and education, and to perform state regulation in the areas of broadcasting and retransmission.' Regarding the contents of politically relevant broadcasting, the Council 'shall pursue the maintenance of plurality of information in the...programs of the broadcasters broadcasting on the basis given by law... (pg. 14)

However, just what is the basis given by law, and who decides that law? The answer of course is the Slovakian government, and they have shown a marked lack of enthusiasm for the establishment of a truly free and independent broadcast television media system in the contemporary western sense. The way that the Slovakian state has established said "basis given by law" for the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission is through what amounts to politically convenient use of laws and regulation. According to Skolkay et al (2011):

The Slovak media are primarily regulated by traditional state regulation which has a strong influence on the semi-independent regulatory authorities. There is general agreement that general favoritism exists towards TV broadcasters across the...spectrum in Slovakia. There is also significant intervention by the courts of law, ruling on appeals against the regulators' decisions. Media legislation is either very unstable (regarding broadcasting) or politically polarized...or widespread and unclear... (pg. 27)

In the days after Meciar and HZDS's 1992 victory, Meciar set about to consolidate his power over television broadcasting in Slovakia. Skolkay (1996) stated that after the election "...the republican parliament under the Meciar government changed the law governing Slovak television to allow the parliament to engineer appointments as well as dismissals of members of the supervisory boards through simple majority quorum" (pg. 18). Meciar was not only keen to acquire the means to muzzle broadcast media by power of dismissals, but he was also more than willing to use it. Milton (2001) coolly observed the similarities between Slovakia's past and present by noting that "It was not long...before the new government, like others before it, would turn the ax of political

dismissals on the media management" (pg. 511). Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2003) seems to

agree that in Slovakia "The interplay of political influences is part of the institutional

culture surrounding…television…," and that it could be said "…the removal of top-level

management when the government is changed is the norm rather than the exception"

(pg. 39).

Axing broadcast media board members and management is just one component

of the mechanism of influence and control exercised by the Slovakian state upon the

television broadcast regulatory bodies. The other side of the coin is the appointment of

pro-government board members ("yes-men," if you will) to the heads of these regulatory

bodies. Mihai Coman (2010) noted that in Slovakia:

> …broadcasting is still, as it was before the political changes, largely
> subordinated to the state authorities and party elites rather than to public
> accountability. This influence is both direct and indirect. It is direct in areas
> where the state's representatives have control. There have been a number
> of celebrated disputes to win control of…television… (pg. 46)

These disputes have remained in tandem lockstep along with the development of

political disputes in the country, with whomever finds themselves at the top of the

Slovakian government at that moment in possession of a powerful propaganda tool

(especially when it comes to public television, which on paper is supposedly impartial

and is supposed to offer equal access to both ruling and opposition parties alike).

Mungiu-Pippidi (2003) offers this anecdotal account of a Slovakian broadcasting

regulatory board member:

> Politicians are obviously content with the *status quo* and appoint their
> cronies or "yes-men" to various supervising boards. One broadcasting
> board member interviewed explained the need for commercial television as
> well as public service television to provide 'high culture.' What was his
> previous position and what did he mean by 'high culture?' He had been the
> president's chief-of-staff and by 'high culture' he meant opera. When asked

to indicate a favorite opera composer the board member quoted Beethoven. (pg. 54)

Jakubowicz (2008) agrees by saying that "The lack of political independence of the Board is seen as one of the main causes for the lack of objectivity and diversity...of the public-service broadcaster..." (pg. 116). Jakubowicz (2008) goes on to say that this lack of political independence is due to "Heavy political control, resulting both from the politicization of the process of appointing top governing authorities, turning former state...television into 'parliamentary' rather than public broadcasters, or indeed amounting to its 're-nationalization'" (pg. 117). Even when the broadcast television regulatory bodies stood up to the Slovakian government and issued a decree that was against the ruling party's interests, then the decree would be fought in the courts or sometimes simply ignored altogether. Peter Gross (2010) offers an example of this passive-aggressive tactic:

> For instance, the Slovak Television Council ruled in 1996 that news time for Slovak Television (STV) news was to be divided equally between the government, the ruling Parliamentary coalition, and the Parliamentary opposition. Yet, just before the fall elections of 1998, the [Meciar] government continued to receive 60 percent of air time on STV news, with the ruling Parliamentary coalition and opposition each getting 20 percent. (pg. 82)

Despite all of this, there have actually been incremental moves on television broadcast media reform. The problem with keeping the Slovakian state from throwing its weight around and pressuring broadcast regulatory bodies is that the state still typically has the final say on matters (as the Slovakian government is still in nominal control of how the rules are constructed for said regulatory bodies). The particular party which finds itself in power can redraw the boundaries within which television broadcast media regulators and boards must operate by altering laws and regulations, dismissing

politically inconvenient board members and managers, the appointment of politically

aligned ("yes-men") board members, the use of courts, and sometimes by outright

ignoring regulatory board decrees.

What has been the nature of the state's involvement in public television broadcast?

Under communism, all television broadcast media were considered public and

for the express purpose of regurgitating propaganda lauding the accomplishments of

socialism while minimizing negative coverage involving anything inconvenient to the

image of the state (shortages, diseases, crime, etc.). After the fall of communism, there

was naturally a new space for private media to enter the television market, although the

licensing for this is still under the thumb of the Slovak state. However, public television

survived and was (and still is) considered an invaluable governing tool by Slovakian

politicians. Gross (2003) wrote that in the case of public television broadcast in

Slovakia:

> During the first five years of the post-Communist era, the control and
> influence exercised by political parties, politicians, political systems, and
> politics on the...media, particularly television, was greater than on any other
> institutions. A combinations of reasons can be posited for this: ownership
> and other sources of control and influence, the nature of politicians and the
> political system, the nature and behavior of political parties and of
> politicians, the overall political culture, the economic situation media found
> themselves in after 1989, and the legacy of Communism... (pg. 79)

Gross (2003) goes on to say that public television in Slovakia after the Velvet

Divorce "...differed little from...the Communist media," and that some of its activities

included the "...dissemination of selected information, partisan political indoctrination,

mobilization, and propagandizing" (pg. 79). The former freedom fighters turned new

political elites found that they too had a taste for the lash, and that power once seized is

very difficult to relinquish when the bureaucratic apparatus of an autocratic state is

inherited more or less intact. In order to maintain a grasp on public television

broadcast, Slovakian politicians have altered some of the more liberal media tendencies

and laws that were grandfathered into their new state after the split with the Czech

Republic. Jakubowicz (1995) explains how this was done with public television, as his

article was written a mere 2 years after the Velvet Divorce:

> In the countries that are the slowest to go through the transition process,
> governments or presidents still exert direct administrative influence and are
> able to interfere with the work of state broadcasting organizations
> practically at will, by decree. In Slovakia, which inherited the liberal 1991
> Broadcasting Act adopted in the former Czechoslovakia, a more elaborate
> system was developed. Under the Slovak law amending the
> Act...broadcasting...by the Slovak Radio and Television Broadcasting
> Council must be confirmed by the National Council (the country's
> parliament). In 1993 another law was passed, providing that if 10% of
> deputies propose a change in the membership of the Slovak Radio and
> Television Broadcasting Council and the boards of...Slovak Television, both
> directly elected by parliament, that proposal must be discussed and can be
> ratified with a simple majority. This gives the governing coalition the ability
> to subordinate the council as well as public...television to its wishes. (pg.
> 135)

This system hamstrung any efforts that could be made to move for reform in

public television, and Slovakian politicians have kept control through parliamentary law

to this day (although in a much more diluted fashion). Efforts to integrate Slovakia into

European Union standards have certainly helped the situation, but immediately post-

communism and Velvet Divorce there were more similarities between the way Slovakian

politicians used public television then they cared to admit. This may have been in large

part due to the authoritative Slovakian culture, and therefore represents a naturally

occurring phenomenon. Jakubowicz (1995) went on to note that in Slovakia:

> One could thus, actually, say that the old broadcasting systems that had
> previously been controlled by the Communist party are in some cases being
> renationalized and turned into government agencies or, at best, national,

politicized, and quasi-commercial public broadcasting systems. One observer was moved to note that, 'as a result of state and market-commercial logic of the social and media restructuring, a kind of paternal-commercial media system is developing.' (pg. 135)

There is that same paternal, authoritative cultural aspect that has crept up on multiple occasions during this analysis. Gross (2003) wrote that "The relationship between Eastern European political elites and media thus sheds light not only on the nature of media…but also on the dominant political culture they represent, reinforce, and thus propagate" (pg. 80). It stands to reason, therefore, that political culture can be viewed as a reflection of broader culture, and that in turn political culture leaves its footprint on broader Slovakian culture as well. When it comes to Slovakia, it would appear that the state's autocratic pedigree continues to affect how the Slovakian state views public television. Gross (2003) continued by saying that "Furthermore, the political parties in control of the government's view the so-called public broadcasting media, particularly television, 'as a significant military position' to bolster [their] power'" (pg. 81). Considering the bleak, cynical view that Slovakian politicians regarded public television and the propensity for history to repeat itself it is somewhat surprising that there has not been more research into this subject. Mungiu-Pippidi (2003) noted, "Few studies have focused on the role of the media and broadcasting in new democracies and the relationship between the media and the emerging political and social order…Unlike the rest of the media, public broadcasting is still subject to political influence…" (pg. 32). This unfortunately is an inversion of how western democracies have viewed the role of public television. However, again this can be viewed through a cultural lens. Indeed, Mungiu-Pippidi (2003) wrote that "…one's conception of broadcasting must be in step with one's larger conception of society," and that instead of

being a muzzled entity meant only to serve the propaganda needs of the Slovakian state

"Rather, the mission of public service television lies in providing the necessary

information for a citizen to facilitate his or her enlightened participation in the

democratic process, i.e. providing objective, in-depth and prompt information" (pg. 34).

Of course, this is all theoretical, and actions are much more difficult to implement than

merely paying lip service to the idea of an egalitarian public television broadcasting

system. Mungiu-Pippidi (2003) wrote that "The legal status of public service television

is often subject to ideological debates with practical consequences...While 'public' is a

relatively new concept, 'national' is often understood to mean the subordination of the

truth to the national interest represented by the government or some official office-

holder" (pg. 48). This concisely sums up how Slovakian politicians regarded (and to an

extent still regard) television broadcast, as a tool to mold Slovakia into the image that

they see fit. However, this was particularly bad during the 1990s. According to Nora

Schleicher (2000), in her book *Communication Culture in Transition*, although

"...public Slovak Television...has always been in the center of politicians' interest...its

pro-governmental orientation was much clearer under Vladimir Meciar's

governments..." (pg. 161). There are those that take an exceedingly realistic viewpoint of

politics and public television in Slovakia, that there simply is no way to amputate

political influence from public television broadcasting. According to Jakubowicz (2008)

regarding public television in Slovakia:

> ...the decisive element is not the <u>fact</u> of involvement by politicians, e.g., in
> the appointment of the governing bodies of [public service broadcast
> organizations], or in other relations with them (as this is very common in
> all systems), but the <u>quality</u> of that involvement or relations. This is where
> political culture comes in...political culture consists of widely shared,
> fundamental beliefs that have political consequences. Political culture
> shapes how individuals and the society act and react politically. It is

political culture, to a great extent, that determines whether the society is able to maintain and operate a viable and enduring constitutional democratic system of government, or whether the society must choose between authoritarianism and domestic disorder. Political culture sets the framework, the intellectual environment, within which government and politics take place. Among other things, it should constrain the actions of politicians and public officials: even if inclined otherwise, they usually refrain from taking positions or from implementing policies that blatantly violate the elements of the political culture. (pg. 108)

This actually represents the problem with public television and political culture in Slovakia, as it is somewhat difficult to blatantly violate elements of the political culture regarding how the role of public television is viewed with Slovakia's authoritarian past. Jakubowicz (2008) goes on to note that public television's lack of independence is more of a symptom of a broader cultural issue of "...a far more fundamental nature: lack of social embeddedness of the idea of public service broadcasting and lack of a social constituency willing and able to support public service broadcasters and buttress its autonomy and independence" (pg. 117). Johnson (2013) agrees, noting that this is a problem that has not completely evaporated with Slovakia's membership in the European Union:

> ...every Slovak government since 1993 has sought to use Slovak Television, STV, ostensibly a public broadcaster, as a state television network...Patrons of public broadcasting in Slovakia advocate a BBC-like system supported by society that provides comprehensive, reliable and fair news coverage as well as presenting quality cultural broadcasts. That is a nearly impossible mission in a country with a political culture where government and political leaders have directed state media for eighty-five years... (pg. 160)

This thesis has explored Slovakian culture, political and otherwise, and how it serves to subordinate public television broadcast to the purposes of the state, but what are the actual mechanics in which this feat is accomplished? Simply put, through money and law.

According to Minarik (2000) this sort of behavior was even occurring before the formal split with the Czech Republic:

> In May 1991, Slovakia became the first post-communist country in Central and Eastern Europe to adopt the law on 'public broadcasting institutions,' which should technically have created a more independent electronic mass media...The impulse for transformation of the media did not come from leading democratic politicians of the former anti-communist opposition in Slovakia...This indicates that they failed to grasp the importance of the public status of the mass media and preferred to have the media subject to their potential control. The legislation passed by the Slovak parliament did not clarify what in fact the public status entailed. It appears now that the parliament and government were reluctant to define the term 'public,' finding its ambiguity potentially useful in serving their needs. The new law therefore did not guarantee financial and political independence of the broadcasting media. (pg. 21)

The law therefore was a Trojan horse, masquerading as an instrument of autonomy for public television broadcast while hobbling any chance of true independence. Skolkay (1996) wrote that "The new laws explicitly stated that Slovak Television...were dependent in part on the state budget...Moreover, the assets of...public broadcasting institutions were still defined as state property" (pg. 25). Minarik (2000) goes on to say that "The change in the legislation replaced the state or government control with a 'public' control, which was however seen solely in terms of political representation...Thus, the public broadcasters started to be controlled by the parliamentary majority, which in practice however consists of the same political parties that form the government" (pg. 21). This stands to reason since parliament had control of the budgets on public television broadcasts, and Skolkay (1996) acknowledged that 'The cancellation of finance for the so called mass media was the most effect tool for the government to pressure...Slovak Television...' (pg. 26).

However, to what ends have the Slovakian politicians used their influence on public television? Adroitly put propaganda (or at best heavily slanted coverage in favor

of the state). Minarick (2000) wrote that "There has been a sharp difference between the behavior of the 'public' and private mass media in Slovakia," and that in practice "...Slovak Television became an uncritical tool of the governmental propaganda..." (pg. 30). The nomenclature used post-communism has certainly changed, typically propaganda as terminology is dressed up in the phrase "parliamentary broadcasting." Monika Metykova and Lenka Waschkova Cisarova (2009) elaborate:

> In terms of political interference, the most obvious examples...involve public service broadcasters...public service broadcasting, where it has been nominally created, is usually 'parliamentary broadcasting': the role of parliament in appointing broadcasting regulatory and supervisory bodies is so strong that 'public' broadcasters do not really represent the public, but the parliamentary majority. In some cases, the attempts to exercise political control went to such lengths that media analysts termed them media 'battles' or 'wars.' (pg. 721)

As stated before, Slovakian politicians were loath to relinquish the influence and power of public television that they had inherited from the hated communists. Therefore, they used any means available to them to retain control in order to decide the manner and subject matter being projected by public television. According to Coman (2010), in Slovakia "The legal provisions concerning broadcasting stations in the public sector, as well as their implementation, give the state institutions (no matter which parties or which ideologies are in power) the power to control information and the program contents of public service stations" (pg. 37). Zuzana Kusa (2001) wrote that public media in Slovakia:

> ...exerted the role of a mourning person that reads loudly complaints on miserable fate that have to be repeated in chorus. The abstract and sniveling form of media discourse in Slovakia [is] also shared by top politicians. Their 'arguments' as well as missing experiences of positive social integration and public control of the political elite helped to stabilize the representation of the 'eternity' of the elite standing above the law. This 'true picture' of social life was reinforced by the feeling of distance between one's daily troubles

and the interests of the political elite as well as disbelief in one's own impact on improvement of social life. (pg. 169).

This last part is a good example of the negative impact that propaganda/parliamentary broadcasting has had on the Slovak populace. Indeed, Kusa (2001) goes on to say, "…media representations of the rules of political and economic life in Slovakia substantially contributed to the decrease of the political confidence and self-confidence of citizens" (pg. 163). This remains the situation today to an extent, but government interference with public television broadcasting peaked in the 1990s. According to Metykova (2004):

> …Public service broadcasting existed only in name in Slovakia between 1993 and 1998. Thus, instead of referring to public service broadcasting I refer to state-controlled broadcasting…The governing coalition, and especially the Movement for Democratic Slovakia (Meciar's party), used its political influence to turn the state-controlled media into government and party political advocates…From Autumn 1994 until the fall of Meciar's government 4 years later, members of the Broadcasting Council were exclusively associates of the governing coalition. The state-controlled television channels (STV1 and STV2) were governed by the Council of the Slovak Television…The [Council] were *inter alia* responsible for the independence of public service media as well as objectivity in their broadcasting. However, members of [the Council] were appointed in a clearly political way… (pg. 226)

The whole situation was heavily slanted in favor of the Slovak state and could be described as a fox-in-the-hen-house sort of situation or of the prisoners being in charge of the prison. Moreover, much like propaganda's effects on Slovakian citizens' perceptions of their own worth and personal political control, this slant has had severely negative effects on the populace. Metykova (2004) elaborated:

> The transformation of Slovak…state controlled broadcasting to public service broadcasting under the conditions of democracy and free market has faced a number of obstacles. In the case of Slovakia efforts at gaining political control over broadcasting went hand in hand with the use of media for nation building purposes that in turn caused a worsening of ethnic relations in the country as broadcasting involved solely the majority Slovak

population. Between the years 1993 and 1998 what was called Slovak public service broadcasting was under the control of the ruling coalition. This was enabled by formal as well as informal means, above all by the appointment of regulatory and supervisory bodies. (pg. 231)

There certainly are benefits to being in power, and being able to change the rules of the game typically means that winning is much more likely. Never was/is this more important than during an electoral season, as deciding what people hear and know about their political options is a crucial weapon in an election. Fernando Casal Bertoa, Kevin Deegan-Krause, and Peter Ucen (2014) offer a good example of this:

> Meciar's government frequently sought to change institutional rules for partisan benefit, and this strategy spilled over into the realm of party finance regulation on the question of party media access. The original Slovak election law 80/1990 had provided an implicit subsidy to parties by obliging state...television broadcasting companies to provide space for political advertising of the campaigning parties and to divide such dedicated airtime between parties in an equitable way. In 1992, an amendment (104/1992) specified an exact amount of airtime—21 hours—and banned party broadcasting by state organizations outside of the dedicated slots. The 1998 amendment to the electoral law (Act 187/1998) took these limits considerably further by allowing *only* the specified state airtime and banning campaign advertising in *all* private media, a move calculated to strengthen governing parties and their privileged access to state media. (pg. 360)

Public television broadcasting has faced a number of challenges during the growing pains of Slovakia as it continues to attempt to shed its autocratic past at the hands of empires, fascists, and communists, or in the words of Johnson et al (2005) of "...shifting from an authoritarian media system to one emphasizing social responsibility, that is, from one representing primarily the government to one attending primarily to the interests of the public" (pg. 71). This of course is much easier to say than to do, especially after such a long cultural experience with autocracy. Rhodes (2001) puts it in the best way possible by writing that "In the end, the Slovak people and their leaders will have to work through the country's...challenges on their own" (pg. 11).

CZECH REPUBLIC

(Figure 2: Political Map of the Czech Republic.)

As noted above, the Czechs and other denizens of what is now the Czech Republic have had a longer and more recent history of self-rule and governance. In fact, the former Czechoslovakia's liberal reputation stemmed mostly from the portion that is now the Czech Republic rather than what is now Slovakia. This difference in political culture became quickly apparent after the Velvet Divorce as Slovakia diverged back onto the path of autocracy. The difference in political culture has also reflected itself onto television broadcast media and the particular path the Czech parliamentarians have guided the system down.

What has been the legal connection of the state to broadcast media?

In contrast to the Slovaks, the Czechs have had a much more consistently open television broadcast system that has not displayed the authoritarian tendencies that permeated the Slovakian experience. The Czechs (as mentioned in the background section of the thesis) have had a richer tradition of self-rule throughout their long history. Furthermore, the territory that is contained in the Czech Republic has been traditionally some of the richest and most industrialized regions in central Europe. In addition, even though the Czech Republic has suffered the same setbacks as other former communist nations it generally has been in a better position than its neighbors have. Petr Pavlik and Peter Shields (1999) offer a nice summation of the evolution of Czech television broadcast at the turn of the millennium:

> Since the collapse of the Communist regimes in the *annus mirabilis* of 1989, the Czech Republic has experienced some of the most profound economic and political changes of all post-Communist countries…These dramatic societal transformations are reflected in the ferment that has occurred in Czech television, which, a little over a decade ago was monopolized by the Czechoslovak state. Today, the now independent Czech Republic has a well-developed dual broadcast system…the state continues to have a television operation but it is now institutionalized in the form of a public broadcast corporation. (pgs. 487-488)

The Czech Republic's dual broadcast system, which insures a place for both public and private television broadcast (which plays a much bigger role in the Czech Republic than in Slovakia), is a hallmark of the evolution of the Czech Republic's broader media system from the saccharine propaganda of the Communist party towards an independent institution of the Czech nation. It was partly due to a collective sense of revulsion towards state dominated television broadcast leftover from the nation's memory of communist media methods that played such a huge role in the establishment of the (occasionally lopsided) dual broadcast system. Indeed, the communists, upon taking power in what was then Czechoslovakia, soon realized the power that television broadcasting held in keeping their new hold on power solidified. Pavlik et al (1999) add a little historical context that is necessary in understanding how the Czechs came to interpret "freedom" regarding television broadcast and (in their mind) its inextricable link to laissez-faire style, unbridled capitalism:

> Shortly after the Communists came to power in 1948, the deployment of television began in earnest. From the beginning, Czechoslovak Television (CST) was tightly controlled by the Communist Party. The party leadership was well aware of the propaganda potential of the medium. As a former chief party ideologue named Vasil Bilak put it: 'Mass media...are tremendously important instruments of power and mass political education which must never escape from the direction and control of the Marxist-Leninist Party and the socialist state if we want to avoid serious danger to socialism.' (pgs. 494-495)

The Czech Republic, behind the iron curtain and still party to its forced marriage with Slovakia, had no sooner emerged from the nightmare of Nazi occupation only to have to dip back under the authoritarian thumb of outsiders once more (this time the Soviets and their Marxist collaborators). The Slovaks with their background of subjugation and obedience seemed to suffer less on a cultural level then the Czechs,

which in turn influenced how the Czechs wished to construct their new state and its use

and involvement in television broadcast. The proliferation of the illicit samizdat

movement as well as the presence of Radio Free Europe had brought in a trickle of

outside information during the communist occupation before the Velvet Revolution but

television broadcasting remained thoroughly under the thumb of the Czechoslovakian

state and communist party and only spouted information that glorified socialism. Epp

Lauk (2008) offers a summation of the nature of the Communist party and television

broadcast:

> The consequence of the Party supervision and all-encompassing censorship was that...the media reported primarily the achievements of 'socialist construction' in industry, agriculture, culture, science, and education...Manuals for censors with lists of forbidden subjects included accidents with human losses, public unrest, epidemics, crimes, jails, etc.... (pg. 199)

All of this is fascinating history, but what does it have to do with the development

of the Czech Republic's television broadcast system and its relation to the Czech state

after the split with Slovakia in 1993? Quite simply, this legacy of state domination and

control of not only the broadcast of Czech television but also its content left an indelible

mark on the Czech psyche and how it viewed authority and the state's involvement in

television broadcast. It was around the memory of this legacy of domination that the

Czechs formulated the new landscape of television broadcasting in their nascent

country, and it was this memory that spurred the impetus for the dominance of the

private market. The process centered on parliamentary law (the Broadcasting Law,

primarily) which altered, edited, or deleted portions of television broadcast law which

had been grandfathered in from the former Czechoslovakia. The primary law

responsible for the transmutation of Czech broadcast television from an entity

completely controlled by the state into an (ostensibly) pluralistic system with both

private and public components, the so-called dual system, has been the backbone of

Czech state involvement in television broadcast since its inception. Frank L. Kaplan and

Milan Smid (1995) write of the Broadcasting Law a mere four years after its

implementation:

> The...Broadcasting Law abolished the state monopoly of broadcasting and established prerequisites for the coexistence of public and private sectors in...television broadcasting. The law defines two sorts of operators: the public broadcaster, who is entitled to broadcast by the relevant law, and the private broadcaster, who gains authority and legitimacy to broadcast through the grant of licenses. (pg. 35)

Reflecting the pride with which the Czechs view their heritage of autonomy and

democracy, the Broadcasting law was meant to be a document of progressiveness and a

return to Europe (which had been a rallying cry of the Czech freedom fighters as they

sought to rejoin the advanced countries of the continent and resist the eastern invaders

from Eurasia). The Czech Republic's Broadcasting Law was unique among former

communist nations. According to Milan Smid, Frank L. Kaplan, and Robert Trager

(1996) in a research paper written within the first three years of Czech self-rule:

> The law was the first of its kind to be adopted by a member state of the former Soviet commonwealth. In drafting the bill, which laid down a new pattern for the country's entire broadcasting system, the government tried to implement the European standards of a dual broadcasting system as described in various Council of Europe documents. (pgs. 5-6).

The law since its inception at the outset of the Czech Republic's statehood has

had a clear and present effect on the broadcast media up to this day, particularly up

through the Czech Republic's accession into the European Union. At this point, it is

worth drawing a parallel with Slovakia. In Slovakia, the various governments used their

parliamentary powers to strengthen the state in television broadcast, returning it to the

position of mouthpiece of the government in the case of public television. The Czech

Republic went the opposite way, equating liberty and freedom from the shackles of

communism with rampant capitalism and very little state oversight in some cases. What

is interesting to note is that both Slovakia and the Czech Republic used parliamentary

law as a tool for developing their television broadcast systems while utilizing it for

diametrically opposite reasons (which may be attributed to their different cultures).

Smid et al (1996) explain how the Broadcasting Law was actually designed to serve the

desires of neo-liberal politicians working on behalf of the private market in the newly

founded Czech Republic:

> The Czech Parliament de facto amended the Broadcasting Law merely a
> week after its promulgation by designating...public television...a limit of
> only one percent of advertising time. This was an obvious attempt by
> Parliament to create favorable conditions for future private broadcasters to
> dominate the advertising market. This tendency to favor the private sector
> has emerged as an inseparable link between the Czech Parliament and the
> country's future media policy. (pg. 9)

The private sector link and its preponderance in the Czech Republic's television

broadcast system is indicative of the legacy of autonomy and self-rule (as misguided as

that may be in confusing liberty with the dominance of the market) which is a hallmark

of Czech culture. Both the Czech Republic and Slovakia suffered under the exact same

communist domination within the exact same geopolitical entity (Czechoslovakia), yet

each used its parliaments in very, very different ways. In the Czechs' case, the slide

towards the market seems a bit more understandable than the replication of

authoritarian methods that were found in Slovakia.

Pavlik et al (1999) wrote about the mindset of those politicians in the Czech Republic who orchestrated the unleashing of the private sector into the realm of television broadcasting:

> The [economistic vision of the neo-liberals] saw the construction of civil society as essentially predicated on the establishment of private capitalism and the institutionalization of the rule of the market. From that would flow benefits of liberty and democracy...In accord with their vision, dissidents advocated the establishment of a balanced dual broadcast system that would enjoy a significant degree of independence from the state. This perspective was reflected in the Broadcast Law of 1991. Commensurable with their vision, the neo-liberals amended this law in order to limit the independence of the [Czech Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting] and to tip the balance of the dual broadcast system in favor of private sector actors. (pg. 510)

Regarding the Czech Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (CBC), it will be covered more during the second research question in this chapter. The balance in favor of the private market within the dual broadcasting system, once tipped, has never been equalized since in terms of influence. According to Jan Jirak and Barbara Kopplova (2008) the most common aspect of Czech television broadcasting is "...that those types of...production which are not oriented to profit-making and do not tend towards conglomerization have not prospered" (pgs. 14-15). However, this is not the exclusive preserve of the Czech Republic (although it is a unique country in relation to its other former communist neighbors economically, culturally, and socially). According to Lauk (2008) "Within the conditions of a young democracy with underdeveloped political and media culture, the profit-making aims of...investors are inevitably accompanied by the growing power of their outlets in society and that certainly affects its politics and culture" (pg. 202). It is not all glum regarding the Czech Republic's politicians meddling with television broadcasting and the private market. Although the Czechs have skewed television broadcasting in favor of the private market through

parliamentary law, they largely have not engaged in censorship or the editing of content

like their predecessors and Slovak neighbors. According to Jirak et al (2013) regarding

television broadcast in the Czech Republic:

> Though politicians do seek to control public service media, Czech media in
> general operate in very liberal political and legal environments. Comparing
> the contemporary development with the media situation prior to 1989,
> Czech society has reached more or less all the objectives which were
> articulated in 1989, including freedom of expression, media content
> produced independently of the state, unrestricted access to information,
> [and] lack of political control... (pg. 185)

This is a far cry better than many in the neighborhood of the Czech Republic, but

with the Czech background in a democratic tradition and a tendency to veer towards

western ideas of television media and economics this is not necessarily unforeseen or

surprising. Jirak et al (2013) elaborate that "As a result, Czech media were ready to

embrace swift and fundamental change at the beginning of 1990s—from a media system

based on the exploitation of ideological, manipulative, educational, and aesthetic

functions to one based on commercialized, profit-oriented...content and functions" (pg.

189). This transformation was accomplished with the help of sympathetic, business-

friendly parliamentarians and their democratically inexperienced constituents, although

it seldom took on an authoritative context. According to Marius Dragomir (2003)

"Praised as one of the most developed democracies among the former communist

nations, the Czech Republic has been an example of a free environment propitious for

the development of independent media" (pg. 26). That being said, this was not a

complete "return to Europe" (to invoke the battle cry of the Czech freedom fighters).

Tomas P. Klvana (2004) puts it concisely by stating, "The capitalism the Czechs were

entering in the 1990s was different from the capitalism their grandfathers had lost

decades earlier" (pg. 43). Mihai Coman (2010) notes that with television in the Czech

Republic "The mass media…experienced not only a forceful entry of foreign capital but,

even more importantly, an invasion of western programming" (pg. 41). The magnitude

of the economic importance of western television broadcasting's content and breadth

was an unknown entity before the wraith of totalitarianism consumed them, and many

authors note that it was an astounding force to be made aware of after the careful

filtering of the former communist regime. However, such was the scale of the former

regime's repression that even in a country as thoroughly committed to democracy and

the free market as the Czech Republic that there was a vestige of the tendency for

politicians to influence television broadcasting in the country to serve their needs.

Although very minor compared to Slovakia and other post-communist states, and

predominantly focused in the mid-1990s, it is still worth mentioning in this analysis. In

a study produced just one year after the Czech Republic's independence, Tracie L.

Wilson (1994) wrote:

> Since there has been a major drive in the Czech Republic to privatize media
> organizations, the problem of direct government influence is much less
> acute. Nevertheless, the Czech government does attempt to influence the
> media to a smaller extent and in less direct ways, and appears to believe that
> it has a natural right to greater…access than competing interests…some
> members of the Czech government are somewhat disturbed at the idea that
> broadcasting might become politicized, particularly if there is a chance that
> it might be influenced by members of the opposition. (pg. 153)

It is that sneaking suspicion, that nagging paranoia that allows those who once

fought oppression upon finding themselves in power to rationalize the use of television

broadcast media in their interests. This is because there is a popular view in eastern and

central Europe that broadcast media are still tools to mold the nation in a positive

direction, with the concept of positive direction left to the eye of the beholder. Wilson

(1994) elaborated that "Supporters…see the media as 'agents of political

communication,' through which political parties and politicians maintain a dialogue...Those who favor this approach generally believe that media (particularly broadcasting) is very valuable in influencing public opinion" (pg. 156). However, the Czech population has not proven to be as quiescent as their Slovak neighbors are when it came to political dirty dealing designed to bolster the positions of the political elites. So although Florian Toepfl (2013) wrote that "mass media outlets function inevitably and, in any society, as tools of those in power," he also wrote that "In the Czech Republic, for instance, 50,000 protesters took to Vaclav Square in Prague in 2000 when political elites attempted to reshuffle leading positions in public TV all too obviously in accordance with political considerations" (pg. 10-11). It is this case of civic activism and pride that the Czech culture hold that makes them unique in the region. Toepfl (2013) has written "...the Czech Republic is an exceptional case in the sense that none of the other East European countries had 'a serious democratic tradition'" (pg. 14). That being said, the massive influence held by the private media (bestowed upon them by sympathetic parliamentarians) was not the panacea that the Czechs were hoping for. Many authors note that much of the programming regressed to the intellectual level of the communist era, tabloid-style coverage replaced the propaganda-oriented news, and there has been much wrangling over broadcast frequencies and to whom they will be awarded.

Zrinjka Perusko and Helena Popovic (2008) wrote that with Czech television "...full control of the media by a market-based institution is as undesirable as full total control by the state," especially if there are multiple market-based institutions (corporations and other private interests) which are all competing against not only each other but to a certain extent public television in a saturated media environment. That

being said, the television broadcast media system in the Czech Republic is in much better shape and of a much more liberal and inclusive nature in a lot of ways than many of the other former Soviet client-states. John Rosenbaum and Heather Duncan (2001) concisely sum up Czech broadcast television and its legal connection to the state by saying that "Political deregulation and changes in the economic system…and society itself would further enliven…freedom" and movement away from the state-dominated television broadcast pedigree that the Czech Republic still holds.

In the next segment of the chapter, I will further investigate the state's political role in television broadcast media. This time I will focus on politically motivated appointments to licensing and oversight bodies. Finally, in the third segment I will delve into the nature of the Czech state's involvement in public television broadcast.

What has been the role of political appointments regarding media licensing and oversight boards?

The development leading to the licensing and oversight boards of the dual television broadcast system in the Czech Republic has been an ongoing and evolutionary process. The Broadcasting Law provided the bedrock for the construction of the two boards (the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting and the Council of Czech Television) which regulate the dual system and as such has been amended with time. Even in current times, the councils face the prospect of political interference by the parliamentary majority (though not in a way nearly as autocratic as Slovakia's experience). Typically, this interference takes the form of the reshuffling of cabinets running the councils by either appointments or dismissals with occasionally financial pressure as well. Tomas Trampota (2016) summarized the current assignments,

responsibilities, and the nature of the makeup of the boards for both councils in charge

of Czech television broadcast:

> The key regulator is the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting. It consists of 13 counsellors elected for six-year terms. The body's main task is to monitor TV...broadcasting as well as issue and extend broadcasting licenses. The regulatory body governing public service television is the Council of Czech Television (15 counsellors elected for six years each) ...The Chamber of Deputies, part of the Czech parliament, elects the counsellors of all regulatory bodies. This system of choosing counsellors can lead to politicization; composition of regulatory bodies typically reflects the ruling parties of the Chamber of Deputies. (pg. 6)

Thus even with accession to the European Union the Czech Republic still holds

some measure of state influence over the oversight councils. This could in turn be

interpreted as a shared tendency with the Slovakians but the critical thing to realize is

that in Slovakia parliamentary influence and dominance of television broadcasting was a

move towards autocracy and strengthening the state, whereas in the Czech Republic it

was to undermine the effectiveness of the oversight councils in order to favor the private

sector. Indeed, the rules regarding the state oversight of these television broadcast

regulation and oversight boards has partially neutered their effectiveness based on the

whims of those in parliamentary power (since they write said rules). Smid et al (1997)

explained the foundation of the government oversight of the Council for Radio and

Television Broadcasting two years from the Czech Republic's accession into NATO and 7

years from membership in the European Union:

> In contrast to...foreign models...the accountability of the [Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting] is directed exclusively to the Czech Parliament. The Parliament elects all nine council members. Furthermore, the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting is required to submit to Parliament at least once a year, or as often as Parliament dictates, an activities report. According to Law No. 103/1992, the Czech Broadcasting Council as a whole may be recalled by Parliament. (pg. 10)

There were some steps that were put in place to keep politics out of the television broadcast councils around this point in time. Steven Kettle (1996) gives an example by noting that from the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting's inception the members "...are barred from holding official posts in any political party or in the management of media concerns; they may not have any financial interest in broadcasting companies or any other commercial interests that could affect their decisions" (pgs. 48-49). There is a fundamental problem with this arrangement. The members of the council may be barred from having conflicting interests, but they answer to parliament for funding and appointments (and parliament has no rules against membership in a political party or of favoring the private sector). As such, the work of the council is inextricably linked to politics because despite the vetting given the council members regarding conflicting political loyalties, the council members answer ultimately to politicians whose motivations may be derived from other ends besides just governance. Kettle (1996) wrote that in the Czech Republic "Many politicians have not come to terms with the existence or desirability of genuinely free media in their country, still seeing the need for political control" (pg. 59). Later towards the end of the millennium, Pavlik et al (1999) reflected on the foundation of the Czech state's involvement with oversight of the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (for the purpose of brevity in this citation the council will be referred to as the CBC):

> The CBC's remit was to formulate regulatory policy for the private broadcast sector. In principle, the CBC was to be as independent as possible from governmental influence. The law which created the CBC stipulated that the CBC could be recalled only if it failed to present to the CNC a report about the state of broadcasting and the CBC's activities at least once a year or at any time the Czech National Council requests such a report. However, Act No. 36/1993 amended this to read: 'The Czech National Council could recall the [entire] [CBC]...if the Czech National Council fails repeatedly to approve the report on CNB activities...While the original wording enabled the recall

of the CBC only when the Council would prove not to be accountable to the legislature, the new version empowers Parliament to recall the CBC any time a majority of deputies chooses... (pgs. 502-503)

However, the recall of the CBC is hardly the worst option that parliament has to deploy against the council. In fact, parliament essentially has "the nuclear option" to deal with the council if cabinet shifts and budget cuts do not suffice. Smid et al (1997) states that "In addition to the way in which the CBC is funded...and the Council's dependence on Parliament, which may 'recall the [entire] Council if the Council does not fulfill its duties'...a provision of considerably greater importance...modifies preconditions for abolishing the CBC" (pg. 14). Noting the compromised nature of the oversight councils during the years after the Velvet Revolution, Kaplan et al (1995) wrote that "This clear CBC dependence on parliament stems from the belief, that prevailed in many post-communist East-Central European countries during the early days of political change, that the public's best and only representative body was the parliament because the legitimacy of democratically elected deputies was indisputable" (pgs. 36-37). This language, however, was a fancy way of issuing a demand to television broadcasting by exhorting everyone in the system to obey parliament as representative of the supreme will of the people (which is an idea that rings the bell of communism). In the words of Pavlik et al (1999) "The signal sent from Parliament [to the CBC] was not 'behave according to your mandate' but rather 'show more obedience to us'" (pg. 505).

This also sounds like autocratic behavior for the Czechs, with their history of democracy and autonomy. In fact, the experience of the Czech television broadcast oversight council's sounds (on just a mere read) much like Slovakia's. However, Slovakia engaged in censorship and other extreme measures to empower the state

whereas the Czech Republic typically tried to hamstring organizations that seemed to be in the way of capitalist oriented parliamentarians. Therefore, although very different in the directions that they have taken with their television broadcast systems the Czechs and Slovaks have both employed similar parliamentary tactics. In the apt words of Rosenbaum et al (2001) "…the difference between the media-power relationships in authoritarian and democratic regimes 'is not of the order of night and day…but rather night and twilight'" (pg. 143). In the Czech Republic, as well as with Slovakia and other post-communist countries, public television broadcasting was in an exceptionally vulnerable position to political influence by way of it being *public*. However, as noted before for many Czech politicians the private sector not only flexed political muscle but also could be measured in political terms of electoral loss or gain. Therefore, the issuance of permits to use television frequencies in the Czech Republic became a political issue as political pressure was placed on the Council to obey the ruling coalition's wishes. Metykova et al (2009) offer an example:

> …political intervention was not restricted to public service broadcasting as applications for frequencies were also often evaluated on political grounds…The most discussed case of political influence exercised by a commercial medium in East Central Europe probably involves the Czech television station TV Nova. The franchise for TV Nova was awarded to a group that included former dissidents with close links to the first post-communist government, who were able to gain privileges for the television station…Nova was in frequent conflict with the [Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting], and only survived intact because it was able to build important links with politicians. (pg. 722)

These links have only been strengthened throughout the years as the television broadcast media in the Czech Republic have become incredibly profit driven. As mentioned before in the analysis, television programs that are not profit oriented tend not to excel as much as those designed for the private market. Pavlik et al (1999)

elaborated on some of the tactics used by the capitalist parliamentarians to hobble the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting:

> Returning to the struggle between the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting [CBC] and TV Nova, one of the reasons the CBC has been on the losing end of this contest is because the parliamentary allies of private broadcast interests have, through rule making and appointments, sought to make the CBC much more compliant to parliamentary influence. (pg. 512)

So despite everything, and despite overt tyranny or authoritarianism over the Czech Republic in total not being present, the Czech state had more or less brought television broadcast to heel (although a more profit-driven and less dictatorial heel than the Slovaks). Different governments and parties did have different ideas on how to use television broadcast regulatory councils. Milton (2001) wrote that "...political actors (often parties) frequently argued over the political configuration of the broadcast media, the mechanisms of control (expressed as guarantees for fairness), and ultimately over the place of state media in the formation of nascent political society" (pg. 508). Privatized television did help in a sense because although the private sector was greatly aided and abetted by the Czech government ultimately its loyalties were centered on profit. Milton (2001) went on to note that "Although privatized TV was introduced in the Czech Republic before any of the other [post-communist] countries, it still took 5 years...In the meantime, the state controlled broadcasting by means of boards...Predictably, claims of government and parliamentary meddling in the boards' work followed" (pg. 512). To reiterate, the Czech Republic is far more advanced in its television media oversight boards' level of independence compared to its other former Warsaw Bloc members, and the political control levied on television broadcasting by the Czech Republic has not been broadly used to persecute or to censor its populace (but for the ends of the market) as it was used in Slovakia.

Smid et al (1997) wrote:

> In spite of the...recidivistic attempts to use the broadcast media as instruments to support particular political or economic interests, the primary goals of the transformation in the broadcasting field have been achieved. The broadcast media in the Czech Republic no longer are the state-controlled monolithic institutions they were prior to November 1989. (pg. 16)

As such, this transformation has reflected on Czech society at large. The destruction of the aforementioned state-controlled monolith dealt a blow to the autocratic bureaucratic shell left behind by the Marxists. Moreover, despite attempts by some Czech politicians to dust off the levers of power over the oversight of television broadcast regulatory boards, they have not been as successful as their former countrymen, the Slovaks.

What has been the nature of the state's involvement in public television broadcast?

The Czechs compared to their Slovakian neighbors have enjoyed a more consistently open and transparent television broadcast system. The Czech Republic has not instituted the kind of autocratic policies and censorship that afflicted Slovakia (especially under Meciar) during the decade after the fall of communism. I believe it is worthy to note that while Slovakia backslid into old habits concerning state censorship, the Czech Republic (for better or for worse) rushed headlong into the establishment of a large and influential private sector. This dichotomy stands in contrast to the fact that they were once both bound in a forced union in the form of Czechoslovakia under not only the communists but also the fascists for most their history. Yet the Czechs and Slovaks embarked on different paths in broadcast media in the same way that they embarked on different paths of statehood despite their shared communist background

and the legacy of the former regime's use of television as a mode of propaganda. Pavlick

et al (1999) postulates that, since the fall of communism, in the Czech Republic:

> ...the relation between the state and television has been reconfigured. Before the revolution, the state used television as a political management tool—in terms of disseminating state ideology and legitimating state policy. Today, the potential for using television in this way has diminished substantially. (pg. 488)

In the early years of the post-Velvet Divorce period, there was much debate about

public television concerning the Czech Republic's past under communism and the

former regime's strict media rules and censorship. There were not many terrestrial

channels or frequencies, and so public television was regarded as being a powerful force

politically. With revulsion towards the past by the Czech populace, public television in

the Czech Republic was ostensibly designed by the former dissidents turned

parliamentarians/new political elites to embody a more egalitarian and representative

model (especially compared to their other post-communist neighbors). The pivotal

Broadcasting Law of 1991 established the parameters within which Czech public

television would operate, and what its overall mandate was to be in the broader

television broadcast system that was forming in the Czech Republic. According to Pavlik

et al (1999):

> Czech Television's remit was to offer diverse and balanced information for free opinion making, and...was to be funded from license fees...but also from advertising revenues. The [Czech legislature] created the Council for Czech Television (CCT) to ensure that Czech Television would serve the public interest. (pgs. 499-500)

This was the supposed intent behind the dual broadcast system with public

television, that it would be a neutral and non-authoritarian entity alongside the newly

created private television sector. The idea of state television in the communist model

was a concept met with fierce disgust by most Czechs, and the Czech parliament was

keen to avoid falling into a situation where the public perceived that public television

was being used for propaganda ends and for the service of state censorship. However,

as the saying about there being "more than one way to skin a cat" goes, there is more

than one way for a government to levy its interests and influence on public television

towards achieving its own ends. Rosenbaum et al (2001) put it succinctly by saying that

public television in the Czech Republic "…was experiencing economic censorship

instead of ideological censorship" (pg. 138). This was written a mere two years after

Pavlik et al's (1999) more upbeat assessments of the Czech public television. The Czech

parliament may have designed the wording of the law creating the new incarnation of

public television to sound like extremely progressive legislature, but it is critical to note

that by holding the purse-strings for Czech public television's budget at their whim, the

Czech legislature held a powerful sword over the heads of those in charge of public

television and its content. Eight years after Rosenbaum et al's (2001) article that was

quoted above, things had not changed too dramatically for the better with public

television's financial independence from the Czech parliament. Metykova et al (2009)

caution:

> One should…bear in mind that the income of public service broadcasters…is
> made up of license fee and advertising revenue. The amount of the license
> fee and limits on advertising are set by law thus public service broadcasters'
> budgets represent another element under parliamentary control. (pg. 722)

Funding therefore is an important bullwhip to wield over public television due to

the complete dependence on parliamentary budgetary allotments upon which public

television (not only its operations but also its boards, managers, and everyday

employees plus their families) depend on for its very survival. Not only that, but also

the management and boards of Czech Television receive their positions by oversight

boards that report directly to the Czech legislature. This state management of television oversight boards sounds familiar with the Slovakian experience. However, at this point is where the Czechs diverge onto their own path. As opposed to simply using state domination of public television and broadcast to strengthen the state and as a mouthpiece of the government, the Czech parliament sought to weaken public television in order to give preferential treatment towards the private sector (which goes against what was ostensibly set out in the Broadcasting Law and the dual television broadcast system). Smid et al (1997) wrote that the original aim of the Broadcasting Law for the Czech Republic was to "...decentralize the once monolithic pattern of broadcasting into a more pluralistic structure...and...to replace the former state broadcasting organizations...with public service corporations" (pg. 8). This aim was not to weaken public television to a point of weakness and irrelevance but to restructure it to fit the educational needs of the newly created Czech Republic and to purge public broadcasting of any former communists (a policy known as "lustration"). Ultimately speaking it has been proven that the Czech parliament has consistently favored the interests of private television in the country. Eight years after the fall of communism, Smid et al (1997) noted that the Czech government:

> ...elucidates its evident support of the private sector in broadcasting, at the detriment of the public service broadcasting sector... [and] The government's preferential treatment of the private sector...was reinforced by limiting public broadcasters to one percent of advertising, with virtually no barriers for private broadcasters. (pg. 13)

By allowing the private sector to flourish, the Czech government did not wield direct censorship over all broadcast television as Meciar in Slovakia attempted to do. The private broadcasters, owing their new places of power to the Czech legislature's business-friendly agenda, have not been known for being overly critical of the

government. Public television has been brought to a less severe heel at the hands of the

Czech Republic's parliament than what happened in Slovakia, but they have been

brought to heel nonetheless. Due to the control of its budget by the legislature (without

which Czech television would cease to function) even the weakened public television

system in the Czech Republic has, like its Slovakian counterpart, been used as a

sympathetic outlet of the government in power. Gross (2003) noted that some of the

traits of Czech public television news programs were of being:

> ...passive, unimaginative and without independent critical thought. In fact,
> [Czech Television] prides itself on mechanically and passively conveying
> information without pacing it in context, questioning it or analyzing
> it...Thus, even in the Czech Republic, supposedly the most advanced
> democracy in the region, politicians have 'grown accustomed to using the
> weak news and current affairs team...as a docile instrument for the
> dissemination of their views and pronouncements.' (pg. 86)

As the decade beyond the collapse of communism unfurled, so did a political

conflict that would spill over into civic unrest regarding the future of public Czech

television. There were those who held onto the idealistic and egalitarian model for

public television as a source of unbiased information and content that represents the

interests of the country across the political spectrum, and then there were those (who

naturally were the dominant political blocs and parties) who wished to emulate the

Slovakian model and to have the weakened public television system as a mouthpiece of

the state. This was a conflict which had been brewing since the fall of communism (and

especially after the Velvet Divorce), and it finally came to a head in the fall of the year

2000. This, I believe, is where the Czech culture of democracy and self-rule kicks back

in as the situation escalated into a full-scale national crisis over Czech public television

as employees of public television and the populace sought to push back against

government control of television broadcast. According to Jirak et al (2008) "The

unstable position of...public service television became reflected inter alia in the so-called 'television crisis' at the turn of 2000 and 2001, triggered by...escalating efforts...of parliament to gain...control over it (through the agency of the oversight *Czech Television Council*)" (pg. 20). It was the politicizing of the Czech Television Council by the Czech parliament that sparked the events that were to happen during the television crisis, which was also known as "the Czech Television Christmas Crisis." Lubomir Lizal and Evzen Kocenda (2001), writing at the time, provided details as the crisis unfolded:

> ...the Czech Television Council answers to the Czech Parliament...The recently nominated Council for Television Broadcasting has elected...on December 20, 2000, a new CEO of Czech Television...the staff of the Czech TV opposed the election and began a strike. The main objections were: The Council was nominated based on political premises and consisted chiefly from members of political parties; and candidates for a new CEO were subject to political negotiations held between the two major parties prior to the election...The strike attracted nationwide support that grew as the new management started to fire protesting TV staff and commenced regular censorship of news broadcasts, along with switching-off TV broadcasting entirely. (pg. 156)

After a few weeks the crisis reached a head with many taking to the streets of Prague to protest, the largest protests since the peaceful overthrow of the communist regime in 1989. Finally, the protesters succeeded in their aims as the new CEO resigned his position and the remaining members of the Council for Television Broadcasting were recalled by the Czech parliament. This crisis was the peak of conflict regarding the future of public television in the Czech Republic, but it can be construed as just another facet of the drive for control that some Czech politicians hold in order to fulfill their personal ideas of what kind of a country the Czech Republic should become. In fact, Jirak et al (2013) wrote "The Christmas Crisis was just a public manifestation of long-lasting efforts by political elites to gain control over public service media...via the composition of their supervisory councils" (pg. 184). The strong reaction to government

meddling in public television during the Christmas Crisis may have been due to a collective shudder over the possibility that the Czech television broadcast system might be regressing back towards its old authoritarian self, perhaps not as bad as under communism but certainly towards a situation like that which was in Meciar's Slovakia. This was an idea that was impalpable enough to the independently minded Czechs to turn the streets of Prague into the largest public demonstration since 1989. It is this type of civic engagement and observance of the makeup of oversight committees that is a good step towards the independence of public television from the Czech state, but it must also be followed by steps away from subsidies and towards license fees and advertising that are in actuality legally insulated from parliamentary meddling. It is important to note that as electronic media (social media, internet applications, and the availability of private television options that do not rely on terrestrial broadcasting) becomes more prominent in the Czech Republic that the political value of public television will decrease as the options for information media intake mushroom and become more diverse and portable. This will inevitably lead to political meddling in public television becoming a functionally moot point and an unnecessary political liability. However, in the meantime Peter Bajomi-Lazar (2008) has some suggestions to keeping Czech public television as independent from political interference as possible:

> In this respect, special attention should be devoted to: media policy declarations, political intervention into the privatization of...broadcast media, political intervention into the (re)-distribution of resources, and, in particular, information, advertisements by state-owned companies and...political intervention into the appointment and dismissal of leading personnel for the public service broadcasters... (pg. 81)

It is not just the legal aspects of public television broadcasting which must be examined. There is a deeper, more rooted problem that is not just found in the Czech

Republic (or Slovakia, for that matter). This is the natural instinct of the political elite

to view anything that may have the capacity to be legally slanted in their direction in an

official capacity in solely Machiavellian terms, as something to be deployed and used

like a weapon. Therefore, this instinct must be addressed in order to create a stable

environment for public television to flourish in the Czech Republic. Dragomir (2003)

writes that "Policymakers must see the distinction between state television, which

conforms to the interests of government, and public television, which is a 'trustee of

society'…independent from the government, providing all necessary information to

facilitate…enlightened participation to the democratic process" (pg. 60). But it should

be noted that in all fairness the Czech Republic, despite its liberal traditions and

heritage, has suffered cruelly at the hands of the fascists and communists for most of its

history and therefore bears the scars that these totalitarian regimes left on its culture. It

is therefore not surprising to see some attempted government interference in the Czech

Republic as the country has morphed from its Soviet-vassal status into its current

incarnation as an independent state. It certainly has not been a long time since

communism fell compared to the longevity of its existence in the Czech Republic. In the

words of Kaplan et al (1995) written shortly after the Velvet Revolution but which are

still applicable today, the progress that post-totalitarian countries experience

"…supports the tenet that the media reflect the society they serve, and that changing a

media culture, like a political system, is not a short-term process…The transition from a

totalitarian to an open democratic media will be continued for years…," and likely Czech

public television will still have a role to play in the future of the Czech Republic (pg. 43).

THE IDIOMATIC EXPERIENCE OF THE FORMER CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE EASTERN BLOC
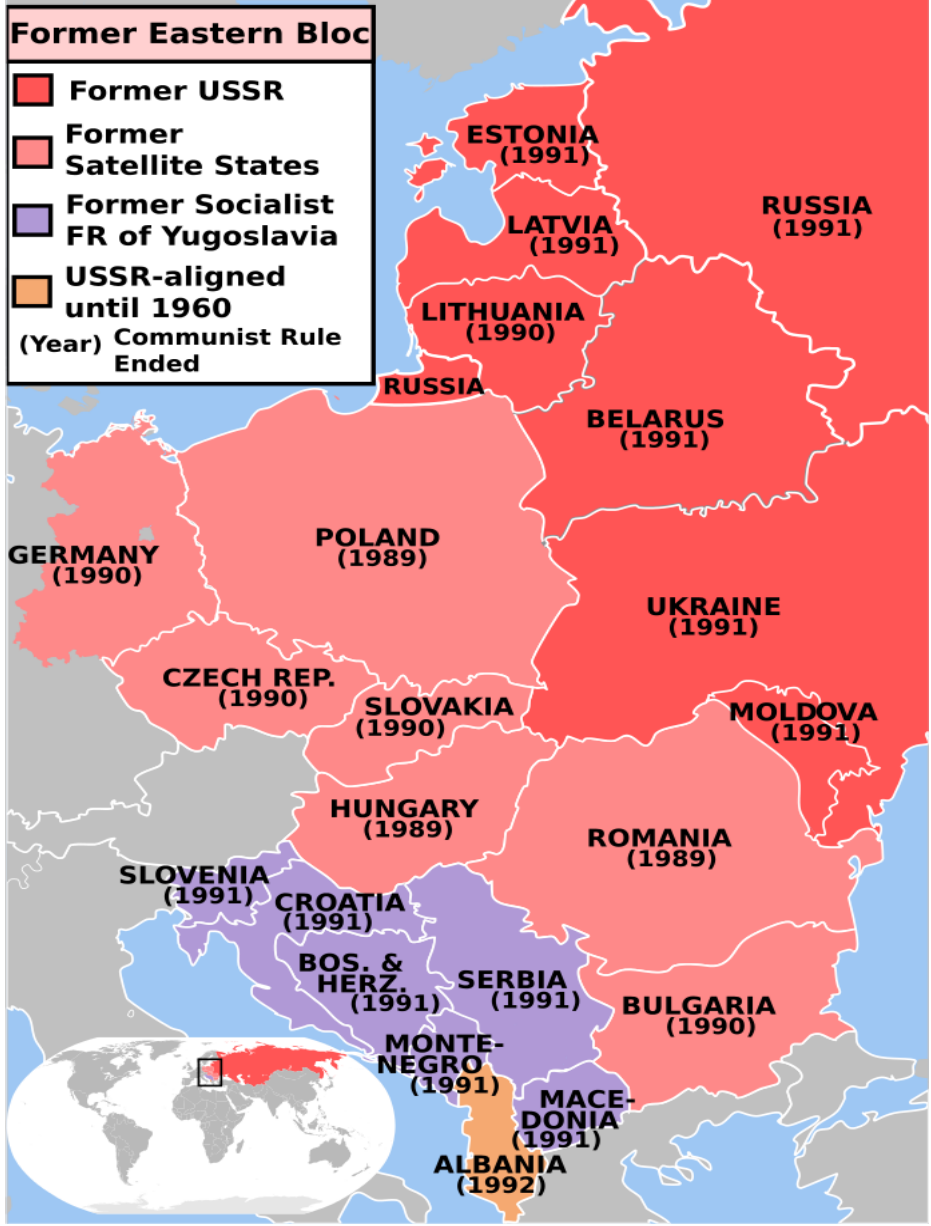
(Figure 3: The Former Eastern Bloc.)

Information on the television media landscape within the Czech Republic and Slovakia has no bearing and is not as notable without examining the former Czechoslovakia's neighbors and communist contemporaries of the Eastern Bloc. Looking into the regional broadcast television landscape post-communism in order to elucidate the particular experience of the former Czechoslovakia (particularly the Czech Republic) vis a vis other former Bloc is necessary. This includes the former Yugoslavia, as it and its successor countries were members of the Bloc although not always in accordance with the dictates of Moscow (particularly under the reign of Joseph Stalin). This section will not go into as much detail with the former Bloc countries as with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This is simply due to the sheer scale of the amount of information available and all the other cultural and national details associated with each nation's television media system (despite their cultural overlaps it would be overly simplistic to assume that these countries don't have their own unique aspects worthy of study). Not conducting a close examination on the entire television broadcast scene post-communist in the former Eastern Bloc is one of the limitations of this analysis. However, this does leave room for future study in conducting a regional meta-analysis given the right factors for a project of that size and thus is an area for further research. However, limitations and suggestions for future research will be saved for later in this thesis as part of my concluding chapters.

Accession to the European Union has brought some uniformity within countries of the former Bloc as their television broadcast systems have to fit within a general set of European Union regulations, but there still are some major cultural differences in how television broadcast is viewed as a societal entity between western European nations and those in the central and east of the continent. In addition, during the decade and a

half after communism fell in 1989 the geopolitical (and therefore television broadcast) environment in Eastern Europe was chaotically fluid. Changes in the economy developed in sloppy lockstep with changes in the political system, and cultural and nationalistic differences that had laid dormant like cicadas for decades of communist rule arose from the ashes of the Eastern Bloc to challenge conventions and change national borders. This fluidity causes difficulties in nailing down the precise nature of the interactions between television broadcast media and the sources of political power, shifts in culture and society, as well as the fueling of civil unrest. However, it is certain that these interactions between television broadcast systems of the Eastern Bloc with societal entities and undercurrents in those countries bear some of the same traits as other countries that have metamorphosed into their modern incarnations out of a totalitarian past. Where the difference comes between members of the Eastern Bloc and other countries around the world that have emerged from dictatorship is that the territory that eventually became the Bloc was once part of absolute monarchies/empires which extended back to the middle ages and left a permanent cultural imprint on the region that has nothing to do with whatever ideology happens to be in the seat of power at any given time.

Arch Puddington (2014), in his article *Twenty-Five Years On, Freedom in Central Europe Faces New Threats,* observed that "As parts of larger empires or under foreign domination, the countries of Central Europe had little experience in self-government" (pg. 1). This was true of practically every country in that part of the continent (as those countries were once swaths of imperial territories), although one of the reasons I chose to do my qualitative meta-analysis on the former Czechoslovakia is due to its idiomatic experience in eastern and central Europe and its cultural

background of autonomous thought and a deep desire for self-rule (particularly on the

part of what is now the Czech Republic). Toepfl (2013) notes that these cultural desires

for freedom remained indelibly marked on the Czechs throughout the same traumas

that were endured by their fellow former Bloc members:

> ...the collective historical experiences of Czech intellectuals in the fight for press freedom, which dates back to the Habsburg monarchy...These historical realities were not lost on the journalists, writers and artists who, during the ensuing years of oppression, both under Nazis and Communists, continued the struggle to regain freedom of expression. (pg. 6)

So it would appear that despite falling into the twin catechisms of communism

and fascism, Czechoslovakia (mainly on the part of the Czechs as the Slovaks proved to

take better to autocratic regimes than their neighbors to the west) managed to keep the

light of hope alive that one day the Czechs would again be able to freely express

themselves by any means and with any media. This self-expression naturally extends to

the realm of television broadcasting, as the Czechs so enthusiastically accepted the

capitalist system into the arena of television as if it was profoundly indivisible from

democracy. So the cultural and national bulldozer that was communism did not

completely erase the desire for autonomy (be it on a personal, national, or merely

expressive level) in Czechoslovakia. However, what about its neighbors, the other

nations in east and central Europe that also succumbed to the invasive forces of

communism from the east? Were they also able to make any notable changes to the

nature of the interactions between state and television broadcast after shaking off the

yokes of the former regimes? Coman (2000) asked:

> ...was communism a system so homogenous and oppressive that it could erase in 50-70 years all distinctive elements, derived from different cultural values, histories, religions and languages?...If the answer is 'yes' it means that post-communist mass media must follow, in all countries, the same pattern and same evolutionary steps...If the answer is 'no,' then the

evolution of mass media systems in these countries is arguably autonomous and divergent... (pg. 49)

The question is if the television broadcast systems in the Eastern Bloc have been able to reform themselves and to become more in line with the model of the former Czechoslovakia or if they have merely backslid into the autocratic past. There are certain patterns discovered in the meta-analysis of the articles, one of the major ones is the governing "toolbox" (to use my own term) which the communists left the national legislatures as the dissidents set up shop and prepared for the business of governance. Essentially the toolbox is a fully functional bureaucratic television media apparatus that was created by a totalitarian regime. But despite a certain uniformity across the Bloc (even to an extent in the Czech Republic with its select use of parliamentary rules to further the Czech politicians' personal designs for the country's television broadcast system), there have been certain benchmarks of reform that some former Bloc countries have achieved quicker than others. Jakubowicz (1995) gave a report a scant six years after the fall of communism on the progress made in former Eastern Bloc countries (or their successor states) in terms of reform:

> Those [countries] where transformation into pluralist, free-market democracies is already underway and is unlikely to be turned back, that is, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Slovenia, and Estonia...Countries with optimistic prospects for the future but that are still politically and economically vulnerable, including Slovakia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Albania, Romania, and Lithuania...Countries with a less than optimistic outlook for the future [include] Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia, and Moldova. (pg. 130)

At this juncture, several observations may be made. First is to define the members of the Visegrad Group, which Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Terhi Rantanen (1998), in their book *The Globalization of News,* note had "...three original members...Poland, Hungary, and the Czechoslovak Federal Republic...but the number has increased to four

with the division of Czechoslovakia into the separate Czech and Slovak Republics" (pg. 126). The second observation is to note that six years after the fall of communism that the only member of the Visegrad Group that was not considered to be transforming into a pluralist democracy was Slovakia. In fact, other than Slovakia the Visegrad Group has been among the leading former Bloc countries in transitioning into countries that are better integrated into the western European model of a free-market democracy. In fact, according to Colin Sparks and Anna Reading (1998) in their book *Communism, Capitalism, and the Mass Media*, "By the middle of 1990, there were stable non-communist governments in power in the then three Visegrad countries" (pg. 136). The Visegrad Group will be discussed more later in this chapter, as the grouping deserves a special mention. However, what of the other countries in eastern and central Europe (including Slovakia)? What has been their experience with television broadcast after the fall of communism? Did they similarly shake of the dust of Marxism and begin their own natural media transformations like that of the three more progressive members of the Visegrad Group? Well, not exactly.

Jakubowicz (1995) noted that six years on from the fall of communism "In many Central and Eastern European countries, the umbilical cord between the media and the authorities has hardly been weakened" (pg. 133), while adding that "As a result, media policy in Central and Eastern Europe is a strange, internally inconsistent mixture of old and new elements..." (pg. 129). This concept is critical in understanding the progression of the television broadcast systems in former Bloc countries. In the west, there was an assumption that once communism fell that all the countries of the Bloc would rush into the arms of the western model of politics and economics with little to no cultural "hangover" from their decades of suffering under the constricting blanket-rule of

communism. However, communism was just the current ideology that sat atop the autocratic throne of political power in the region that had been built by the Hapsburgs, the Austro-Hungarians, and other former empires. As such, although the post-communist states of the former Bloc were nominally free and democratic compared to the outright unabashed totalitarianism of the past, television media policy and democracy in general in those countries was the aforementioned "inconsistent mixture of old and new elements." In an article written fifteen years after the previously quoted one, Jakubowicz (2008) defines the sort of hybrid democracy (which in turn generated a hybrid television broadcast system) found in most of the former Eastern Bloc countries known as "Partitocrazia:"

> Partitocrazia [is the] monopolization of public life by political parties which exclude other social actors from decision-making processes; rule by political oligarchs often connected to economic pressure groups. This amounts to political party capture of the state, corruption and low legitimacy of the system (just about everywhere in post-communist countries). (pg. 112)

This incomplete transition (in the western sense, as former Bloc members have taken some western media ideas and fused them with older eastern cultural ways of governing) leaves many echoes of totalitarianism in the realm of television broadcasting. Similarly, some of the political interference into the content and financial management of public television entities in former Bloc countries rings of the old Bolshevik experience in the region (Slovakia under Meciar being an excellent example).

Some of the countries that find themselves alongside Slovakia in this dubious category are Romania, Lithuania, and many of the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia, and Croatia for example). In those countries, the television broadcasting system is no longer subordinated to ideological control from the monolithic communist party but instead finds itself at the mercy of economic and

political special interest groups and their politician surrogates. This nepotism between private interest groups and biased parliamentarians in those countries of the former Bloc leads to a low opinion of the validity of the government by their populaces and a low estimation of the honesty of opinions and facts spouted on state TV. This is after years of communist rule where the citizens of those countries were used to an unusually large dose of skepticism when being presented with state propaganda. So in countries like these in the former Bloc, although the names of the political parties and the issues which are invoked are different and are presented with the veneer of democracy, in many ways it is simply business-as-usual in states which have a traditionally undemocratic tradition (which stands in very stark contrast to the Czech Republic). Coman (2000) wrote that in former Bloc countries such as these that "Post-communist media did not create a new 'model'...they represent a mixture of the already known 'models,' combined in proportions which vary in accordance with the historical, geographical, and cultural characteristics of each country in the region under discussion" (pg. 54).

Now to focus a little bit more on how these old/new media models are constructed and carried out, and more importantly by whom. The answer to that last question is the "new political elites." Here is where the great inversion of logic surrounding the fall of communism in the former Bloc lies in the eyes of westerners. The new political elites were the only other politically active members of Eastern Bloc societies besides the seemingly all-powerful communist party as they were the dissidents who formed the only opposition which existed at the time. These dissidents were portrayed on western televisions as the scrappy nationalists who, taking matters into their own hands (literally), grabbed sledge-hammers and began breaking down

former communist partitions and statues/monuments in the name of freedom. But

what happened when the oppressed became the master? The dissidents turned political

elites found that they had a taste for power and, with the aforementioned governing

"toolbox" left to them by the communists, the bureaucratic means to transform the

nascent countries and successor states of the former Bloc into the incarnations desired

by the current regimes in power. Hubert Tworzecki and Holli A. Semetko (2012) in

their article *Media Use and Political Engagement in Three New Democracies: Malaise*

Versus Mobilization in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland noted that these

eastern European dissidents turned political-elites:

> Having spent much of their own lives under the shadow of communist
> media monopolies, they seemingly internalized the belief that control of the
> media—especially television—is one of the attributes of political power.
> Consequentially, post-1989 attempts to transform state-run media outlets
> into genuinely independent broadcasters…time and again clashed with
> political resistance, leading to an almost two-decade-long pattern of so-
> called media wars waged in all countries of East-Central Europe. (pgs. 411-
> 412)

It is this sort of political Stockholm Syndrome, perhaps not identifying with the

ideology of their communist oppressors but emulation of their television media

methodology of control, which has plagued the region after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Only the Czech Republic stood as the closest amalgamation of a western-styled former

communist nation (followed by its two Visegrad Group members Poland and Hungary),

despite also succumbing to the practice of parliamentary interference into television

broadcasting, albeit in a less oppressive and censored way than most of its neighbors. It

is this hypocrisy (again from a western standpoint) of freedom fighters who in turn deny

freedom to any possible competitors, much like Meciar did in Slovakia during the 1990s,

which is the most striking and disappointing factor in the free development of television

in the lands of the former Bloc. The same opposition leaders who decried the communists and demanded that they accede to the development of the construction of a civic sphere that did not include the preponderance of the communist party now turned around and decided that it is now their right to change the political narrative from one of freedom-fighting to one concerned with the needs of the state and the newly created capitalist market. It would appear that without the presence of the leviathan of communism (to use the nomenclature of the philosopher Thomas Hobbes) to keep all the dissidents enthralled to the idea of regime change that these dissidents turned new political-elites now had their minds on their own personal political designs for their nations. These homelands still had the governmental apparatus of power left, replete with television broadcasting institutions that had been the former preserve of the communist regimes in the former Eastern Bloc. Toepfl (2013) noted that "At the top of these institutions, after the collapse of the old regime, the new political decision-makers turned out...to be rather reluctant to unleash the media from political control...similar tendencies...are reported from across the post-communist world" (pg. 7). So the question at the beginning of the chapter about whether communism was so powerful a force as to ride roughshod over national and cultural interests in many different countries seems to have an affirmative aspect to it. But on the other hand, one might say that the reason communism took root and was so well entrenched in the former Bloc is because those peoples and countries (other than the Czech Republic) were already predisposed towards autocratic methods of government, and thus communism was merely the next head of the autocratic hydra which has been ruling eastern and central Europe in one manifestation or another for hundreds of years. The new political elites in the former Bloc were quick to lay claim to the same powerful privileges which access

to and control of television broadcast engender upon those in power in these countries. It wasn't just a power-hungry approach. Most of them saw control of television, its content, and therefore information as one of the perks of being in power. Lauk (2008) quipped that in former Bloc countries "Information as an important component of power was the privilege of the Party elite in the former communist regimes…The elite decided what and when people were allowed to get to know…Political…reporting was…centralized and controlled in all communist Bloc countries" (pg. 199). Now that the communist Bloc had fallen, the new eastern European politicians were of the opinion that television broadcasting media were a deus ex machina which could alter the opinions of the public with the push of a (sometimes literal) button, regardless of what is actually happening in society. This is essentially practicing the same attempts at thought control as the former communists with the same bureaucratic and legal machinery as they did before the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Lauk (2008) laments that as opposed to their stated aim of ushering in true freedom and democracy "…governments and new political elites in the post-communist countries have been more concerned with gaining dominance over the media than to create conditions for their public service functions and…accountability" (pg. 203). This was part of a general progression since these media and political changes were of a magnitude that they took time to play out. For example, in the first few years after the communist collapse there was practically complete liberty in terms of freedom of expression in Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Lithuania. But after a few years these freedoms were rolled back under pretexts related to the economy or biased parliamentary maneuvering. These types of behaviors kept them lagging in television broadcast reform behind the Visegrad Group and the Czech Republic especially. Of the countries which managed to sidestep an

autocratic/dictatorial political system (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia) it is notable that the Visegrad Group is so well represented within this progressive group of former communist nations. But even without an actual dictatorship, the continued persistence of bureaucratic and socio-political entities from the communist era in their intact form have proven a stumbling block for profound realignment of the television media broadcasting systems in all former Eastern Bloc countries. Boyd-Barrett et al (1998) observed, close to the end of the millennia and almost a full decade since the collapse of communism, that television "…broadcasting systems which had previously been controlled by the Communist Party are…being 're-nationalized and turned into a government agency or…a national politicized and quasi-commercial…broadcasting system" (pg. 134). Regarding television broadcasting in central and eastern Europe (speaking in generalities) Milton (2001) stated that:

> In short, the connections between media and dominant political or state actors have persisted from the early part of this century, whereas the specific mechanisms of connection and the goals pursued varied across countries…Given these historical patterns, it would be inappropriate to ascribe…this media dependence primarily to the Communists. They, like others before and since, simply seized on available organizational and institutional opportunities in an attempt to secure and advance their political authority and power. (pg. 505)

So as has been noted and presented multiple times in the articles reviewed and during the course of this analysis, regional political culture seems to have a lot to do with not only having provided communism with fertile ground to take root in eastern and central Europe but in providing the autocratic tools of governance left over from the last absolute ruler to be passed on to the parties and individuals that occupy the seat of power next. The former dissidents were no different when they managed to usurp the communists and seize power. Even the Visegrad Group has not been immune to the

autocratic privations of the new political elite. Milton (2001) observed that, even after

the millennium, "In both Hungary and [the Czech Republic and Slovakia], strong links

have tied and still tie political actors to the media, with the media maintaining the

dependent or compliant position…" (pg. 507). That being said, there is a cultural

learning curve to becoming a pluralistic democracy whilst freshly woken from the bed of

totalitarianism. The transmutations into modern, democratic states have been far more

rapid in the Visegrad Group when compared to the Slovak Republic, Bulgaria, Romania,

or Albania for example (despite some of the growing pains that could be expected when

attempting to fashion a television broadcast system from the flawed template of the

communist variation). In fact, it is this attempt (rooted in the authoritarian-minded

central and eastern European culture) to graft a discredited command structure onto

television broadcast in the former Bloc which has helped keep the region behind the

more advanced, traditionally democratic western European countries. But it is the

intact nature of the former regime's media content and control apparatus which makes

the transition into alignment with these western European countries that much more

difficult. Milton (2007), in another one of his articles on the subject entitled *News*

Media Reform in Eastern Europe: A Cross-National Comparison, observed that

television broadcast media in central and eastern Europe:

> …in the communist period was an organ of the state, completely reliant on and subservient to the communist party. The argument…is that the 'institutionalization of roles into statuses, or power into authority, and of precedent into norms reduces the role of the…structure as it exists' or…existed previously. In other words, radical change of the media's role and function is unlikely because the existing political organizational structure has not been sufficiently transformed. (pg. 15)

Whether it is simply human nature to not seize power when it is right in front of

you seems like a silly question when considering history. As the saying goes, "might

makes right," but this is not a blanket assessment of every nation everywhere (in terms of degree and consistency). There are some nations with more benign views on political power and its relationship to television broadcasting media, although they are almost exclusively members of the contemporary western world. Many western countries also lived at one time or another under absolute monarchies and empires, but the degree of uniformity established by these historical and cultural experiences doesn't seem as drastic as of those that suffered under communism. This uniformity does play a part in the political instincts of the former Eastern Bloc dissidents as that is all they know about how to conduct realpolitik mixed with their cultural upbringing. For example, Bajomi-Lazar (2008) wrote that:

> ...because of the legacy of the Leninist political culture, post-Communist governments will attempt to subordinate the media to their wishes; they are not accustomed to the tolerance...characteristic of a democracy...This...suggests that political re-socialization does not happen overnight and, after the political transformation, the post-communist countries continued to live with...undemocratic political culture. The argument is that the persistence of...totalitarian or authoritarian concepts regarding the media's role in society among the political elites hindered...media freedom. (pg. 80)

As such, television broadcasting in the former Eastern Bloc has been difficult to extricate from the clutches of the states and successor states of the once communist countries. This is in large part due to a belief that being democratically elected is the ultimate mandate of the people, and therefore the political-elite have a popular mandate for bending television broadcast to their will (this belief being especially held in non-Visegrad Group nations). Part of the justification amongst former Eastern Bloc members who maintain that they have a democratically mandated right to use television broadcasting as a direct informational conduit from the regime to the populace (regardless of whether any particular grouping of the citizenry voted for them or not) is

that as new nations the media should support the government in a nation-building effort. Simply put, that it is too premature to have a fully-fledged free television media system when the basic functioning of the economy and the political system are still in their fledgling state and in need of national support (in the eyes of the politicians who wish to maintain control over television broadcast from their vantage-point of power). Perusko et al (2008) wrote:

> The prevalence of this 'nation-building approach' in which the media was seen as a tool of the state, playing an integrative role in the society, and establishing stability, control and homogeneity, by focusing on state interests presented a mixture of new and old values and beliefs...one that embraces a...multi-party political system, and another that still claims the right to control communication channels. (pg. 171)

There are those who defend this nation-building approach as a necessity, although the logic inversion of demanding in an undemocratic manner that the supposedly free television broadcasting media help build democracy seems astounding. But there is some evidence that it indeed worked. Lauk (2008), in her article entitled *How Will It All Unfold? Media Systems and Journalism Cultures in Post-Communist Countries,* wrote that "From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, the Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Romanian, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian press strongly contributed to the development of national identities and culture in national languages" (pg. 196). This, however, doesn't take into account the identities and cultures of all the various minorities and smaller ethnic groups within these countries as television broadcasting paved the way for homogenous national identities at the command of the new political-elites in eastern and central Europe. What's interesting is that despite their cultural overlaps, the nature of who became the political elite depended on whatever former Bloc country's national culture happened to be like. Referencing the

political leanings of the former Bloc countries, Jakubowicz (2008) in the article *Finding the Right Place on the Map: Prospects for Public Service Broadcasting in Post-Communist Countries* observed that amongst eastern and central European countries:

> In the liberal ones [the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland] ...the politicization of all spheres of public life...and the political culture of post-communism favored control of the media by political elites. In the illiberal democracies [Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania], autocratic systems of government, involving the power of state administration or the oligarchs over the media and an underdeveloped civil society, largely undermined prospects for media freedom, turning them into the voice either of the state or of political or other vested interests. (pg. 113)

Ultimately speaking the only sure way to get rid of these autocratic tendencies in former Eastern Bloc countries is to take apart their television broadcasting systems and rebuild them from scratch. It is one of the strange things about democracy that one of the hallmarks of the powerful is their ability and duty to pass on their political power in a peaceful transition without resorting to censorship or political and financial intimidation. The former Eastern Bloc has come a long way on its road towards pluralistic democracy, but due to not only its recent but its long-term political history and autocratic culture (minus the Czech Republic in some ways) the former Bloc still has many things as nations to come to terms with. This of course includes television broadcasting media and the systems responsible for maintaining and regulating it. It remains to be seen in the future how these former Soviet client-states shall develop and where they will head in terms of overall cultural/socio-political direction in the future and how this will impact their television media broadcasting systems.

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this meta-analysis, Blanka Kudej (1996) was quoted as saying "[The] story of Czechs and Slovaks is the story of different peoples whose fates sometimes have touched and sometimes have intertwined" (pg. 71). This analysis has found that to be a very apt statement. The focus of this thesis has been to conduct a qualitative meta-analysis on the nature of the interactions between the Czech Republic and Slovakian states in regards to their respective television broadcasting systems. In order to conduct a qualitative meta-analysis on this subject, extensive research and the exhaustive searching for English language academic publications on television broadcasting in the former Czechoslovakia (after the fall of communism followed by the Velvet Divorce) was conducted.

The academic material acquired and analyzed (the articles representing the unit of analysis for this thesis) was distilled from a variety of different sources; such as use of university libraries, databases, book stacks, interlibrary loans, personal loans from faculty, and personal purchases when necessary. The wide net which was cast in order to acquire academic work of a sufficient level of diversity and scale was designed to fulfill a critical requirement in conducting a qualitative meta-analysis. This requirement would be conducting enough research of a sufficient degree and of a diverse enough nature to derive a conclusion which, in a sense, is an academic synthesis of the articles and publications. This in turn represents an academic whole that is greater than its aggregate.

It is commonly assumed by western observers that Czechoslovakia was and has been (in the form of its successor states) an exemplary example of democracy and pluralism in the post-communist world as well as central and Eastern Europe in general.

The analysis of this thesis has suggested that this may be inaccurate. The Czech Republic has been a much more liberal and open society than Slovakia has regarding its television broadcasting, but only to a point and in its own fashion. There are some overlaps in the methods which both countries have brought to bear politically in order to influence television broadcasting in their nascent countries. But the motivations for the legal machinations which both countries have conducted are very different, and the outcomes in terms of using television broadcasting to build a more open nation has also been dissimilar.

The first research question asked "What has been the legal connection of the state to broadcast media?" In both countries, the analysis found that the two nations inherited relatively intact autocratic bureaucracies which the communists left behind. These extended into the realm of television broadcasting, and thus the new political elite/former dissidents in the Czech Republic and Slovakia found themselves in charge of this monolithic broadcasting entity. Disappointingly, the former freedom fighters in both countries found that it was extremely hard to disengage from the use of government controls to bend the television broadcasting systems to their political will and designs. Thus the analysis found that both countries maintained government levers of power over the media which were left behind by the communists, who in turn inherited them from the fascists, who inherited them from the nationalists, and so on. In both countries it is not necessarily about the current ideology which happens to be in power, but of what that power happens to do with the levers of government once seizing control of the country.

The Czech Republic and Slovakia both share a political aversion to letting go of power over the media, and perhaps this has more to do with the bureaucracy of media

control which the political elite in those two countries inherited from the communists then their respective cultures. The political muscles flexed to invoke state influence in television broadcasting in both countries have been parliamentary control and interference in funding of public television as well as politically motivated appointments and terminations of officials associated with television broadcasting regulatory councils in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

This dovetails neatly into the next research question of the thesis; "What has been the role of political appointments regarding media licensing and oversight boards?" Again, the Czech Republic and Slovakia utilized the same methods of influence over television broadcasting oversight boards. This was the overly politicized appointments of yes-men by the legislatures of both the Czech Republic and Slovakia as well as the dismissal of uncooperative board members by the utilization of parliamentary powers to recall the heads and members of television broadcasting boards and councils. The excuse for recalls has been ostensibly related to areas of performance and finance, but whatever government in power could exercise parliamentary majority to not only shuffle around board members to suit their inclinations but to also withhold funding which the oversight boards need to survive. All this heavy-handedness runs contrary to the liberal reputation which Czechoslovakia still maintains even fourteen years after its dissolution. But at this juncture is where the Czechs and the Slovakians, like their history has often shown, split away from the path that they had both been walking.

True, both countries exercised parliamentary controls over board committees and funding in order to influence television broadcasting to suit their political tastes. But the directions the new political elites in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in terms of

where they wanted to take their respective countries were very different. This is where the analysis has suggested that a comparatively liberal cultural component with the Czechs versus the historically autocratic Slovakians comes into play with just how and to what ends they used political influence over television broadcasting (and what the result was for their country).

The Slovakians, as noted numerous times in the publications researched and throughout this thesis, have generally practiced and been more comfortable with an authoritarian governmental system (as they had been subjected to one at the hands of the Hungarians for a millennia) than the Czechs. After the split, Vladimir Meciar and his Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) immediately began to take control of television broadcasting in order to practice "nation-building," but what this boiled down to was a backslide into the authoritarian past which Slovakia had so recently emerged from. The geography of Slovakia fit partly in with how television broadcasting panned out after Meciar's interference since there were very few options for terrestrial broadcasting frequencies other than public Slovakian television (which the HZDS intended on keeping that way). In using parliamentary control over television broadcasting licensing and regulatory boards, Slovakia was able to quash significant political counterpoints to the state's narrative by neutering the private sector (making sure that the government ultimately decided the content and manner of television broadcasting through its grip on public television). Thus Meciar and the HZDS exercised its parliamentary influence over television broadcasting boards to return the monopoly of television broadcasting control back to the Slovak state and in alignment with an autocratic culture and society.

The Czech Republic's parliamentarians had other designs for their political influence of oversight boards. Instead of neutering private television broadcasting and consolidating their grip on information control like the Slovakians, the new political elite in the Czech Republic didn't seem enthralled to return their state to an autocratic one in the model of their past. Instead the Czech politicians wished to embrace a western style culture by limiting the funding and advertising time allotted to public television, while simultaneously exercising parliamentary authority to begin granting new licenses to new private television stations and to create a more business friendly environment in general in the country. But this laissez faire capitalism approach created its own problems (the Slovakians it would seem did not hold sole province over growing pains after communism). The quality of television programming and news reporting in the Czech Republic suffered, as content began to focus more on tabloid sensationalism and base entertainment rather than providing the Czech citizens with important information in how to participate both civically and politically in their new successor nation to the former Czechoslovakia. This is in addition to failing to meet other educational and cultural functions which public television's mandate spells out. So although the Czech Republic did not practice the absolute state dominance and censorship which Slovakia had begun with the advent of Meciar and the HZDS, the efforts of the capitalist-oriented Czech parliamentarians to influence television broadcasting deprived their constituents of content that wasn't profit driven as well as civically and culturally disengaged.

This leads to the third research question in the thesis, namely "What has been the nature of the state's involvement in public television broadcast?" Between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the analysis has shown that there is one major difference. In

Slovakia's case, Meciar and the subsequent governments made the private television market a very difficult place to set up shop. This had the political benefit of meaning that television broadcasting in Slovakia was essentially a government monopoly. In the Czech Republic it was the opposite. The Czech politicians were very compliant with the needs of private television broadcasters, but they crippled public television's influence compared to the private broadcasters by using parliamentary law to limit the amount of advertising time that Czech public television was allowed to air (thus crippling Czech public television financially of any non-direct governmental funding). This made the independence of Czech public television very weak, although on paper it seemed to be locked in as an independent and politically insulated entity.

This dominance of public television, and the use of this dominance by the state to shore up its position politically by controlling the narrative, is where the Czechs and Slovaks meet back up again (in terms of methodology of political arm-twisting). Meciar and the Slovakian political elite wanted to keep the state strong by controlling absolutely a fully functional public television broadcast apparatus (which was extremely reminiscent of Slovakia's communist past), while at the same time keeping any other voices from the private sector absent from the cultural discourse of the country. Exercise of control over public television in Slovakia was done by the appointment of political yes-men to oversight boards and by threatening to withhold funding. The Czech Republic sought to weaken Czech public television by cutting off public television's income stream through parliamentary legislation limiting the amount of advertising time allowed on Czech public television, while allowing private television in the country to advertise more or less at will. This made Czech public television a non-competitor against its much richer, private television broadcasting rivals. However, like

the Slovakians, what public television there was left the Czech political elite set out to dominate. To do so, the Czech's utilized the same sort of funding blackmail as their Slovakian neighbors, and like them they also appointed sympathetic board members to oversight councils. But the Czech culture of independence revealed itself again when things got too close to the past with government interference in television broadcasting. During the Christmas Television Crisis of 2000 (when Czech parliamentarians were a bit too brazen with their political manipulations in the roster of public television broadcasting oversight boards), Czech citizens filled the streets of Prague in the largest protests since the fall of communism. The Czech government fired recalcitrant employees, censored broadcasts (momentarily lapsing back into lockstep with their Slovakian neighbors), and even cut broadcasting altogether, before eventually acceding to the protestors and fulfilling their demands for a non-politicized makeup of the broadcasting councils.

The ultimate conclusion of this thesis is that, although both Slavic peoples and both formerly subjugated by the communist regime and united in the Czechoslovakian entity, the Czech and the Slovakian people have very different cultural imperatives and preferences for governmental style which reveal themselves in their television broadcasting systems and to what ends the state uses them for. After independence Slovakia began the process of retrenchment, stifling the private market and dominating public television. The Czech Republic, profit-making imperative aside, openly sought a plurality of the market and an openness to economic reform. The byproduct of this was that television content was not conducive to the political and civic development process in the populace of the Czech Republic which was necessary for synthesizing a pluralistic and democratic nation after over half a century of communist dominion. But it was not

a return to state censorship by any means. The one anecdotal time that the Czech Republic attempted censorship and blatant dominance of public television, the streets of their capital was filled with angry Czech citizens demanding political disentanglement of the state from television broadcasting.

It is that final anecdotal account of the Czech protesters which is a good way of pointing out the cultural differences between the Czechs and the Slovakians. The Slovakian populace offered no real resistance to Meciar and the HZDS as they re-muzzled television broadcasting and openly used public television as a weapon of political vendettas and slanted positive coverage of the state. The Czechs, on the other hand, during a time where it was blatantly evident of state interference in television broadcasting shut down Prague and filled the thoroughfares and streets of one of Europe's most important cities with the citizenry.

This analysis sheds light on some common assumptions about Czechoslovakia and the supposed pluralism which has happened since the Velvet Divorce. Czechoslovakia, when it was still a country, had a reputation of a democratic tradition. But this isn't because the Slovakians have that sort of an autonomous, democratic culture but because they were part and parcel to a forced marriage of the Czech and Slovakian peoples in an artificial state which was carved out of the carcass of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was the Czechs who fostered that perception of democracy in the heart of Europe, as it was their cultural and political contributions which cemented their former nation's status of a democratic "diamond" in the autocratic eastern European "rough."

This is one of the reasons there is a need for future research. Communism as a cultural force definitely left its mark on eastern and central Europe, but in its wake the

different nationalistic and cultural traits of the formerly subjugated peoples of the

defunct communist bloc have emerged. This has presented many problems in terms of

geopolitical growing pains, but these cultural permutations have not reached their

terminal point. It is notable that this analysis found that (although having once been

bound together in Czechoslovakia), in terms of openness of television broadcasting, the

Czech Republic has more in common with Hungary and Poland then it does with

Slovakia. This is notable as they are all members of the grouping known as the Visegrad

Group, yet Slovakia has been shown by this analysis to have veered away back towards

its authoritarian roots rather than move forward into greater television broadcasting

openness like its other Slavic neighbors.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the major limitations to this analysis was the general paucity of English language academic material. Although sufficient material was gathered to conduct the qualitative meta-analysis, the process of collecting enough English language academic material was quite extensive and extremely time-consuming (branching far out of what has been available easily at hand with conventional research databases and resources). Having fellow academics conducting future research into this field who have experience in the Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, or even Russian languages would be immensely helpful in expanding the sample of information available.

By simply conducting this analysis remotely instead of visiting the Czech Republic or Slovakia and meeting face to face with individuals involved in television broadcasting raises an inherent limitation. It is difficult to suggest holding a comprehensive understanding of the television broadcasting system of a country that one is not from, or when one has never so much as visited the location in question. So actually having a presence on the ground, preferably with fellow researchers with relevant language experience, would provide a more culturally balanced and holistic analysis in the future.

Another limitation of this analysis was not having sufficient time to go more extensively into the former eastern bloc as a region in greater detail. It is important to draw a distinction in researching the Czech Republic and Slovakia as that is the primary focus of this thesis. However, the former Czechoslovakia was two patches that constituted one patch of the mismatched cultural rug that was the eastern bloc. Part of the need to study television broadcasting in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is to gain a greater sense of the place of national culture in the realm of countries still transitioning

and coming to grips from/with their communist past. This includes the entire region which composed the former bloc. However, one limitation to this study was a simple lack of time to conduct a full-scale regional analysis. One option to expand on this thesis without having to conduct an analysis of the whole region is to focus on the Visegrad Group (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary). These four countries have considerable overlap in the realm of history, culture, ethnicity, and subjugation to the fell political winds which blew through this region during the twentieth century. Therefore, studying the Visegrad group would be a good way of building on the research which has been yielded in this qualitative meta-analysis on television broadcasting in the former Czechoslovakia.

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