

Article

Cleansing among Czech Journalists after World War II and a Comparison with the Situation in France and the Netherlands

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Abstract

After the end of World War II Czechoslovakia was faced with the task of punishing its Nazi collaborators. Besides sentencing traitors by the special people's courts, Czech journalists themselves also started the cleansing among their own ranks. The cleansing committee of the Czech Journalists' Union investigated some 400 journalists and imposed some sort of penalties on more than 200 people. The article also presents a brief comparison with the situation in France and the Netherlands. The cleansing among Czech journalists was very rigorous, even in comparison to other European countries. In contrast to Western countries, and due to the subsequent political developments, the journalists punished were often prohibited from resuming their profession.

Keywords

cleansing; collaboration; Czechia; France; journalists; media; Netherlands; WWII

Issue

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1. Introduction

After the end of the World War II (WWII) all European nations overrun by the Nazis were faced with the necessity of punishing collaborators.

Post-war Czechoslovakia also had to decide how to punish the "traitors to the nation". A special judiciary was established in 1945 by two so-called retribution decrees¹ by a structure of the people's courts that were supposed to ensure the cleansing of the nation from those who collaborated with the occupiers. These courts also sentenced several dozen journalists, often to harsh prison sentences. In seven cases, journalists were also sentenced to death (see more in Borák, 1998; Frommer, 2005; for the political history of Czechoslovakia, see Ševčíková & Nordenstreng, 2017, in this issue.)

The national resistance movement, as well as groups of exiles with centres in London and Moscow, acting outside the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, had al-

ready endeavoured to find a solution to the whole collaboration issue during the war. The representatives of the exiled resistance movement in London (the Czechoslovak government in exile from July 1940) talked quite regularly about the punishment of all those betraying their nation by serving the Nazi occupiers on the radio programmes broadcast by the BBC. Some of the contributions directly concerned the punishment of the treacherous journalists:

Each sentence written by a Czech or a Slovak journalist for Hitler is tantamount to a shot from a gun of a Henlein Ordner [Sudeten German paramilitary troop] in the backs of our troopers. Each word, praising Nazism, is the same thing as the kick of an SS man into the bodies of the thousands of our people imprisoned in the concentration camps. Each word written by a Czech hand against Czechoslovakia is like a bomb against our brave pilots, risking their lives every day in the name

¹ For Czech territories it was Presidential Decree No. 16/1945 Coll. "on the punishment of Nazi criminals, traitors and their helpers and on extraordinary people's tribunals" and the Presidential Decree No. 17/1945 Coll. "on the National Court". There were different legal norms for Slovakia.

of their homeland...each article supporting Germany written by a Czech hand is—in a word—treason. And its culprits must be treated as culprits...Everyone who does not belong to this group should avoid belonging into it. For their guilt will be judged by a judge who knows no mercy. And this judge will be the nation itself! (Drtina, 1945, p. 131)

The resistance movement at home, also decimated by the activities of the Gestapo and its informers, demanded the strictest approach. The programme, broadcast on 23 August 1944 to London by the Council of Three (a leading non-Communist resistance group at the end of the war) representing the standpoint of the rest of the non-Communist resistance movement at home, stated radical claims regarding retribution. Among other things it demanded “as an example for the future ruthless punishments for traitors and collaborators, including traitors before Munich and economic parasites” (Kozák, 2002, p. 47). The Communist resistance demanded the same (Hudec, 1978).

The manifesto of the Czechoslovak exile government known as the *Košický vládní program* (Košice Government Programme), which was discussed at a meeting of London and Moscow representatives in exile with the Slovak National Council in Moscow on 25 March 1945, talks about the necessity to punish all traitors and collaborators with the Nazi regime (Borák, 1998, p. 28). It states: “Traacherous journalists who sold themselves to Germans will suffer retribution” (*Košický vládní program*, 1974, p. 33). And because the government committed itself in the programme to “make a thorough cleansing in journalism, radio and film” (*Košický vládní program*, 1974, p. 33), journalists themselves started the cleansing among their own ranks as well.

In the period shortly before the Prague uprising,² a journalistic resistance group around František Bauer, the last democratically elected president of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), had been assigned the task by the Czech National Council (CNC), as the supreme organ of the national resistance movement. This group was integrated into the press committee of the CNC as a committee of the representatives of the press, and one of its members, NUJ secretary Karel F. Zieris, was assigned the task of making a list of those journalists who were supposed to be placed under arrest and subsequently stand trial in open court. Immediately after the outbreak of the uprising in Prague, on 5 May 1945, Zieris handed over the list of 36 top journalists—collaborators—to the president of the press committee of the CNC, Lumír Čivrný.³ Then, also on the basis of this list, some leading represen-

tatives of journalistic collaboration were taken prisoner during the uprising.

Obviously in a number of cases the arrests of collaborator journalists were quite spontaneous, without any orders from the resistance leadership. After all, these journalists represented for the Czech public the most visible representatives of the collaboration with Germans during the occupation, thanks to their regular activities on the pages of the Czech legal press or in radio, and they were treated accordingly during the uprising. One known example is the arrest of the radio journalist Alois Kříž, who was lynched in the street by the furious mob; it was documented by photos.

In the revolutionary days of May the representatives of the new leadership of the Journalists' Union (still under the old “protectorate” name National Union of Journalists) also issued a statement to the Czech public, in which they expressed themselves fully in favour of the cleansing of public life announced by the Košice government.⁴ The highly emotive declaration of the group around František Bauer was made on the air in the revolutionary days, although its purpose was quite practical. The journalists who stood in the front lines of the revival process within the post-war Czech media needed to convince the Czech public that the pro-German articles that people had read during the six-year occupation on the pages of the Czech press or listened to in the broadcasting of the protectorate radio, were the work of a small group of unscrupulous renegade journalists, whereas many Czech journalists due to their patriotic opinions and revolutionary activities were prosecuted or even killed. It was the activities in the resistance movement and the uncompromising attitude towards the collaborating journalists that were supposed to ensure Bauer's group a high moral credit and the right to the leading position within the Czech post-war media system.

2. The Cleansing Process within the Journalistic Organization

The cleansing committee, the setting up of which was announced on 11 May 1945 at the conference of Prague press representatives convened by the CNC, was indeed set up in the following days. It consisted of the widow of a journalist executed by the Nazis, a journalist released from a concentration camp, a previously exiled journalist, a journalist from the domestic resistance movement, the secretary of the NUJ, chief and desk-officer from the press department of the Ministry of Information and the president of the NUJ. “This committee will examine the activities of all journalists during the war”.⁵

² The Prague uprising was an attempt by the Czech resistance to liberate the capital city from German occupation in the last days of WWII. The uprising began on 5 May 1945 and went on until 8 May 1945, ending in a ceasefire between the Czech resistance and the German army led by General Rudolf Toussaint. German forces decided to leave Prague on the same day. Next morning, the Red Army entered the nearly liberated city.

³ National Archive (NA), collection Archive of the Czech Journalists' Syndicate (ASYN), unsorted documents, Zieris, K., F. *Nedatovaný projev k 30 letům obnovení svazu novinářů*, p. 5.

⁴ NA, collection ASYN, unsorted documents, *Prohlášení revolučního vedení Národního svazu novinářů k českému lidu*, undated.

⁵ NA, collection ASYN, box 167, *dopis předsedy NSN dr. F. Bauera Policejnímu ředitelství*, 19 May 1945.

The members of this so-called “cleansing” committee were nominated on the basis of the proposals of the journalists themselves by the Communist Minister of Information Václav Kopecký. The committee began its activities in May 1945, but numerous journalists whose names appeared under the pro-Nazi articles were not examined at all. Journalists who after the war decided to give up the profession were not investigated.⁶ Nor did the obligation to go through the process apply to several tens of prominent activists already expelled from the Union in the revolutionary period; in most cases they had already been arrested and were awaiting trial. But for those who did not appear on the first published lists and who wanted to continue in the profession after the war, it was not officially possible to evade examination.⁷

For those journalists whose activities during the protectorate (author’s note: The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia) could, according to the committee, be deemed an expression of pro-German activism, sanctions were imposed, and these can be divided into four types according to how serious the offence was.

2.1. Expulsion from the Journalistic Organization and Handover to Justice

The most serious form of punishment was expulsion from the journalistic organization and the handing over of the case to the justice (national court or people’s tribunals). This punishment is documented for 73 individuals. The participation of the Czech Journalists’ Union (CJU—successor of the “protectorate” NUJ) did not end with expulsion from the Union and handing the case over to the justice authorities. The officials of the Union were frequently present in court as key witnesses. František Bauer, the key witness in almost all major trials of journalists before the National Court, had in this respect an exceptional position, as shown for example the trial of Václav Crha, where, according to the daily *Svobodné slovo* (30 March 1946, p. 2), Bauer allegedly gave “the most serious testimony”.

The witnesses’ attitude towards the question of guilt and punishment was in fact very often quite relentless. As an example we take the trial of Antonín J. Kožíšek, Rudolf Novák (editor-in-chief of *Árijský boj/Arian Combat*), the “Czech” *Der Stürmer*, and Alois Kříž, whom the national court sentenced to death. Out of eight assistant judges in court, two were journalists—the CJU officials Josef Linek and Vojtěch Dolejší. Both voted in all three cases in favour of the death penalty.⁸ Likewise at the trial of Vladimír Krychtlák (pro-Nazi leader of the NUJ), Jaroslav Křemen, Emanuel Vajtauer and Karel Werner,

where Otakar Wunsch, president of the CJU, was among the assistant judges. He also voted in all four cases in favour of the death penalty. All those condemned appealed to President Eduard Beneš for pardon. Only in the case of Křemen this was also recommended by some members of the court Senate (composed of the presiding judge, assistant judges and prosecutor). Granting the pardon was also supported by two assistant judges, except for the prosecutor Tržický and Presiding Judge Šrámek. Wunsch voted in this case against the pardon.⁹

2.2. Expulsion for Life from the Journalistic Organization and Prohibition of Further Journalistic Practice

The second type of punishment was somewhat more lenient and included expulsion for life from the journalistic organization and a ban on further journalistic practice (after the war only members of the CJU could work as media professionals). This was applied to some 40 journalists. These journalists were not sent to the people’s court. However, by the beginning of November 1945 the preparatory committee of the CJU decided that they would be reported to the court at least on suspicion of crimes on the basis of the so-called “minor” retribution decree.¹⁰

Accordingly, after the liberation, this presidential decree n. 138/1945 Coll. “on certain offences against the national honour” influenced a wide section of Czech society, and became a norm that was often misused to settle differences between political opponents and also between ordinary people. Trials did not take place before the people’s court, but before the investigative committees of National Committees (institutions on the lowest level of new post-war Czechoslovak system of government). Many journalists had to appear before them after the war. Here they had to face accusations related to their journalistic as well as other activities.

2.3. Temporary Suspension of the Right to Engage in Journalistic Practice

In 40 cases where the committee did not find cause serious enough to bring the case forward to justice (national court or people’s tribunals) or expelling the journalist from CJU, he or she was punished by temporary suspension from journalistic practice.¹¹

The time for which these people were denied the right to continue their journalistic practice varied from three months to one and a half years; a longer period was used only in those cases where the appeal committee later mitigated its original decision on expulsion to suspension.

⁶ NA, collection ASYN, box 167, part 10, *oznámení Odvolací komise pro očistu novinářského stavu při ministerstvu informací Svazu českých novinářů*, 21 February 1946.

⁷ NA, collection ASYN, box 167, part *Lidový soud, oznámení očištné komise o vyloučení redaktorů J. Skoumala, V. Rumla, J. Fryčera*, undated.

⁸ NA, collection National Court (TNS) 6/47, box 114, inv. n. 281.

⁹ NA, collection TNS 8/47, box 135, inv. n. 88, *poradní protokol u Národního soudu v Praze v trestní věci proti Vladimíru Krychtlákovu, PhDr. Jaroslavu Křemenovi a Karlu Wernerovi a záznam konečné porady*, 22 April 1947.

¹⁰ NA, collection ASYN, box 166, *zápis o schůzi užšího přípravného výboru SČN*, 5 January 1945.

¹¹ NA, collection ASYN, box 167, part *Očištná komise po r. 1945, oznámení Svazu českých novinářů Zemskému odboru bezpečnosti*, 5 March 1946.

Journalists punished like this could not during the time specified broadcast on radio or publish in newspapers, not even under different names. In some cases they were allowed to work in newspaper offices as technicians.

2.4. Fines for Visiting the “Presseklub”

According to the CJU leadership visiting the so-called *Presseklub*, a social centre for German and pro-German journalists during the protectorate, was deemed a crime.¹² On 18 August 1945 the head of the cleansing committee, Radim Foustka, proposed that the members of the CJU should pay a fine of 100 CZK for every visit to the *Presseklub*. The money accumulating from this was supposed to be used by the Václav Kopecký (post-war Communist Minister of Information) Fund for the support of journalist victims of Nazism.¹³ Fines, however, were only imposed on those journalists who had not been punished in some other way. In total, 58 journalists were fined for having visited the *Presseklub* (*Svobodné slovo*, 6 March 1946, p. 2). Dolejší (1960, p. 363) states that the fine was paid by a total of 36 journalists, and that the money so collected was 11,700 CZK. According to Dolejší, 50 persons no longer working in the field of media did not pay such fines. But not all hurried to pay and in February 1946 there were still many who had not paid their fines.¹⁴

The issue of visits to the *Presseklub* was also discussed in the press. For example, the national socialist (Czechoslovak left-wing political party, not to be confused with the NSDAP) weekly *Svobodný zítřek* (Free Tomorrow) suspected the CJU of not having enough interest in informing the public about who the regular visitors to this institution had been, also founded with the aim of corrupting Czech journalists, and tried to sweep the whole issue of the *Presseklub* under the carpet. (*Svobodný zítřek*, 20 February 1947, p. 3) The article is not surprising in its criticism of the Union, for a number of journalists of the national socialist press took an ambivalent approach to this organization, for example the editor-in-chief of *Svobodné slovo* (Free speech) Ivan Herben. It is that the author reproaches the insufficient extent of radicalism in the attitude towards the punishment of journalists believed to have collaborated with the Germans and other front collaborators during the war. This approach is also surprising given that the call for harsh punishments in 1947 was slowly disappearing from the Czech public debate.

3. Balance of Activities of the Cleansing Committee

In hindsight we can say that the CJU took the post-war cleansing of the journalistic community quite seriously, and that compared to similar processes in other European countries in it was one of the hardest and most thorough.

The total number of journalists investigated by the cleansing committee was quite high. If the NUJ had shortly after its founding in 1939 some 1,000 members, of whom around 120 did not survive the occupation and several tens of others were expelled right after the liberation, or if they had not applied for the new CJU membership, there would still be at least 800 people that the cleansing committee had to examine within the shortest possible time.¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising that the committee was not able to take the challenge and the number of members at the inaugural meeting of the CJU preparatory committee on 19 June 1945 was significantly strengthened by other journalists.¹⁶

The most intensive period of work of the cleansing committee was between May and September 1945. In the middle of September 1945 Radim Foustka already expressed the opinion that the cleansing process could be completed before the end of September.¹⁷ But due to the number of unsolved cases, the cleansing committee continued its work in the following months. At the beginning of December 1945 the president of the preparatory committee of the CJU, Jaroslav Vozka, expressed his strong belief that “the work of the cleansing committee is almost at an end”.¹⁸ However, here, too, it was rather a wish, and the committee continued to work in the winter months of 1946. At the beginning of February 1946 the Country Department of Security (CDS—Department of the Ministry of Interior which was commanded by the Communist Party) demanded all available materials concerning the cleansing and offences of Czech journalists in order to be able to decide whether the individuals accused should be judged according to the so-called “minor” retribution decree.

The CJU surrendered all files concerning the cleansing to the CDS.¹⁹ The Union had previously decided that when the cleansing was complete, it would hand over all the incriminating material collected to the relevant courts and agencies, so that the request of the CDS in reality corresponded to the intention of the Union.²⁰ From approximately 800 journalists who survived the war and who could be concerned by the cleansing, the commit-

¹² NA, TNS 8/46, V. Ryba, box 23, *oznámení svazu novinářů národnímu prokurátorovi*, 5 March 1946.

¹³ NA, collection ASYN, box 166, *zápis o schůzi širšího přípravného výboru SČN*, 14 August 1945.

¹⁴ NA, collection ASYN, box 167, *part Očistná komise po r. 1945, zápis o společné schůzi očistné komise s užším přípravným výborem*, 19 February 1946. See also NA, collection ASYN, box 167, *part 4, oznámení Svazu českých novinářů šéfredaktorovi tiskového odboru K. F. Zierisovi*, 7 March 1946; NA, collection ASYN, box 166, *zápis o schůzi užšího výboru SČN*, 13 March 1946.

¹⁵ NA, collection ASYN, unsorted documents, *Zieris, K., F. Nedatovaný projev k 30 letům obnovení svazu novinářů*, p. 11. Zieris states that 700 journalists were left to be examined.

¹⁶ NA, collection ASYN, unsorted documents, *Zieris, K., F. Nedatovaný projev k 30 letům obnovení svazu novinářů*, p. 13.

¹⁷ NA, collection ASYN, box 166, *zápis o schůzi širšího přípravného výboru SČN*, 14 September 1945.

¹⁸ NA, collection ASYN, box 166, *zápis o schůzi širšího přípravného výboru SČN*, 5 December 1945.

¹⁹ NA, collection ASYN, box 167, *part Očistná komise po r. 1945, oznámení Svazu českých novinářů Zemskému odboru bezpečnosti*, 5 March 1946.

²⁰ NA, collection ASYN, box 166, *zápis o schůzi širšího přípravného výboru SČN*, 17 January 1946.

tee according to K. F. Zieris (secretary of protectorate NUJ and also post-war CJU) investigated around 400 individuals.²¹ However, the literature and contemporary sources show that by February 1946 a total of 86 journalists had been punished by expulsion from the Union (Dolejší, 1960, pp. 400–401). The press informed the general public about the results of the cleansing committee immediately after the materials were handed over to the CDS: “The committee authorized to pursue the cleansing of the journalist community completed its activity. It handed over 51 journalists to the national court, expelled a further 35 from the union, forbade 42 to engage in journalism and fined 58 journalists” (*Svobodné noviny*, 7 March 1946, p. 2).

Here it is necessary to add that the lists of journalists punished that I managed to find in the archives of the Czech Journalists Syndicate (today part of the National Archive in Prague) and from the archives of the Ministry of Information (also held in National Archive), do not fit with the numbers mentioned in the press, literature and documents of the CJU. Since I was unable to locate any document containing the total number of journalists punished, nor a list of their names, I put together the list on the basis of the sources available. Although V. Dolejší in his book refers to a list of journalists whose exclusion was published in the daily press, several names mentioned in the sources that I examined are, however, missing. For this reason I assume that his list is likewise incomplete.

The rigour with which the cleansing process was pursued within the journalistic union discouraged many of the members of the original organization. These people, 34 journalists in total (Hudec, 1987, p. 74), preferred to withdraw their applications and deliberately gave up their possible future careers rather than risking the scrutiny of their activities during the protectorate.

Regarding people in special groups, individual cultural organizations could officially decide themselves; their cleansing committees were only an internal issue, not a matter of justice. It is interesting to compare the approach of the cleansing committee of the journalists' union with the activities of the cleansing committee of the writers' syndicate, which was represented by one of the most important members of the domestic non-Communist resistance movement—Václav Černý. Due to the traditional interconnection of these professions, the members of the syndicate also included members of the journalistic organization. The writers expelled from the syndicate numbered eight until 23 February 1946 (among them also writers excluded from the journalistic organization: A. J. Kožíšek, J. Grmela, V. Rozner). One of the main directives that the writers' cleansing committee followed, stated: “we do not hand over the guilty writers to the public administration, we do not tell the state courts, we are not in touch with the criminal bodies of the state, we are solely an internal device of the writers' community” (Černý, 1992, p. 57).

4. Punishment for Journalistic Collaboration in Other European Countries

The problem of punishing media professionals who during the war had collaborated with the Nazis, was obviously not confined to Czech territories (Czechoslovakia), but also existed in other countries invaded by the Nazis. For purposes of comparison I cite the examples of the Netherlands and France. These countries can serve as points of comparison in the evaluation of the journalistic cleansing process on Czech territory. The examples of France and the Netherlands were selected for comparison due to very similar situation during the war and the similar methods of regulating the media in these territories. Specifically, the conditions under which the media and journalists were working during the war were taken into consideration; not the situation in which the punishment of collaborating journalists after the war took place. Here, it might have been more logical to choose one of the countries of the future Eastern Bloc, but the situation in those countries and their media during the war was quite different. In the case of Poland, the territory was completely destroyed by war and administered by the Germans (*Generalgouvernement*), while other countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, etc.) were Nazi satellites. The subordination to Germany was not enforced and in most areas they maintained a high degree of autonomy, including the media. This was also reflected in a completely different (mostly very lenient) assessment of the co-operation of journalists with Nazi regimes in the post-war era. In addition, from the end of the war until 1948, Czechoslovakia retained a certain degree of independence from the USSR, which did not exist in other countries of the future Eastern Bloc.

As for the processing of the topic abroad, in addition to the published examples of France and the Netherlands, there are publications and parts of studies dealing with the situation in Poland (see Gondek, 1988; Młynarczyk, 2009), Norway (see Ottosen, 2010), Belgium (see *Presse de Collaboration*, 2008; Winkel, 2004), Austria (see Duchkowitsch, Hausjell, & Semrad, 2004), and Denmark (see Roslyng-Jensen, 2010). Often, however, they are primarily concerned with the media situation during the war, and the post-war reaction to journalists' collaboration is only marginally described.

4.1. The Netherlands

The retribution in the Netherlands was also very thorough, with over 450 thousand individuals suspected of collaboration. The death sentence, which had been abolished in 1870, was reinstated. Death sentences were handed down in 154 cases, however, in majority this was commuted to life imprisonment. 39,000 people were deprived of some of their civil rights (e.g. the right to pursue their profession or to occupy prominent public of-

²¹ NA, collection ASYN, unsorted documents, Zieris, K., F. *Nedatovaný projev k 30 letům obnovení svazu novinářů*, p. 18.

ficie). One of the hardest sanctions concerning more than 40 thousand people was the loss of Dutch citizenship. (Kozák, 2002, pp. 38–39)

In the Netherlands journalists were punished by a so-called Committee for Press Cleansing, in particular by temporary exclusion from the profession. Between 31 December 1945 and mid-1950, the committee investigated 1,100 people. In all 341 journalists were temporarily suspended from the journalistic profession for up to four years. In 97 cases the suspension was between four and nine years; 75 journalists were suspended for 10 to 14 years and in 60 cases for 15 to 19 years. The harshest punishment (the ban on practicing the journalist's profession for 20 years) was used in 161 cases. (Kolínková, 2011, pp. 34–35)

In contrast to Czechoslovakia however, Dutch journalists were rarely sentenced in court. These cases usually concerned other crimes not relating to the journalistic profession. Among the small group of journalists punished for their journalistic activity by special courts of justice in The Hague and Amsterdam, there were, for example, Tobie Goedewaagen, Arie Meijer-Schwencke, Willem Goedhuys, Meinoud Marinus Rost van Tonningen, Marius Adolf van Huut, or Hermanus Anthoni Goedhart. The longest sentence was to 14 years' imprisonment, but the majority of the condemned journalists were released in 1952 under a general amnesty. The only journalist in the Netherlands to receive a death sentence for disseminating pro-Nazi propaganda was Max Blozijl (for more detail see Kolínková, 2011).

4.2. France

A more rigorous approach towards journalists collaborating with the Nazis can be found in France, which, due to the Vichy regime, suffered a lot from collaboration in the media. French tribunals of justice began legal proceedings against suspected collaborators in June 1944. The main action against domestic collaborators was the trial of Pétain's Vichy government, which became a template for future actions against pro-Nazi puppet governments in a number of other occupied countries. The extensive French retribution, however, did not focus only on politicians and high-ranking officials, but also on a wide range of society including compromised journalists (Kozák, 2002, p. 32). It is stated that within the *L'Épuration* (author's note: French term for "cleansing"), 50,095 people in total were accused, of whom 7,037 were sentenced to death. A number of collaborators, either real or suspected, were eliminated by the resistance movement without trial even before the arrival of the Allies (Kozák, 2002, p. 40). According to Borák (1998, p. 99), 2,853 people were condemned to death and 767 people were sentenced to execution.

Collaboration on the part of journalists was perceived in France as especially heinous, and the criminals were treated accordingly. Like in Czechoslovakia, the cleansing in the French media was also done partly by the

justice system and partly by the journalists themselves. Since in France there were several journalistic organizations after the war, the cleansing was pursued by a special committee of the Ministry of Information. Individual syndicates also examined the activities of their members during the war, but here punishments were usually exceptions. The orderly cleansing in France was preceded by a "wild" phase when some journalists were already executed by the resistance movement during the war for collaborating with the Germans (e.g. editor-in-chief of the *Cri du peuple* Albert Clément). After the liberation, out of 2,000 to 3,000 journalists working during the war, only a few were sentenced, but the punishments were in these cases quite harsh. Approximately ten leading collaborator journalists were executed (Henry Béraud, Robert Brasillach, Abel Lamy, Jean Breyer, Jean Luchaire, Paul Chack, Georges Suarez, Jean Hérold-Paquis, Paul Ferdonnet), in the case of several other people the death sentences were commuted to sentences to life imprisonment (Beauplan, Cousteau, Rebatet, Maurras, Boissel). Several other journalists were sentenced to life imprisonment or to many years of hard labour. However, in general it can be said that the judgements mostly concerned editors-in-chief and other high-ranking journalists, who, besides writing articles and broadcasting, also served the Nazis in other ways.

The journalistic (i.e. professional, not judicial) cleansing began in summer of 1944 and continued in several phases under different authorities. In March 1945 these were united into one committee for granting journalistic licences and professional cleansing (*Commission de la carte en organisme d'épuration professionnelle*) and were subordinated to the press department of the Ministry of Information. This committee was composed of representatives of the Cassation court, journalistic organizations, resistance movement press, publishing houses and individual journalists. This committee examined those who were interested in working in the media and on the basis of the evaluation of their activities during the war licences were issued without which the journalists could not work. Over a period of several months, however, the committee received 6,000 requests for licences, and its functioning was to a certain extent paralysed. The problem was also the fact that the basic material for the evaluation of the journalists' culpability, i.e. their wartime articles, was not extant. The important criteria for assessment were thus the nature of the newspaper in which the journalist had worked and his position in the official hierarchy (11% of those convicted were editors-in-chief, 27% executive editors—*secrétaires de rédaction*), having received material benefits (i.e. whether the journalist thanks to his collaboration with the Nazis had enriched himself), having maintained private contacts with the Nazis, and last but not least also having made journalistic trips to Nazi Germany.

The vast majority of those convicted came from the occupied part of France (77%), journalists working under the Vichy regime were punished less. Similarly to

Czechoslovakia, in France, too, the journalists might forever lose their right to work in journalism, but the committee never actually gave such a sentence. The longest restriction on working in journalism was 20 years. 89% of temporarily suspended journalists, however, were not suspended for more than two years. In total, 687 journalists were punished by the committee during the professional cleansing (8.4% of all requests for journalistic licences), 73% of them later returned to their profession (particularly after the general amnesty in 1953), although in lower editorial positions (Delporte, 1999, pp. 384–400).

5. Conclusion

The process of bringing to justice those journalists who during the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia committed the crime of collaborating with the Nazis, or were after the war accused of such collaboration, significantly influenced the reconstruction of the post-war media system in Czechoslovakia. As in France, also in Czechoslovakia treason perpetrated by journalists was perceived as especially reprehensible, as journalists were within the post-war concept of media presented to the public, and even to themselves, as the leaders of the construction of the new, better society. Therefore it was not acceptable for this state to be in any way compromised by people who during the war had had anything to do with the Nazis.

This theory, however, was in practice in conflict with the vague perception of borders that were supposed to define journalistic collaboration. Excluding several leading editors and editors of significantly pro-Nazi or anti-Semitic papers who compromised themselves by an active approach towards collaboration with the Nazis, and who were punished within the extraordinary public judiciary, the majority of journalistic collaborators were people writing pro-German articles often under constraint and in fear for their very lives. The public, aroused by six years of occupation during which they could every day read articles collaborating with the Nazi invaders, and for whom it was the newspapers that represented the collaboration, however, had no mercy for these journalists, and nor did the journalists themselves who after the war accepted the task of cleansing their community from the stigma of the occupation. This related without a doubt to the moral disintegration of Czech society during the occupation, which traumatized society in the post-war period, and led to a more intensive proclamation of national unity, which was supposed to suppress this trauma and to shift the burden of guilt onto a certain group of people (traitors, collaborators, Germans). (Brenner, 2005, pp. 257–263)

This fact was strongly reflected in the media, where the evidence of collaboration was clearly visible to the public and present in everyday life. Therefore it was without a doubt for the journalists to make their community again legitimate in the eyes of the public after the war, and the professional cleansing among Czech journalists

was very harsh, even compared to that in other European countries. Contrary to other western countries, the journalists convicted often lost their chances of returning to their profession due to the later political development.

An essential part of the cleansing is also its political aspect. From the very beginning the leadership of the post-war CJU was significantly left oriented, and the same can be said of the cleansing committee, consisting mostly of members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia or of its open and secret sympathizers. The Communist press was banned already in 1938, and Communists, together with Jews, were the main enemies of the Nazis, and so with some exceptions the majority of radically left-thinking editors did not work in the protectorate press, and thus could not compromise themselves by the collaboration. This also made it impossible without further risk for the Communists to demand the most radical approach, which would enable them to rid themselves of potential political adversaries.

Christiane Brenner (2009) correctly points out the problem of the absence of free and equal public discourse during the relatively democratic pre-February regime (before the Communist takeover in February 1948). This situation was caused by the exclusion of certain societal groups (ethnic Germans, members of former right-wing political parties, real or supposed traitors and collaborators) from participation in the public discourse. Some restrictions were introduced for certain issues and violating them was punishable like for example in the conflict of the Catholic weekly *Obzory* (Horizons) with the Communist Minister of Information, Václav Kopecký. These facts also concerned very decidedly the journalistic community, which significantly influenced the form of the public discourse. The exclusion of a certain part of journalists from participation in this discourse could have had a significant influence on this discourse, and could have contributed to its shaping in a certain political and ideologically desirable direction (for more on the topic, see Brenner, 2009, pp. 467–468.)

From the point of view of the development of society in the days of the Communist takeover in February 1948 and in the following years of Communist totalitarianism in Czechoslovakia, the ideological and personal interconnection of the united journalistic organization (to which the professional cleansing was entrusted) with the Ministry of Information (commanded by the Communist Party) is essential.

The notions of the future role and position of the media, (the end of private ownership in the media, the media as a tool for building a new, people's democratic regime, journalists as supporters of governmental efforts) which were adopted by the domestic and foreign resistance movement already during the war, were in the post-war period promoted by both the Ministry of Information responsible for the media and by the CJU, which brought all active journalists together. The Communist Party could therefore exert a strong influence on journalists and the media through the connections of the

Ministry of Information with the CJU. Communists could abuse the post-war cleansing within the journalistic organization to discredit or displace political opponents, which prepared the ground for an easy takeover of the media as the key means of influencing public opinion.

This was accordingly used also during the Communist coup in February 1948, and in the immediate aftermath, for quick subordination of all media in Czechoslovakia under communist control. Journalists who in the post-war period criticized the Communists' efforts were immediately expelled after the February coup from the CJU and thus (according to the law) lost the opportunity to work in the media. While some of those were to emigrate, many undesirable journalists ended up in prison or labour camps.

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Conflict of Interests

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