

Re-Evaluating the Political Press. A Case Study on Political, Economic and Journalistic Functioning of the Inter-War Czechoslovak Party-press Newspaper *Národní listy*, and its Publishing Company the Prague Stock Printery (PAT)

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Abstract

This article attempts to re-assess the often negative evaluations of the political press, through a detailed analysis of a case study from inter-war Czechoslovakia, the newspaper *Národní listy*, and its publishing company the Prague Stock Printery (PAT), which were affiliated to the National Democratic Party. The analysis is theoretically framed by a discussion of notions of party-press parallelism and political parallelism, and how these political models are evaluated within the contemporary literature. In the following parts, an extensive (but necessary) contextualization is offered, which first focuses on the political-economic history of inter-war Czechoslovakia, and a description of its media landscape, and then details the workings of PAT and *Národní listy*. The analytical parts first describe the financial, managerial and editorial situation of PAT and *Národní listy*, and then evaluates their functioning at the economic, political and journalistic level. This evaluation shows the complexities of the political model from within the actual publishing practice, and demonstrates both the advantages and problems of the political model, compensating for the frequent exclusively negative evaluations of this model.

Keywords: political parallelism – party-press parallelism – media economy – political communication – inter-war Czechoslovakia.

Introduction

In the 21st century Western world, the dominant model for media organizations has become the corporate-capitalist model, which disconnects media organizations from political parties and where the media organization's existence serves the shareholders more than any political actors. Obviously, this is not the only model, with the continued existence of public service media and not-for-profit media, which are outside this corporate-capitalist model. Moreover, also the corporate-capitalist model has not always had this hegemonic position.

In the Western world, the corporate-capitalist model has, over time, *gained* dominance¹ by replacing another hegemonic model, the political model.² This political model – as Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 26) argue – has been dominating print media for a long time: “From the beginning of the print era [...] political advocacy was one of the functions of print media, and by the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, when newspapers began to emerge as a force in political life, this became their principal function.” At later stages, the connection between political parties and media organizations became more structural, and especially the period between the First and Second World Wars was a ‘golden age’ for the political press, as sharp ideological divides and strong political polarization enhanced demand for overtly political papers (Hardy, 2008, p. 39).

This article will argue that contemporary perspectives on the political model contain disavowals that use the corporate-capitalist model as reference point. As a consequence of this decontextualization, the political model is often not evaluated on its own terms, with respect to both the merits and problems this model had. In response to this problematic, this article will look into a particular case study, the Czechoslovak newspaper *Národní listy*, and its publishing company PAT, the Prague Stock Printery, which were affiliated to the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party. To add another point of reference, this study will also use data of PAT's competitor, *Melantrich*, which was part of the political press system, yet its economic behaviour was much more market-oriented.

The specificity of the case requires an elaborate two-stage historical analysis, which combines an analytical with a synthetic stage, and which goes into great detail.

Furthermore, this analysis is extensively contextualised by a discussion on the Czechoslovak political and media situation of the Interbellum, a context which is important, but not very well known outside the region. Through our two-stage historical analysis, the article wants to revisit a party-press from the 19th century, and evaluate its functioning at three levels: the economic level, with its two sublevels (the financial and the managerial sublevels), the political level, and the journalistic level, in order to provide a more nuanced perspective of what once was a dominant model in the world of publishing.

¹ An extensive body of literature exists to describe the variety these models, from a more analytical perspective (e.g. Hallin and Mancini's (2004) book, used extensively here) to a more normative perspective (with the *Four Theories of the Press* by Siebert et al. (1956) as an important starting point – see also Nerone (1995) and Christians et al. (2009)). This literature also reminds us that these models are ideal types (or discursive constructions) that never perfectly manage to capture the diversity of social reality.

² If we take a more historical approach, we first of all have to note the existence of even more models, such as the communist model of the second part of the 20th century that was dominant in Central and Eastern Europe (including Czechoslovakia) and the USSR. The communist model obviously also has a strong connection between media and politics. In Czechoslovakia, this was illustrated when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took control over the country in 1948. *Rudé právo* (Red Right) was its main newspaper, a role which it continued to play until the Velvet Revolution in 1989. One can argue that this was not a case of political parallelism in its traditional form, because the role of the Communist Party was authoritarian. As de Albuquerque (2013, p. 743) argues, the concept of political parallelism makes only sense within “the existence of a competitive political system: the concept of political parallelism does not apply in the absence of political cleavages.”

Party-press parallelism as a way to describe the close ties between political parties and politics

To describe this intimate connection of media enterprises with particular political parties the concept of party-press parallelism (Seymour-Ure, 1974) has been used. Party-press parallelism refers to "the degree to which the structure of the media system paralleled that of the party system. It exists in its strongest form when each news organization is aligned with a particular party, whose views it represents in the public sphere." (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 27) According to the Seymour-Ure's original concept, "the connection between a paper and a party can be measured by reference to three characteristics of parties: 1) organization; 2) goals (programmes and tactics) and 3) members and supporters." (Seymour-Ure, 1974, p. 160) In addition, Seymour-Ure also uses a second level, which correlates the political parties' strength with the readership of the newspapers (de Albuquerque, 2013, p. 746). As Seymour-Ure believes, the "closest form of connection is ownership and management of a paper by a party," (Seymour-Ure, 1974, p. 160) but also important are the paper's "loyalty to party goals" (Seymour-Ure, 1974, p. 173) and the ideological affiliation between the paper, the party and its readers: "for the parallelism between a paper and a party to be complete, the paper's readership ought not to include supporters of any other party." (Seymour-Ure, 1974, p. 168). A short summary of party-press parallelism can be found in Van Kempen's (2007) description. For Van Kempen (2007, p. 303) party-press parallelism "exists in its strongest form when each newspaper supports a party that is highly visible in the leader columns and in the editorial parts of newspapers – but sometimes also in the news items themselves. According to Seymour Ure, basically, there are four ways in which the media-party parallelism can manifest itself. Firstly in media contents, secondly in media ownership, thirdly in party affiliations / preferences of journalists and publishers and fourthly in party affiliations / preferences of the audience."

Party-press parallelism also impacts on journalistic identities, as party-press parallelism assumes that journalists are not autonomous, but in contrast align themselves with the political party that is supported by their newspaper and themselves (Van Kempen, 2007). Also here, we can see a historical evolution, which is sometimes captured by the concept of professionalization. Although we should be careful not to write a too linear history of journalism and not to ignore journalistic diversity by exclusively focussing on the Anglo-Saxon tradition³, Hallin and Mancini's (2004, p. 26) description of the changes in dominant journalistic models remains instrumental:

"A political journalist was a publicist who saw it as his or her role to influence public opinion in the name of a political faction, and in many cases newspapers were established on the initiative of political parties or other political actors, or supported by them. By the late nineteenth century a contrasting model of political journalism was beginning to emerge, in which the journalist was seen as a neutral arbiter of political communication. This was often connected with the development of a

³ Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 111) point out that "The quality of writing and sophistication of political analysis in titles like *Le Monde*, *El País* or *La Repubblica* are higher than in American newspapers." Journalists are here perceived as an important part of their role to be "promotion of certain values and ideas" and "influencing of the public" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 131).

commercial press, whose purpose was to make money rather than to serve a political cause, and that was financed by advertising rather than by subsidies from political actors. It was also often connected with the development of journalistic professionalism.”

The contemporary dominant journalistic professional model, as Hallin and Mancini state, praises independence supported by professional norms. These norms can include ethical principles such as the obligation to protect sources or to maintain a separation between advertising and editorial content, as well as practical routines – common standards of “newsworthiness” (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 35). In addition, contemporary journalism has a public service orientation, which implies that they are oriented toward an ethic of public service, and media function as a “public trust.” (Hallin & Mancini 2004, p. 36) This should be contrasted to the role of the journalism in a political parallelism model, where the journalist’s allegiance does not lie with the public in general, but with a particular public, which takes ideologically similar positions and are supporter of a particular political party. Ethical principles and journalistic professionalism do exist in this model but became framed from within the party’s ideology.

De-hegemonising the political party-press model

The close relation between papers and parties, which, as Seymour-Ure claims, was the rule in the nineteenth century, “has become uncommon since the growth of the advertising industry to a size where papers derive anything from 40 to 80 per cent of their gross income from advertisements, and since the setting up of newspapers as public companies.” (Seymour-Ure, 1974, p. 160). The political press, and with it, the dominant model of party-press parallelism⁴, disappeared, which led Hallin and Mancini (2004) to develop a new concept: political parallelism. In a later article, Mancini (2012, p. 266) explains this choice: “The direct control of newspapers by political parties was replaced by a different kind of involvement of newspapers in political life, which has been defined as political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). It features the alignment of newspapers with different ideological, political, and cultural views.” Political parallelism’s reason of existence is exactly the demise of party-press parallelism.

Although in some cases a neutral position is taken, the disappearance of the political press (and party-press parallelism) is also frequently met with implicit approval. Sometimes these positionings are subtle and marked by the choice of words. For instance Hardy’s (2008, p. 38) statement, that the newspapers’ “growing financial independence, through sales and advertising revenue, allowed increasing independence from organised political interests” reserves a central role for the notion of (in)dependence, building on the positive connotations of this notion. Humphreys (1996, p. 29) refers to the end of the party press and the process of commercialization as “a political secularization process.” But in other cases, the connections between political parties and media institutions are explicitly problematized, as we can find in Blumler and Gurevitch’s (1995, p. 23) work:

⁴ Here we should be careful not to suggest that the political press has completely disappeared, or that these changes took place at similar moments. See for instance Hadenius and Weibull (1999) for a discussion of the Swedish case, and Van Kempen (2007) for an analysis of media-party parallelism in 15 European countries.

"1) Party-tied media systems will produce a higher proportion of one-sided political content [...] 2) The more subordinate the media system, the greater will be the degree of free access to communication outlets allowed for the statements of party spokespeople as originally conceived. [...] 3) The greater the autonomy of the media system, the greater will be its tendency to generate 'balanced' political information contents. [...] Autonomous media systems are to be found in two main variants: a) Commercially supported and b) Non-commercial media systems that will produce higher proportions of issue-oriented political outputs and will tend to generate higher incidence of 'monitor' role orientations among audience members."

There are a number of problems with this type of argument that disavows the party press (and the models of party-press parallelism and political parallelism). We should keep in mind that the parallelism models are deeply rooted in the media and political realities of Western Europe, as de Albuquerque's (2013) argues, which renders them context-dependant. The implication that also the disavowals of the party-press are context-dependant brings us to the first critique, which is grounded in the argument that some of the arguments lodged against the party press originate from a more liberal perspective, which is more dominant in particular parts of the world (namely the Anglo-Saxon world, see, e.g., Chalaby (1996) about journalism). Second, these disavowals are grounded in a preference for internal pluralism over external pluralism. To use the words of MM-CM, the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Media Concentrations and Pluralism (MM-CM, 1992, p. 3), who defines these concepts: "Pluralism may be internal in nature, with a wide range of social, political and cultural values, opinions, information and interests finding expression within one media organisation, or external in nature, through a number of such organisations, each expressing a particular point of view." The relationship between internal pluralism and external pluralism is complex, and different positions have been taken. For instance, Peruško (2010, p. 268) describes Donsbach's thoughts about this issue as follows: "Donsbach (1996) calls this [external pluralism] virtual pluralism, as one would have to partake of many different media before a diverse and plural view of ideas and culture could be gained." Others, like Mancini (2012, p. 267), refer to external pluralism (and political parallelism) differently, without privileging one over the other, but simply as "a different structure of the public sphere and a different organization of social and political pluralism." Here, we would argue that the societal plurality of opinions can also be served by media systems based on party-press or political parallelism, and that a dichotomizing perspective that *necessarily* privileges one component of the dichotomy is problematic. Similarly, an argument can be made for a diversity of journalisms, which include opinionated and partisan journalism. A third critique is that the demise of the political press and the dominance of the corporate-capitalist model is explained and evaluated through the workings of capitalism itself. The evaluation of the functioning of media organizations is grounded in their capacity to be viable businesses, that produce profit. Alternative models for structuring media organizations, that are not aimed at generating profit, remain underrepresented in these debates, which also results in less significant role for non-economic evaluation criteria. What is often disregarded is that the party press partially functioned outside a 'pure' capitalist media model, and used different logic that privileged political objectives over economic ones. In practice, this meant that political parties, as their owners or patrons, covered some of the losses inflicted by 'their' party presses. Their reason of existence was not to generate profit for their shareholders, but to promote the ideologies of the political parties, if necessary, at an expense.

At the same time, we should keep in mind that the party presses still *partially* had to function within a capitalist media model. This implied that party presses were still capitalist enterprises that attempted to generate profits or break-even, and needed additional capital to cover their losses. As organizations active in capitalist societies, party presses were susceptible to the fluctuations in the economy, and the recessions and depressions that these fluctuations entail⁵. Moreover, in a capitalist economy, party presses had a number of structural disadvantages. Media companies, as Picard (2011, p. 159) argues, operate in dual product market: "Advertising supported media compete in two markets because of their dual product characteristics. When they compete, they may compete with others in both the audience market and advertising markets, only in the audience markets, or only in the advertising market." Both audience and advertising income are to a high degree restricted to the income generated by the supporters of the party. A party press can thus rely on a steady flow of advertising money from its loyal supporters, but if these partisans cannot support the newspaper any more – e.g., if, in the case of advertisers, their own business is struck by difficulties – it is much harder for the party press enterprise to acquire new advertising income, as it is limited to the political community of supporters. Secondly, the connection between the party and its press also has consequences for the management of party presses, as the power relations between these two actors might become unbalanced. Party presses risk instrumentalisation, rendering their particular objectives, interests and even survival secondary, exposing their functioning to what can be called mismanagement.

The reasons that are seen to have contributed to the demise of party-press parallelism are then also often economic, as it is emphasized that the political de-alignments, supported by the preference for internal pluralism and objectivity journalism, served the interests of advertisers who were seeking to reach an aggregated audience of consumers, not fractured along political lines. Williams (2005, p. 63 in Hardy, 2008, p. 38) is one example of this point: "The emphasis on facts and objectivity accorded with the commercial needs of the Anglo-American press. By presenting the facts and allowing readers to draw their own opinion of them, newspapers were able to sell to more people, across a broad range of political views and attitudes." Van Kempen (2007, p. 314), talking from a contemporary perspective and despite establishing many differences in Europe, refers to "a trend toward catch-all-ism [...] [where] Newspapers tend to blur their ideological identities and connections in order to appeal to as broad an audience as possible." Although we do not want to question these arguments in their entirety, we would also like to question some of the ideological assumptions behind the necessity and desirability of their demise, as this pushes us towards a discourse of linear progress.

This article aims to show how in the inter-war period, a particular party press, *Národní listy*, published by PAT, the Prague Stock Printery, affiliated to the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party, functioned within a capitalist context, and managed to survive for decades, driven by mainly political objectives. Without privileging the corporate-capitalist model over another, we will attempt to evaluate PAT's strengths and weaknesses, looking at the economic, political and journalistic levels. In order to do so, we first need to describe the Czechoslovak context at the interbellum.

⁵ As Picard (2011, p. 103) argued, media are particularly sensitive to such changes in the economy for two reasons. First, sales of communications products and services are affected by general economic conditions. Second, advertising sales are also strongly affected by changes in the general economy.

Inter-war Czechoslovakia

This overview of the Czechoslovak context will first briefly discuss Czechoslovakia's political and economic history, emphasising that inter-war Czechoslovakia was one of the rare examples of a relatively well-functioning democracy, with a developed industry, but did not escape the crises of the 1930s. In a second part, we will (equally briefly) sketch Czechoslovakia's media landscape, and the dominance of the party presses in the 1920s and 1930s.

A political-economic history

After the First World War, Czechoslovakia became one of the independent states born out of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Although "[the] Czechs registered impressive cultural, economic, and political achievements while part of the Habsburg monarchy," (Agnew, 2004, p. 175), especially during the early years of the First Republic Czechoslovakia – the "golden twenties" – the country found itself in more favorable circumstances than some of its neighboring states. Postwar Europe was in a problematic and a very unbalanced situation. The economic difficulties led to growing societal tension and political instability. This produced the conditions for the formation of authoritarian regimes, which also threatened Czechoslovakia (Bednařík, Jirák, Köpplová, 2011, p. 151; Johnson, 1996, p. 204). Nevertheless, Czechoslovakia's unique situation within inter-war Central Europe is mentioned by several authors: "Preconditions for a tranquil domestic political and economic development did not exist in Central Europe after World War I; by the end of 1934 Czechoslovakia was its only functioning democracy." (Johnson, 1996, p. 199). Kitchen (2006, p. 200) makes a similar argument:

"Unlike Poland and Hungary, or the other countries in East-Central Europe and the Balkans, Czechoslovakia functioned reasonably successfully as a democracy during the inter-war period. In fact it was the only truly democratic nation in the entire area, showing reasonable respect for parliamentary procedure, individual liberties and the rule of law. [...] The Czech areas of the Hapsburg Empire, the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, and the largely German-populated southern Silesia were highly developed and contained a number of important industries, such as Skoda works, that had supplied the Austro-Hungarian army with most of its weapons. Rapid industrialization brought a marked improvement in the living standards of the Czechs. [...] By the turn of the century the Czechs were no longer the serfs of their German overlords."

The historian Jan Křen believes that Czechoslovakia was affected by the postwar breakdowns, revolutionary and nationalistic distempers and wars, but that these effects did not last very long and did not hit the country so intensely (Křen, 2005, p. 398). As mentioned above, its capitalist economy was fairly strong. The party-political consensus of socialist and civic parties – the grand design of the political lay-out of postwar succession states – was extraordinarily strong in Czechoslovakia, even when the political scene inherited the typically Central European segmentation of the political landscape in many interest-based national parties. For instance, in 1920 there were about 25 political parties. Moreover, Czechoslovakia had, similar to its

neighbors, frequent government changes (in 1918–1938 there were 23 governments) and relied heavily on coalitions (Křen, 2005, p. 401).

Czechoslovakia's "golden twenties" did not last, and the new decade brought a global crisis. In the East, there was Russia's forcible collectivization of undeveloped agriculture and unprecedented decrease of living standards. In the West, there was "Black Friday", the New York stock market crash in October 1929 (Křen, 2005, p. 406). The still weak economies of Central-East Europe were strongly connected to Germany, which was severely affected, and the consequences were disastrous. In Czechoslovakia, the foreign trade index dropped between years 1929–1938 from 138 to 48 (in dollars per capita) (Křen 2005, p. 407). The situation of the Czechoslovak economy, afflicted by the Great Depression, has been described by Václav Průcha (1974) as problematic during the entire 1930s: "The crisis, which started in 1929 in New York, lasted in Czechoslovakia for as long as 1933, which was longer than in most other countries. Also the recession lasted an exceptionally long time, until 1936. By contrast, the expansion was very short (1936–1937) and, moreover, it lead into a new crisis in 1937 without a period of boom. At the turn of 1937–1938 a new crisis broke out, which started another business cycle of recession" (Průcha, 1974, p. 88 – our translation). The unstable political and economic environment in Europe has brought rise of fascism, dictators like Benito Mussolini or Adolf Hitler and resulted in the Munich Agreement and break up of Czechoslovakia in September 1938.

Czechoslovakia's media landscape

During the interbellum, Czechoslovakia's media landscape consisted mainly out of political party periodicals. Political parties, such as the National Democrats (Československá národní demokracie), Czechoslovak Social Democrats (ČSSD – Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická), Czechoslovak Agrarian Party (Agrární strana, officially Republikánská strana Československého venkova), Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ – Komunistická strana Československa), Czechoslovak Socialist Party (Československá strana socialistická), People's Party (Československá strana lidová)⁶ used these party-presses as communication means to address their voters. As Bednařík et al. (2011, p. 159 – our translation) say, "party politics was promoted especially in the morning editions of the dailies, in which readers were presented with speeches of party officers, commentaries on political events, which were rich with respective ideologies, summaries of resolutions from party meetings, reflections on competing parties' activities and other news of a political nature." Next to the production of political newspapers the (party-press) publishing houses were also printing various weekly magazines (women, hobby...) and other publications.

Končelík, Večeřa and Orság (2010, p. 39) have a closer look at the periodicals' periodicity and circulation. Important dailies, they write, were published twice a day. The Sunday edition was considered to be a highlight of each daily. Morning and evening circulations of big dailies were different. In the mid-1930s, according to the available data, the circulation of some of the big Czech morning papers were as follows: Lidové noviny (The People's Paper): 45 thousand, Národní listy (National Sheets): 20 thousand, Venkov (Country): 30 thousand and Rudé právo (Red Right): 25 thousand. The morning papers were considerably

⁶ See Harna in Marek, Malíř, 2005, p. 537–538; Kitchen, 2006, p. 205; Agnew, 2004, p. 181.

more popular: for example *Národní politika* (National Politics) reached a circulation of up to 150 thousand copies, as was recorded by Končelík et al. (2010).

The organisational structure of the party-press enterprises was influenced by the Czechoslovak legislative framework: "Structurally, the press syndicates played an important facilitating role. Large press syndicates were connected to political parties, which, according to the law, were not legal entities and therefore could not own property or make contracts. Because of this legal requirement, the publishing houses mostly created joint stocks or limited partnership companies, headed by (important) leaders of political parties." (Bednařík et al., 2011, p. 163 – our translation)

During the First Republic, the journalist profession, as Končelík, Večeřa and Orság (2010) say, became more organized, with the emphasis on specialization and professional ethics. "Even though the profession was not prestigious, there was a journalistic elite^[7], represented by journalist-writers and prominent journalists, working mainly in dailies, who in their lead articles and keynote commentaries, co-created political orientation of their papers." (Končelík et al., 2010, p. 65–66 – our translation) Tendencies towards the 'intellectualization' of journalism started as early as in the half of the 1880s, by people around the later Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk: "Their fundamental thesis was the need to reduce exalted expressions of ideology in the press, which manifested itself by the use of nationalist rhetoric and inter-partial political and anti-German confrontations. They required from the modern journalism to contain pragmatic argumentation and verification of the facts." (Bednařík et al., 2011, p. 138) Professional organizations were established at the turn of the century, for instance, the Union of Czechoslovak journalists in 1902 or the Syndicate of the Czech Journalists in 1909. In 1928, *Svobodná škola politických nauk* (The Free School of Political Studies) was founded in Prague as the first institution designed specifically for educating journalists (Bednařík, Jirák, Köpplová, 2011, p. 139).

The Prague Stock Printery case study – the actors

The case study will analyse the actual practices of party-press publishing, showing the complexities played out at the economic, political and journalistic level. In order to do so, we will back to the First Republic of Czechoslovakia, and the workings of the Prague Stock Printery (PAT) and its daily newspaper, *Národní listy*. This particular company had been selected for two reasons. Firstly, the political partisanship of the newspaper was strong, with the party represented by important political and business figures of its time. Secondly, the archive materials, required for case study like this, were the most complete, in comparison to the archives of other inter-war publishing houses. In this part, we will first introduce the main actors that were involved in PAT.

PAT – Prague Stock Printery

⁷ The profession was essentially reserved to men, even though several women managed to obtain a position in the daily press, with Milena Jesenská, Olga Fastrová or Marie Fantová belonging to the prominent ones (e.g. Penkalová, 2011).

The party-press enterprise analysed in this case study is PAT – the Prague Stock Printery, which was affiliated to the National Democrat Party. The joint stock company PAT had been established in Prague in 1910, with a capital stock of Kč 1 500 000. The right to form a company had been given to Karel Kramář (a member of parliament for the National Democrats), Václav Havel (a real estate owner), Alois Rašín (an advocate) and other influential politicians and businessmen.⁸ In 1938, PAT had 300 employees⁹, out of which 26 were journalists; 6 of these 26 were freelancers.¹⁰

PAT belonged to the National Democratic Party – not directly, but the owners of the majority of its stocks were leaders of this party during the entire existence of the company.¹¹ In the company's managing board were Karel Kramář (the first Czechoslovak prime minister (1918-1919) and National Democratic party chairman) as the chairman of the PAT board, Bohdan Bečka (minister of finance) as its vice chairman, František Xaver Hodáč (member of parliament and member of the bank committee of the ministry of finance) and other active politicians (Kubů & Douša, 2008, p. 480, 540; State Archive)¹² as regular members. In legal matters, Alois Rašín, the first Czechoslovak minister of finance, represented PAT (State Archive)¹³. The leaders of the National Democratic Party also owned most of the PAT stocks. In 1937, the majority of stocks was owned by vice chairman Bohdan Bečka – his group (his family and friends) owned 6 489 out of total 20 964 stocks, which is 31 %; the group of chairman Karel Kramář owned 12 %; the group of Dr. Rašín owned 8.5 %, the rest was owned by individuals, industrial corporations and banks, including Živnobanka, which cooperated with PAT.¹⁴

The main role of PAT was to publish the *Národní listy* (National Sheets) daily, although PAT was also publishing an evening paper, *Národ* (Nation) and a Monday paper, *Ráno* (Morning)¹⁵. Nevertheless, *Národní listy* was one of the main vehicles that the political representatives of National Democratic Party used to pursue its political line, and to address readers in relation to the politics of the party. On the pages of *Národní listy*, the party pursued a "fight for the correction of economic and political conditions".¹⁶

PAT became *Národní listy*'s publisher in 1910, but the daily had been founded much earlier, in 1861 by Julius Grégr, to – already then – serve as a tribune for Czech national-liberal elite (Velek, 2013, p. 113). Initial attempts to acquire a licence for a political daily, by publicist and politician František Ladislav Rieger and historian and politician František Palacký had been rejected by the Austro-Hungarian state (Borovička et al., 2012, p. 32). In anticipation of another negative response, "an application for the licence for Czech political daily titled *Národní listy* was also submitted, by young attorney Julius Grégr, to the proconsulate." (Borovička et al., 2012, p. 37 – our translation) This application was successful, and "*Národní listy*, which started to be published on January 1st, 1861, kept Rieger's line at the beginning, but gradually sought its own way. Their

⁸ Czech National Bank's archive, Protocol from the meeting, December 17th, 1909.

⁹ Compass, Financial Yearbook, Praha, 1938.

¹⁰ Czech National Bank's archive, Internal report – comparison of *Národní listy* and *Lidové noviny* dailies, September 29th, 1939.

¹¹ Czech National Bank's archive, Protocol from the meeting, December 17th, 1909, List of stockholders, May 29th, 1937.

¹² State Regional Archive in Praha, PAT fund, Minutes from PAT board meeting of April 28th, 1936.

¹³ State Regional Archive in Praha, PAT fund, Minutes from PAT board meeting of January 13th, 1936.

¹⁴ Czech National Bank's archive, List of PAT's stockholders, May 29th, 1937.

¹⁵ Compass, Financial Yearbook, Praha, 1938.

¹⁶ Jubilee *Národní listy* daily, December 21st, 1929 – our translation.

publisher changed from unknown article clerk into the most influential Czech journalistic entrepreneur and significant politician," as Borovička et al. (2012, p. 37 – our translation) described the first years of *Národní listy*. The daily was very active in promoting Czech patriotism and nationalism, and on its pages, the Young Czech Party, a party that would later be integrated into the National Democratic Party, "challenged national nihilists" (Borovička et al., 2012, p. 325 – our translation). *Národní listy* was also successful; Borovička et al. (2012, p. 319 – our translation) write that in 1886, *Národní listy* was considered to be "the most influential Czech daily."

When PAT then acquired *Národní listy* in 1910, keeping the daily alive always had the highest priority, no matter how considerable losses it incurred (State Archive)¹⁷. As Sládek (2005) argues, "National Democratic Party's persons of authority also firmly intervened if the ideological line of *Národní listy* started to deviate from the official line of the party." (p. 598) To illustrate the absolute ruling of the political line of the newspaper over the enterprise, let us mention that in 1936, when the economic situation of PAT was problematic, its vice chairman Bohdan Bečka (State Archive)¹⁸ made a critical comment on the party not paying its rent dutifully: "While elsewhere the press is supported by the party, here it is vice versa." The separation of *Národní listy* from the party, he argued, would have been beneficial for the paper, while at the same time, the party could not exist without the paper. (CNB Archive)¹⁹. Such a suggestion (from a former minister of finance) might have sound ruthless, but his evaluation was quite visionary: according to the records *Národní listy* stopped being published on 15 May 1941 (SOA)²⁰, for reasons that will be discussed below.

The position of the National Democratic Party

As Zdeněk Sládek (2005, p. 593 – our translation) wrote in his book chapter about the National Democratic Party (on which this part of the article is based), this party "played a key role in Czech politics at the end of the first world war and during constitution of the Czechoslovak state." In July 1918, when preparing for Czechoslovakia's independence, its political parties agreed to establish a People's Committee, in which the State-Rights Party²¹, as the National Democratic Party was then called, had the most important role, allowing its members to participate in the construction of the legal framework of the new Czechoslovak state.

The National Democrats presented the constitution of their party in 1919, by announcing a program in which the party defined itself as a party of the entire nation; it also then adopted the name of Czechoslovak National Democratic Party. The party defended, as Zdeněk Sládek (2005, p. 594 – our translation) describes, "an economic democracy, which means the retention of the existing private ownership system". Sládek (2005, p. 594) further argues that this approach had little chance to convince a large constituency, because the Czechoslovak political landscape was divided by the many different social interests of particular parts of the Czechoslovak society. The National Democratic Party was criticised by those who represented the lower

¹⁷ State Regional Archive in Praha, PAT fund, Minutes from PAT board meeting of April 28th, 1936.

¹⁸ State Regional Archive in Praha, Introduction to the inventory of PAT fund

¹⁹ Czech National Bank's archive, Minutes from PAT board meeting of February 27th, 1936 – our translation.

²⁰ State Regional Archive in Praha, Introduction to PAT fund.

²¹ Translation used by McHale (1983, p. 145).

classes; they "denounced it for instigating social poverty and injustice. [...] In the 1919 elections, the National Democrats acquired only 8.2% of the votes, which did not allow them to maintain their position and they moved into the opposition." (Sládek, 2005, p. 595 – our translation) The combination of the small share of votes and their relatively high level of influence, might also be explained by the fact that twenty-five parties participated in these April 1920 elections. Most shares were relatively small: The largest election share was 25,7 %, which went to the Czechoslovak Social Democrats (e.g., Harna 2005, p. 550). The National Democratic Party's results were never high, as these voting results indicate: 1919 – 8.2 %; 1920 – 6.3 %; 1925 – 4.0 %; 1929 – 4.9 % and 1935 – 5.6 % (Harna 2005, p. 550; Sládek 2005, p. 595). Still, the party remained influential and became part of the coalition governments of the 1920s; the National Democratic Party held the positions of Finance Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade (Sládek, 2005, p. 599). The reason for such an influence Sládek explains by the party leader's, Karel Kramář, and his followers conviction that "since the party had their merit in the domestic resistance [before Czechoslovakia's independence] and had played a significant role in the foundation of the Czechoslovak state, it was entitled to a leading role in the state government." (Sládek 2005, p. 599 – our translation)

This right-wing party grouped several fractions, including the protagonists of an "aggressive nationalism", which manifested itself through its claims that only Czech should be used as official language; the keenest of them, journalist and writer Viktor Dyk, was also writing for *Národní listy* (Sládek 2005, p. 600). This fraction wanted to join forces with the extreme-right, in particular with the National Fascist League (*Národní obec fašistická*) that had been established in 1925. The National Democrats "not only observed this movement with sympathy, they also supplied it with supporters and celebrities" (Sládek 2005, p. 601). As also Miroslav Mareš (2006, p. 161) writes: "Some of the Czech right-wing democratic parties had small fractions that tended toward fascism. This was typical of the National Democratic Party, Agrarian Party, and Czechoslovak People's Party." This strategy was blocked by the so-called industrial wing of the National Democratic Party, which included Bohdan Bečka and F. X. Hodáč (both were in the managing board of PAT). These politicians had a strong position from 1928 onwards, and were therefore capable of avoiding a too strong proximity towards the extreme-right. Jaroslav Preiss, the director of *Živnobanka*, supported them by acquiring a controlling interest in PAT, and the general secretary of the Union of Czechoslovak industrialists, F. X. Hodáč, was de facto overtaking the party's management in 1929 (Sládek, 2005, p. 604).

In his 1929 speech, "K. Kramář reviewed the party's relations with the fascists. He explained that the National Democrats sympathized with them, because they claimed the national idea, fought against communism and activated passive members of the party." (Sládek, p. 603 – our translation) Kramář declared that the National Democratic Party would separate from the fascists.

At the beginning of the 1930s, the National Democrats returned to government, as one of the coalition's parties, providing the Minister of Trade (Sládek, 2005, p. 605). All the groups – the industrial wing, the nationalists and the followers of chairman Karel Kramář – engaged in power struggles throughout the 1930s, and they all sought to control *Národní listy* (Sládek, 2005, p. 606). From the beginning of the 1930s, the National Democratic Party's position steadily declined (Kosatík, 1996). Kosatík explains: "Its political influence declined even more at the beginning of 1934, when the party – officially to protest against the depreciation of the national currency, the koruna – removed its ministers from government." (Kosatík 1996, p. 88 – our translation). For the 1935 elections, the National Democrats, desiring to enter into government again, established the National Unification Party (*Národní sjednocení*) (Mareš 2006, p. 161), grouping

together the National Democrats, the National League (Národní liga) and the National Front (Národní fronta) (e.g. Mrklas, 2011). Kramář became its chairman (until his death in 1937), although – as Antonín Klimek (2002) suggests – Kramář was not in favour of the integration of the National Democrats with the National League, with its connections to fascism. Still, “he was sidetracked and all the control of the integration efforts was taken over by Hodáč. On 28th October, 1934, the National Unification Party thus proclaimed its foundation as a new party, which became later renowned for its motto 'Nothing but the nation'.” (Klimek, p. 282 – our translation) In 1935, these two small parties left again, and the National Unification Party then “asked for the support of the Agrarian party. The National Democrats thus ceased to exist as an independent political force.” (Sládek, p. 614 – our translation)

A short note on methodology

The case study is based on the analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources were the economic and legal documents on Živnobanka and PAT, complemented by 21 newspaper issues, selected throughout the history of the newspaper (1861, 1910, 1921, 1923, 1932, 1936 and 1939²²). Also two key special jubilee issues of the Národní listy newspaper (from 21 December 1929 and 15 December 1935)), that were awarded a lot of attention in the PAT documents, were analysed, and used as illustration in this article. For this research, different archives were consulted, as listed below:

- The Regional State Archives (Státní oblastní archiv – SOA) in Prague – Chodovec (part of National Archives): the minutes of PAT managing board meetings, annual reports, documentation on the company’s foundation and correspondence with business partners. The PAT-related documents are kept in 28 archive boxes and 46 office books, which takes almost 4,5 meters of shelf space.
- The archives of Czech National Bank (ČNB) in Prague: PAT loan documentation (kept by Živnobanka), which included internal Živnobanka reports containing PAT financial data, the minutes of PAT managing board meetings, information about PAT’s competitor, Melantrich publishing (also kept by Živnobanka), including annual reports of the company.²³ The Živnobanka archive (for 1869-1964) is 931 meters long, but only two boxes related to PAT.
- The National Library Klementinum: financial year-books named Compass, written in German.
- The issues of Národní listy were studied both in the archive and on-line. Physically, all the issues from 1861 to 1941 are kept in the National Museum Library Archive. The entire archive has been digitalized recently (after the data collection), and all the issues are now available on-line at <http://kramerius.nkp.cz/>.

²² For each of these years, the issues of March 12th, 13th and 14th were selected. If a particular 14 March issue did not have the regular number of pages (8), the issue of the 15th was selected. The relatively small number of newspaper issues is legitimated the complementary nature of this analysis, as the main focus is on the analysis of the archival material related to Živnobanka and PAT.

²³ The latter documents were only related to the Melantrich branch in Vienna; no documentation was preserved about Melantrich’s headquarters in Prague.

The historical analysis was driven by the basic principles of source criticism (Shafer, 1974; Howell and Prevenier, 2001). Economic documents that were studied in the archives included legal documents (e.g., foundation charter, bank contract) which have a high degree of trustworthiness, as well as sources confirmed by reference to outside authorities. In practice, the latter often implied that information from PAT was corroborated by information from Živnobanka. In a second phase of this historical analysis, the combination of analysis and synthesis – Shafer (1974, p. 165) refers to them as "transactional, like the relations of buyer and seller, each affecting the other" – has been applied. The actual reporting consists of two parts: In the first, more analytical part, the financial, managerial and editorial situation of PAT and *Národní listy* is discussed, in combination with a brief overview of the situation of one of PAT's competitors, Melantrich. The second, more synthetic part, returns to the party press discussion, and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the case study, in particular in relation to *Národní listy*.

Analysis: PAT and *Národní listy*'s situation

In the first, analytical part, the focus will be placed on the functioning of PAT and *Národní listy*. We will start with a discussion at the economic level, with its two sublevels, the financial and the managerial. To be discussed first is the financial sublevel, where an overview of PAT's results will be given – showing its downfall – in combination with a more detailed overview of the results of PAT's business entities and the supportive role of Živnobanka. Secondly, in the subsection on the managerial sublevel, the functioning of PAT's managing board is analysed. Thirdly, we turn to the political and journalistic levels, which are here discussed together, as it is too difficult to disentangle them. This part ends with a brief analysis of Melantrich, PAT's competitor, which offers a crucial reference point for our evaluation of PAT's strategies.

PAT's financial results over time

PAT was successful throughout the entire 1920's. In 1926, the managing board referred to the growth of the company's enterprises. The report for this year mentioned that the newspaper businesses – *Národní listy*, the evening paper *Národ* and the Monday paper *Ráno* – produced satisfactory revenue as a result of increased income from advertising and subscriptions (SOA – our translation).²⁴ Similarly, the annual report for 1927 stated that PAT was doing economically well and enjoyed the attention of both readers and advertisers (SOA – our translation).²⁵ In this era, *Národní listy*'s readers were loyal and committed. In a jubilee issue of 21st December 1929, a gallery of subscribers was, for instance, published, including their photos, names and occupations. This issue contained 244 pages and included 423 articles, 177 manifestations of subscribers and readers, and 878 advertisements.²⁶

Over time the situation changed. According to later numbers, available in reports from managing board meetings, PAT sustained losses in the 1930s, which continued to increase until 1940, when the company

²⁴ Regional State Archives in Prague, Annual report of PAT for 1926 year, carton No. 2.

²⁵ Regional State Archives in Prague, Annual report of PAT for 1927 year, carton No. 2.

²⁶ *Národní listy*, jubilee issue of December 21st, 1929.

decreased its debts by selling its property. The results were explained in 1935 by “broadly known reasons: the opposition standpoint of the newspaper, the decrease of advertisement, the too high overhead costs and a permanent burden constituted by debtors.” (ČNB – our translation)²⁷ In 1935, “Národní listy suffered a disastrous deficit”, especially because of the decrease in advertising, because of advertisers distancing themselves from the politics of the National Democratic Party (SOA – our translation).²⁸ In 1936, the “permanent deficit of Národní listy” was mentioned as an explanation for the loss (ČNB – our translation).²⁹ Advertising revenues from newspapers published by PAT were 6 mil. Kč in 1930. This figure has been gradually decreasing, and it reached 4.2 mil. Kč in 1935. The loss in advertisement was most significant for Národní listy (SOA).³⁰

Table 1. Financial results of PAT (ČNB, SOA – reports from managing board meetings)

	profit / loss
1924	332 187 Kč
1925	327 464 Kč
1926	416 227 Kč
1927	424 570 Kč
1928-1934	N/A ³¹
1933	-250 000 Kč
1934	-230 000 Kč
1935	-317 000 Kč
1936	-283 000 Kč
1937	N/A
expectation 1938	-611 000 Kč
1939	-620 000 Kč
1940	-956 000 Kč
1941	-188 000 Kč

The company’s prosperity, until the beginning of the 1930s, with 1919 and 1920 as its best years, is also evidenced by the following overview of dividend payments for the period 1918–1930.

²⁷ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting in Kramář’s villa of December 11th, 1935.

²⁸ Regional State Archives in Prague, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of April 28th, 1936, carton No. 2

²⁹ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of February 27th, 1936

³⁰ Regional State Archives in Prague, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of April 28th, 1936, carton No. 2

³¹ N/A means not available.

Table 2. Dividend paid by PAT, CZK per a stock (yearbook Compass 1933)

1918	24 Kč	1925	18 Kč
1919	32 Kč	1926	20 Kč
1920	32 Kč	1927	24 Kč
1921	20 Kč	1928	24 Kč
1922	0 Kč	1929	24 Kč
1923	0 Kč	1930	0 Kč
1924	18 Kč		

Results of individual businesses

PAT owned a printing works and used it for the production of its own papers, as well as for external customers. The company had significant orders from ministries, banks and book publishers, according to the 1945 report (ČNB).³² Another of PAT's profitable operation was the lease of its real estate, Palác Národ (Nation Palace) (ČNB).³³ However, the operating results of PAT, in the 1930's, had a constant pattern: publishing *Národní listy* was economically unprofitable, while the printing works remained profitable (ČNB)³⁴, and also the Palác Národ (until 1940 – when it had to be sold) generated income. The following table shows the economic results in the period of 1933 – 1935, for which the data of individual business units were available.

Table 3. Loss and profit from individual business operations of PAT; source: reports by Živnobanka

	Printing works	Národní listy paper	Národ Palace	Total
1933	1 100 000,00 Kč	N/A	N/A	-250 000,00 Kč
1934	1 158 000,00 Kč	-1 399 000,00 Kč	504 000,00 Kč	-230 000,00 Kč
1935	1 416 000,00 Kč	-1 632 000,00 Kč	280 000,00 Kč	-317 000,00 Kč
1936	1 160 000,00 Kč	-1 378 000,00 Kč	375 000,00 Kč	-283 000,00 Kč

The income that originated from *Národní listy* was generated by both advertising and paper sales (both subscriptions and shop sales). An internal report made by Živnobanka in December 1939, based on a balance of 1938, showed that the invoiced revenues of *Národní listy* were still significant, even in the worsened financial situation. Advertising created about 40 % of the revenues of the paper.

³² The archives of Czech National Bank, report for the Živnobanka's head office of September 15th, 1945

³³ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of February 27th, 1936

³⁴ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meetings of 1934, 1935 and 1936 year.

Table 4. Revenues (invoicing) by individual business operations; source: internal reports of Živnobanka

	Revenues (invoicing) from individual businesses in Kč					Advertisement of Národní listy
	Printing works	NL - total	Národní listy - revenues by source			
			Subscription	Shops	Advertisement	
1936	5 100 000	8 800 000	2 500 000	2 800 000	3 500 000	40%
1937	5 300 000	8 400 000	2 300 000	2 600 000	3 500 000	42%
1938	5 200 000	7 300 000	2 100 000	2 100 000	3 100 000	42%

At the same time, there are also more detailed traces of the financial problems and set-backs. An anniversary issue, on 15 December 1935, which commemorated 75 years of Národní listy and the 75th birthday of Karel Kramář, was planned to have generated an income of Kč 700 000 in total, out of which Kč 450–500 000 was supposed to come from advertising (ČNB – our translation).³⁵ In reality, the issue generated a revenue of only Kč 303 000 (ČNB)³⁶, even though for that year (1935), the acquisition of advertisements for the common supplements was halted, so that it would not absorb the anniversary issue's advertising. This step decreased the total revenues from advertising with Kč 300 000. Karel Kramář's death, in May 1937, meant a further serious decrease of revenues from subscription and shop sales, although the revenues from advertising were dropping more steadily (ČNB)³⁷. Nevertheless, the situation became unsustainable, and on 15 May 1941 Národní listy stopped being published (SOA).³⁸

Živnobanka's role in financing PAT

The financial position of PAT, at its start-up, was very good, with an easy access to financial capital, thanks to its orientation on newly established Czech businesses and their owners. The joint-stock capital of K. 1,5 mil.³⁹, which the company had at the disposal at its foundation in 1910, increased later to K. 4 mil. and to Kč 10 mil. in 1931 (Yearbook Compass).⁴⁰ Important to note is that after the foundation of the Czechoslovak state in 1918, the National Democratic Party was supported by many entrepreneurs and other prominent persons (Lustigová 2007, p. 246).

Živnobanka, at that time one of the most significant financial institutions, used a particular developmental strategy. "Its aspiration to build a Czech (national) industry and banking sector brought Živnobanka together with Národní listy, which was read by Czech businessmen," (Kubů & Douša, 2008, p. 475 – our translation). The alliance of the National Democratic Party, Živnobanka and PAT represented, thanks to the personal connections of members of managing boards and other authorities, the most important economic, political and cultural elite of inter-war Czechoslovakia, which shared a right-wing orientation (Kosatík 1996, p. 43).

³⁵ The archives of Czech National Bank, PAT's Request for increase of the bank credit by Živnobanka of August 8th, 1935

³⁶ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of February 27th, 1936

³⁷ The archives of Czech National Bank, Report on the revision of the balance for 1938 year of September 27th, 1939

³⁸ Regional State Archives in Prague, Introduction to the inventory of PAT fund

³⁹ Until 1918, the currency of the Austro-Hungarian krone – K. - was used in Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁰ Compass, Financial Yearbook, Vienna 1923, Prague 1933.

For example, the vice chairman of PAT, Bohdan Bečka, was at the same time vice-chairman of Živnobanka and finance minister (Kubů, Douša, 2008, p. 480). Jaroslav Preiss, the director of Živnobanka, although not officially present in a governing body of PAT, remained an important figure in the background. Before his appointment to Živnobanka, Preiss had been working for seven years in *Národní listy* as its economic editor (Kosatík 1996, p. 121). Later, as Kosatík states, he regularly supported the National Democrats financially. For instance, in 1927, he notified Kramář that he donated 200 000 Kč to the party (Kosatík 1996, p. 86). Preiss, one of the richest men of his time, was also a close friend of Karel Kramář, the National Democrats' chairman, Kosatík (1996) writes.

These connections made it possible for PAT to easily borrow money from Živnobanka, but as a consequence, PAT's debt constantly grew. Živnobanka's "cash office" status is evident from the written money requests addressed to Živnobanka (and granted by the bank). For example, a letter to the bank's director Preiss, from April 1920, states: "Bohdan Bečka telephoned us to say that *Národní listy* bought in Vienna the complete printing equipment for Viennese K 2 200 000 through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is requesting us to release this sum to the Ministry in Vienna." (ČNB – our translation).⁴¹ In the period of 1934–1939, the requests for financing concerned the daily operations of the newspaper, like paying for the paper mill or settling tax payments. PAT's sometimes desperate lack of cash also becomes evident from a letter from Marek [his first name was not documented], the then director of PAT, to Živnobanka's director Balcar in December 1939. Marek is asking for the "release of Kč 115 000, which are needed for tomorrow's payment of wages." (ČNB – our translation)⁴²

PAT's high degree of indebtedness becomes visible when the debt ratio is calculated. This indicator divides total liabilities by total assets. In PAT's case, in 1938, the liabilities were Kč 24.6 mil. (debt on mortgage Kč 19.2 mil. + creditors Kč 5.4 mil.). Its total assets were Kč 34.7 mil. (Yearbook Compass)⁴³, which brings us to a (fairly high) debt ratio of 71 %. PAT's debt increased to such an extent that in 1940 the company had to sell its building – *Národ Palace* – to Živnobanka (ČNB).⁴⁴

Management

In the 1920's, the management was mainly performed by the members of the managing board. PAT had not appointed a managing director. (Compass, 1923) The members of the managing board were representatives of big business, like bank directors, factory owners, and also senators or advocates. There were two finance ministers on the board (Rašín and Bečka) (SOA).⁴⁵ The managing board members' role also was to take an active part in the editorial strategy of *Národní listy*; each of them was active in one particular field, which included the cultural, political, financial and industrial fields. (19-SOA) The autonomy of the editor in chief was quite low, as in making decisions he was obliged to approach the editorial

⁴¹ The archives of Czech National Bank, a letter to director of Živnobanka Preiss of April 12th, 1920

⁴² The archives of Czech National Bank, a letter to director of Živnobanka Balcar from director of PAT Marek of December 1939

⁴³ Compass, Financial Yearbook, Praha, 1938.

⁴⁴ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of March 20th, 1940.

⁴⁵ Regional State Archives in Prague, Regional Commercial Court, the Abstract of the Companies Register – PAT

committee, which consisted of the chairman, both vice chairmen and the board member(s) in charge for respective area (SOA).⁴⁶

This situation changed in 1933 when the new acting director Marek started to manage PAT. Still, all strategic decisions were made at board meetings, by the most important members of the board (Bečka, Kramář and Rašín). They also continued to have a considerable influence on the editorial content of *Národní listy*. This situation led to managerial decisions that were more off-handed and not always well-prepared. One trace of the dominant role of board members in managing PAT, but also of this less systematic way of dealing with the financing of PAT, can be found in the minutes of the December 1935 board meeting, where it was suggested to “relieve the liquidity problems of the company by contracting a new mortgage loan.” (ČNB – our translation)⁴⁷ Board members Rašín and Krátký opposed the idea of a new loan, critiquing the lack of preparation and time granted to them to familiarize themselves with the proposal. Krátký complained that “the board meeting was summoned at the eleventh-hour” (ČNB – our translation)⁴⁸, something Bečka agreed to. Krátký added that even an outsider could see what state the enterprise was in, referring to the use of new loans to fill the gaps, without generating sufficient income.

During this difficult period, Živnobanka played a strong supportive role. For instance, in 1938, the vice chairman of the managing board, Bohdan Bečka, asked a “friend” from Živnobanka to nominate someone who could, on a daily basis, work for PAT and revise its management.” (ČNB – our translation)⁴⁹. One year later, in September 1939, Živnobanka, which was dissatisfied with the PAT management, organised an audit of *Národní listy*, comparing the daily to a competing newspaper, *Lidové noviny*. This audit report stated that livelier and more sophisticated spirit rules in *Lidové noviny*. The audit also mentioned that *Lidové noviny* incorporated a number of agile gentlemen, who took care of all company-related processes. In contrast, in *Národní listy*, the report said, “there was a managing board with numerous members, but only relatively few executives. The managing director is said to be dependent on the board’s chairman.” (ČNB – our translation)⁵⁰ The audit continues its critique by stating that *Národní listy*’s staff could show more discipline, and that the section chiefs were not very willing.

Editorial content of Národní listy

Národní listy was, also content-wise, above all committed to the politics of the National Democratic Party. From the beginning of the century, the paper had been acclaimed for its outstanding journalism and some of the best journalists of that time were contributing to it. *Národní listy* had a tradition of superior national economic pages, also thanks to one of the first Czech economic editors, Jaroslav Preiss, who, as Kosatík

⁴⁶ Regional State Archives in Prague, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of January 13th, 1936.

⁴⁷ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting in Kramář’s villa of December 11th, 1935

⁴⁸ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting in Kramář’s villa of December 11th, 1935

⁴⁹ The archives of Czech National Bank, letter from Bohdan Bečka of November 11th, 1938.

⁵⁰ The archives of Czech National Bank, internal audit report of September 29th, 1939 – comparison of the *Národní listy* and *Lidové noviny* dailies.

(1996) states, had been working in *Národní listy* since 1900, and became later *Živnobanka's* director. "During the times the Czech industry and banking sector was developing, he played a pioneering role in Czech economics journalism. [...] In fact he was the most successful Czech economics journalist of his time." (Kosatík 1996, p. 121) The newspaper's emphasis on economics journalism can be traced during later years as well. In the jubilee issue of December 1929, the newspaper itself described the rationale of the section as follows: "We wanted to have authentic economic coverage. Therefore, we entered into relations with the most esteemed economists, from the spheres of finance, industry and trade – bank managers, directors of the syndicates from trades like brewery, textile industry." (NL 1929 – our translation)⁵¹

The paper held on to its ideological and political character, even in the 1930s, when nationalism became less popular with the majority of the population. Politicians of the National Democratic Party continued to be dominantly featured in the newspaper, as is testified by the jubilee issue of December 1935. On the opening pages of this issue, there were politically motivated articles by F. X. Hodáč and Josef Lucek, both of which were important party representatives and PAT board members. Especially the leader of the National Democratic Party gained a prominent presence. The December 1935 issue contained 18 pages devoted to Karel Kramář, who then celebrated his 75th birthday. There were articles with titles like "Kramář's relation to Tolstoy", "Kramář and frontiersmen" or almost full page article "What dr. Karel Kramář means for South Slavs". (NL 1935 – our translation)⁵²

As mentioned earlier, the editorial policy and the newspaper's content was strongly influenced by the managing board members, as is evident from board meeting reports. During these board meetings, the editorial content was discussed in detail. For instance, during one board meeting Kramář came out against publishing extensive articles of the parliamentary club members in *Národní listy*, suggesting that short summaries will suffice (SOA).⁵³ These board discussions were often critical towards the content, as is illustrated by the minutes from a managing board meeting in 1935. Bečka, advocating saving costs, said that for years he has been reproaching the editor's office: "It is necessary to urge editors to write less than today, but in such a way that the paper contains more than today." (ČNB – our translation)⁵⁴ In these minutes, he also pointed out that the paper does not cover international politics.

Editorial policies did not always remain uncontested. The promotion of Czech nationalism, which was making the paper sell at the beginning of its existence, caused it harm later and increased internal resistance. But this resistance against too strong forms of nationalism occurred during the whole history of *Národní listy*. For example at the beginning of the 1920's "almost the entire editorial staff revolted against floods of stories permeated with fierce nationalism. Similar actions had been repeated in the history of *Národní listy*." (Sládek 2005, p. 598) In fact, all documented references to the content of *Národní listy*, in the later period, were of a critical nature. The report on the 1938 audit stated that it is possible to read only the first page and the

⁵¹ *Národní listy*, jubilee issue of December 21st, 1929.

⁵² *Národní listy*, jubilee issue of December 15th, 1935.

⁵³ Regional State Archives in Prague, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting of January 13th, 1936.

⁵⁴ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting in Kramář's villa of December 11th, 1935

national economy column; all the other pages were deemed unworthy of attention. "The paper is a fossil and is being read by partyliners only", the report claims (ČNB – our translation).⁵⁵

PAT's competition – Melantrich

Four major party-press companies competed with PAT: Melantrich (connected to the Czech National Social Party), Československá akciová tiskárna (belonging to the religious Czechoslovak People's Party), Tempo (connected to a politician, Jiří Stříbrný [his own party was called the National League]) and Novina (belonging to the Agrarian Party) (Bednařík et al., 2011, p. 165; Beránková, Křivánková & Ruttkay, 1988, p. 55) The largest and commercially most successful of these four companies was Melantrich (Kárník 2000, p. 336), which offers an interesting point of comparison. Melantrich was connected to a political party, as well, as the Czech National Social Party. Its main daily, *České slovo*, pursued the voices of that party, but its management was not controlled to the same extent as could be seen with other party-presses.

Melantrich was founded in 1898, when the National Social Party was established (ČNB)⁵⁶, but remained relatively independent from the National Social Party. From 1925 on, the company was run by Jaroslav Šalda. During the four decades of his working for the company, he turned it into the most powerful media empire of inter-war Czechoslovakia (Fejlek, 1998, p. 12, Šalda, 2001). The table shows the economic results of the Melantrich branch office based in Vienna, as almost no economic documents from Melantrich's Prague headquarters survived. It documents how the company was able to gradually become profitable again after the Great Depression.

Table 5. Economic results of the Melantrich Vienna branch office. Source: Annual report of Melantrich Vienna, 1936

1925	4 661
1926	15 999
1927	10 528
1928	9 240
1929	7 638
1930	9 780
1931	-6 948
1932	-1 946
1933	-17 507
1934	-1 391
1935	-59
1936	41
(profit / loss in Austrian shillings)	

⁵⁵ The archives of Czech National Bank, Report on the revision of the balance for 1938 year of September 27th, 1939.

⁵⁶ The archives of Czech National Bank, Melantrich's fund, document Outline of the progress of December 22nd, 1913.

The company had 2000 employees in 1938 (Yearbook Compass)⁵⁷ and published tens of newspapers and magazines. Melantrich was also strongly engaged in book publishing (Kárník 2000, p. 336). Its manager Jaroslav Šalda decided that the exclusive connection to one political party might restrict the economic success of his company. "My business mind observed a long time ago that original, purely political, enterprise is an obstruction to business development," he wrote in his memoirs. He also said he realized that if he wanted to attract customers from trade and industry circles, he could only do so with a neutral, apolitical firm (Šalda, 2001, p. 67 – our translation). Moreover, Melantrich used marketing elements in its strategic development. In the 1930's, for example, the company started publishing a magazine called *Eva*, which focussed on knitting and other handicrafts. To attract female readers to this magazine, Melantrich opened "Eva's Factory" which offered wool and patterns for the designs published in its magazines. As Šalda himself claims, "'Eva's Factory' eventually became a very prosperous department of Melantrich" (Šalda, 2001, p. 213 – our translation).

Melantrich did not stop working, not even during German occupation, as Fejlek (1998) recorded in his book on the publishing house. When the communists gained control over Czechoslovakia in 1948, the company did not become extinct either. Its activity was nevertheless reduced, and it operated mainly as a book publisher (Fejlek 1998, p. 16). After the revolution in 1989, the *Slovo* newspaper (originally *České slovo*, successor to Melantrich) was first sold to Chemapol, then to German publishing group N-Tisk/Mittelrhein Verlag, as Josef Schrabal (2002), former journalist of the newspaper, wrote.

Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of *Národní listy* as a party-press

In the introductory and theoretical parts of the article, the argument was made for a fair evaluation of the party-press model, within succumbing to the need to automatically confirm the superiority of the corporate-capitalist model. Instead, the party-press model needs to be judged on its merits, by looking at its strengths and weaknesses. The strategy that is used to do so is to revisit the detailed analysis that the previous part has produced, from a more synthetic perspective. In line with our historical analysis, outlined in the methodological part of this article, this synthetic perspective will allow us to focus on the *Národní listy* component of the PAT case study, evaluating *Národní listy*'s functioning at the three levels that we distinguished before: the economic, political and journalistic level. We will start with the political level.

The political level

The inter-war period was the golden age for the political press. The advantages of the alliance of party and press on the political level were considerable. *Národní listy* was a platform of communication for the National Democrats, allowing the political representatives of the National Democratic Party to reach out to their voters and public, and to promote the Czech nationalism that was typical for the National Democrats. But the advantages for the National Democratic Party were also symbolic, as the newspaper served (in the 1920's) as a showcase for the party, articulating it with commercial success and bearing witness of the managerial

⁵⁷ Compass, Financial Yearbook, Praha, 1938.

skills of the party leadership. Moreover, the newspaper allowed to make the political support and prestige visible: the 1929 jubilee issue is a good example here. *Národní listy* also benefited from this situation, as the ideological association with the National Democrats provided them with a loyal and guaranteed readership, but also with committed advertisers. Looking at a broader socio-political level, we can also argue that in intra-war Czechoslovakia, pluralism remained protected through external pluralism, although the party-press lead to the segmentation of the Czechoslovak public space. Nevertheless, a high plurality of societal voices was still present, through the different party-presses.

The interlocking interests also created several vulnerabilities, as the focus on a particular ideological project also avoided a dialogue with non-voters, turning the newspaper into what would now be called an echo chamber. The close affiliation also meant that if the party's success would decrease, the number of readers, subscribers and advertisers would equally decrease, threatening the newspaper's survival. Moreover, a newspaper requires a serious and inflexible investment in human and financial resources, which cannot be used for other communicative strategies. A newspaper in crises only increases the drain on the resources of the party. This is exactly what happened to *Národní listy* in the 1930's. The political authority of the National Democrats steadily weakened, from the beginning of 1930's onwards, and its nationalist ideology become discredited through the rise of national-socialism. The party's political influence declined even further at the beginning of 1934, when the party withdrew its ministers from government. The paper lost advertisers and readers, and the pressure on the National Democrats increased. A further serious decrease in revenues, from subscriptions and shop sales, hit the paper after death of the party's chairman Karel Kramář, and the newspaper only survived for a few more years after that.

The economic level

Národní listy, whose primary objective was political (and not economic), managed to survive economically, in a capitalist context, for a very considerable amount of time. In the 1920's, Karel Kramář and Czech nationalism were popular, which provided *Národní listy* also with a financial backbone. Its advertisement was well targeted, aiming for the upper middle class. The advertisers were loyal and the income they generated amounted to about 40 % of invoiced revenues of *Národní listy*. As mentioned before, the decrease of popularity of Czech nationalism (and the death of Kramář) created the inverse effect, and the newspaper's income structurally decreased.

The affiliation between the National Democrat Party and *Národní listy* also allowed the latter access to capital, through the connections with rich, politically right wing oriented people willing to buy stocks or to give direct cash subsidies. One particularly important connection, from which PAT profited, was that with *Živnobanka*, one of the most significant financial institutions of that time. This connection allowed PAT to easily borrow money, especially in the second half of the 1930's, when *Národní listy* was in financial difficulties. But this sponsorship had its limits, and eventually PAT had to sell its valuable property to *Živnobanka*. The willingness to sponsor PAT and *Národní listy* for a longer period, on purely political grounds, whilst ignoring the companies' economic problems, did not materialise, which contributed to the demise of the newspaper.

But here we should also point out the more general influence of the economic crisis, which reduced the availability of advertising income. PAT, as other media companies, sensitive to such changes in the economy, suffered during the Great Depression in the 1930's. One of PAT's competitors, the Melantrich publishing house, was more commercially oriented and politically more independent – and thus also not affiliated with an ideology that became more and more discredited. Also this company was affected by the economic crisis, but when the overall economic situation improved, this company gradually managed to become profitable again.

Finally, there is also a managerial sublevel, as PAT and *Národní listy* were managed by the key figures of the National Democratic Party, whose main priorities lay with the party's ideological project. One argument here would be that the management consisted out of successful politicians, who also had strongly developed managerial skills, and access the decision-making realms of government (and the information that circulated there). At the same time, the board members, chairs and vice-chairs also had other concerns, and the time they could spend on PAT's and *Národní listy*'s management was limited (also because of their interest in the content of the newspaper as well). A managing director, who focussed on the management of these businesses, was only appointed quite late. Moreover, the management of PAT and *Národní listy*, compared to that of Melantrich, was not extremely creative, and diversification strategies (and new business opportunities) were not developed. PAT's main strategy consisted of borrowing money from *Živnobanka*, a strategy which turned out not to be sustainable.

The journalistic level

Although the party-press is often seen as juxtaposed to journalistic quality, the *Národní listy* case also shows how the alliance between party and press can strengthen its journalism, in the case of *Národní listy*, its economic journalism. If we return to the evaluations from that time, its economic section was often credited for being excellent, something that also other (academic) analysis confirmed. Our own analysis showed that it thrived thanks to the connections with people from the business world, supported by the tradition set-out by Preiss. Moreover, *Národní listy* was able to employ a series of prominent journalists, especially at the beginning of its operation, after PAT was founded and the newspaper taken over from its original owners. The paper maintained this tradition of quality (economic) journalism, but also innovated by employing some of the first females to write for *Národní listy*, such as Milena Jesenská (e.g., Penkalová, 2011) and Milada Síssová (State Archive)⁵⁸. Although other sections were critiqued, the quality of the economic section was confirmed until the last years of the newspaper, when the 1938 report stated that (only) the economy pages were worth reading.

But *Národní listy*'s journalism should not be naïvely celebrated either. Its partisan journalism is considered problematic when today's standards are used. Even if external pluralism was achieved (through the diversity of party-political newspapers), the risk of party loyalty prevailing over truthful and balanced reporting was considerable. One trace of this can be found in the 1935 statement from vice chairman Bečka who himself

⁵⁸ State Regional Archive in Praha, PAT fund, Minutes from PAT board meeting of January 13th, 1936.

complained that “the paper knows nothing about world politics,” (ČNB – our translation)⁵⁹ as the newspaper strongly focussed on National Democrat politics and nationalism. Moreover, the journalistic autonomy was limited, with an editor in chief that was dependant on the editorial committee, which consisted out of the chairman, the vice-chairmen, and the board member responsible in charge of the specific topical field. The board exercised strong control over the content of the newspaper, despite the staff members’ revolts that were mentioned in part 7. The former also added their own articles, which lead to long, politically oriented, articles full of nationalism. This ideological preference would – in the end – also harm the newspaper, when nationalism fell out of grace.

Conclusion

Media organizational models are deeply embedded within particular ideologies, which tends to complicate their analysis. All too often, as illustrated in our theoretical discussion, contemporary media models are celebrated, and legitimated by the disavowal of preceding models. One of the consequences of this line of thought is that these contemporary models are defined through a discourse of progress, which articulates them as the outcome of a logical – even natural – evolution. This evolution is seen to have brought about the demise of the previously dominant models and to result in structural improvements for all involved. Simultaneously, contemporary models claim a taken-for-grantedness, that supports the idea that they will continue to exist into eternity. This taken-for-grantedness also produces a situation where a model that was dominant in the past (the political model) is evaluated through the lenses offered by a model dominant in the present (the corporate-capitalist model), which causes a degree of analytical blindness. Another consequence of this line of thought is that the contingency that characterizes both older and contemporary models is removed from the equation. It is not our ambition to develop new models, or fine-tune them. The contribution of our case study is to illustrate the argument that each of these media organizational models has had a variety of manifestations in social practice, as our case study analysis and synthesis illustrated. Sometimes these practices were (more or less) in alignment with the dominant model, but sometimes they were very different. Also some of their key components, as for instance professional journalism, were not as stable as these model claims, and our case study shows that many different types can (co-)exist in a particular setting, and across different settings.

Obviously, evaluating models that were dominant in the past, and simultaneously trying to bracket the truth claims of contemporary models, poses serious methodological challenges. Here, one not only has to face the often-encountered problems of historical research (e.g., source availability, accessibility and reliability) and the limitations brought about by the focus on one case study, but also the difficulties that analysts have to face when trying to move beyond contemporary hegemonies. The horizons that these contemporary models create are sometimes hard to overcome, which impedes upon a fair evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of previously hegemonic models. In this particular research project, this is further complicated

⁵⁹ The archives of Czech National Bank, Minutes of PAT managing board meeting in Kramář’s villa of December 11th, 1935.

by our ethical reservations with ideologies propagated by the actors in this article's case study, which in some cases leaned towards fascism (see Mareš, 2006, p. 161).

If we return to our discussion of the political model, as it was manifested through the workings of PAT and *Národní listy*, we can see a series of advantages for the National Democrats and *Národní listy*, that might not be highlighted when using a 'pure' corporate-capitalist model to evaluate PAT and *Národní listy*, although these advantages are not new to the journalism studies literature discussed in the theory part. *Národní listy* allowed the National Democrats to communicate directly to their electorate, but also facilitated *Národní listy* to reach a readership they were ideologically aligned with. Also the readers were offered clarity in relationship to the ideological position of the newspaper, in a media landscape driven by external pluralism. Financially and managerially, *Národní listy* also benefitted from their alliance with the National Democratic Party, as its networks gave the newspaper access to skilled managers and to capital, in particular through the privileged relationship with *Živnobanka*, that kept the newspaper alive for a (relatively) long period. At the journalistic level, *Národní listy* was a platform for economic journalism that played a significant role in Czechoslovakia, as also other authors have argued (Kosatík, 1996).

Národní listy had structural weaknesses, which eventually lead to its demise. *Národní listy*'s ideological alliance with the National Democrats implied a strong dependence on the societal support for their particular (nationalist) project – which also had an economic dimension, as only ideologically affiliated news consumers and advertisers would support the *Národní listy*. This narrowed down their client and advertiser base. Also the National Democrats' strong control over the newspaper, with little space for editorial independence but also with little managerial creativity, added to the newspaper's structural problems, particular in times of economic crisis. Nevertheless, the political media model also produced a set of advantages for *Národní listy*, which our case study allowed highlighting: The newspaper managed to survive its crisis for almost a decade, supported by *Živnobanka*. This bank took the position of *Maecenas*, driven by political reasons, and not so much that of investor with an economic rationale. Although *Živnobanka*'s support turned out not to be endless, the alliance of media, politics and capital proved helpful to keep the newspaper going for a relatively long time, something which is unlikely to have happened in a corporate-capitalist model. Even though there are structural problems with the political model – as there are with any model – the *Národní listy* case study indicates that it is unfair to dismiss this political model as *necessarily* inferior, undesirable and unsustainable.

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Národní listy issues

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