

PROMOTING A NEW RED SCARE
Media framing of the Czech Television management shift

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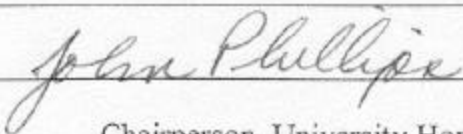
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ABSTRACT

Newspapers and news outlets in other media present events to their audience in a way that resonates with the audience. This is particularly important in international reporting, when journalists try to interpret events and issue pertaining to different cultures to news audiences (or consumers.) This study examines how three cross-cultural newspapers presented what appeared to be a freedom-of-the-press issue in the Czech Republic, a nation that has undergone a democratic makeover after emerging from a 50-year Communist regime. Specifically, articles from the *New York Times*, the *Times* of London, and the *Prague Post* were analyzed for their coverage of Jiri Hodac's appointment as general manager of Czech Television. The stories cover roughly a 45-day span, from the date when Hodac was first appointed (December 20, 2000), to shortly after his resignation in late January 2001. Since Hodac's appointment seemed politically motivated, journalists at Czech TV went on a sit-in strike that lasted for over a month. This paper analyzes a total of 24 stories from the newspapers to see which dominant frames emerged in news coverage in three different nations.

In general, all three newspapers framed the issue in a way that favored the striking journalists. More importantly, the frames used by the newspapers perpetuated stereotypes about the Czech Republic and perhaps about the entire Central and Eastern European region. The rhetoric used by all three newspapers, as said in a January 3, 2001, *Post* article, "made the Czech Republic look more like an impoverished Latin American state than an aspiring European Union member."

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INTRODUCTION

Journalism students are taught to approach a story from a particular angle. That is, they are taught to organize the way in which information is presented to the public. This angle then provides the public with a frame of reference through which to interpret the information. Since most, if not all, news stories have an angle, all news stories are presented to the audience within a particular frame. These frames place news events and issues in a contextual framework that aids audience understanding, interpretation and cognitive scheming.

When journalists report on international news events, frames are crucial. This is because reporters are trying to explain an unfamiliar culture to their audience and it must be done in a way that fosters audience understanding while maintaining interest. Such was the case in December 2000 and January 2001, when newspapers headlined coverage of a media crisis in the Czech Republic. Reporters around the world covered the significance of a man being appointed by a political committee to the post of general manager of a state-run television station in a former Communist state. While news coverage of the event could have had some impact on the Czech Republic's relations with other nations, another possible impact relates to the image of the Czech Republic that is promoted and distributed to the rest of the world.

This paper examines the frames used in three cross-cultural newspapers to present the so-called "television crisis" in the Czech Republic. Specifically, it studies the ways in which three newspapers in three different countries covered the same

news event. In order to more fully discuss the analysis, however, some background must be provided.

Background

In November 1989, in what is now known as the Velvet Revolution, massive crowds gathered in Wenceslas Square in Prague and in other cities in what was then Czechoslovakia. The demonstrators convened on the 50th anniversary of a demonstration held to protest the Nazi occupation of the Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia. The 1989 demonstrations helped dismantle the Communist government in Czechoslovakia and led to a democratic government's installation. The current president of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, played a large role in leading these demonstrations. A similarly democratic government was installed after the end of World War I in 1918. This government, however, was dismantled during the 1939 Nazi occupation. Thus, the downfall of the Communist government in 1989 marked the first time in 50 years that Czechoslovakia was a democratic (and some would say free) nation. Towards the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993, Czechoslovakia split into two separate countries, the Czech and Slovak republics.

On December 20, 2000, the Czech Television Council appointed Jiri Hodac general manager of Czech Television. This nine-member committee is named by Parliament and includes representatives from Parliamentary political parties, so the government has at least a small hand in the direction of the television station. After Hodac's appointment, journalists working at CT protested with a sit-in. Shortly after the sit-in began, Hodac stopped allowing the journalists on the air, to which they

responded by illegally broadcasting their own newscasts. Hodac tried to block these newscasts and eventually pulled all programming off the air for a day. When broadcasts resumed (both pre-recorded programming by Hodac and live news by the journalists), the journalists declared that “Czech TV will become an obedient instrument of those in power” if Hodac’s appointment were to stand (*Post* Jan. 3). The Czech people responded resoundingly in favor of the journalists, holding massive demonstrations again in Prague, Brno, and other cities throughout the country.

Naturally, reporters worldwide were interested in this story, as it seemed to be about freedom of the press in a country that just began experiencing such freedoms a decade earlier. Because of its appeal, most major newspapers ran long stories about the media crisis. From these newspapers, three were selected. Those chosen were the *New York Times* (NYT), the *Times* of London (*Times*), and *The Prague Post* (*Post*). The NYT and the *Times* were chosen for their worldwide scope and for their being considered newspapers of record. While the *Post* is not read in as many parts of the world as the NYT or the *Times*, it is the only major English-language newspaper that is produced in the Czech Republic. Through a content analysis of these newspapers, this study will show the differences and similarities in the ways the newspapers framed the story. On a grander scale, this paper endeavors to discover how media perpetuate stereotypes of a former Soviet Bloc nation.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Several studies researching news framing have been conducted. The common theme throughout is that news media construct frames that aid in audience cognition of news events. What differs in each study, though, is to what end the media frame news events. In Soderlund's 1990 study, for example, he examines news frames and how they legitimize or de-legitimize elections in El Salvador. His study appeared in *The Canadian Journal of Political Science*, and examined press coverage in Canada and the United States of the 1982 and 1984 Salvadoran elections. Soderlund was interested in major issues in both elections, as reported by newspapers in Canada and the United States. He also studied items on and references to major political parties involved in the Salvadoran elections, and how these parties were portrayed. Finally, he analyzed the language of the articles from the two countries, to see if they legitimized or delegitimized the elections themselves, and examined the use of "Cold War language" in newspapers from both countries (Soderlund 1990).

He found that there was a stronger press interest in the United States concerning the elections, as there was more newspaper coverage of them. The finding that is most significant to this analysis is that, "on the basis of the press coverage of the elections in Canadian and American newspapers," the "differences in interpretation were relatively subtle and they were confined largely to the prominence of certain issues in the campaign, leader evaluation and the use of legitimizing language in the text" (Soderlund 1990).

While Soderlund's analysis shows the differences between two countries' reporting on an event in a third country, it does not show how a newspaper within that country (in Soderlund's case, El Salvador) reported on the event. Pan, Lee, Chan, and So (1999), however, examined how media in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China covered the handover of Hong Kong. Specifically, they were interested in how newspapers in the three areas constructed their narratives about the handover. Most interesting, however, was the authors' discussion of how foreign news is "domesticated" to provide relevance to the home audience. They concluded that the media in the United States have a tendency to treat foreign news as similar to domestic news with only variations in themes that are "relevant to Americans or American interests and with interpretations that apply American values." They expanded this further to include world media, saying that they "tend to selectively domesticate an event like the handover of Hong Kong in consonance with the enduring values, national interests, and foreign policy agendas of their home countries." Even more striking, though, is their finding about how the foreign reporters relate the information to their audiences: "They draw metaphors from their own cultural repertoire to make the event seem more relevant and meaningful to their home audiences" (Pan et al).

Framing is one way that the process of relating information to the audience is conceptualized. In their 1998 study, Miller, Andsager, and Riechert analyzed media coverage of U.S. presidential primaries in 1996. Specifically, they examined how three elite newspapers in the United States (the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*,

and *Los Angeles Times*) portrayed the four major candidates in the 1996 Republican presidential primary. The authors stated that framing “refers to selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of experience or ideas over others.” Furthermore, these “journalistic choices, made on the basis of news values as well as journalists’ interpretations of responsibility to society, do have consequences. Through complex processes of interpretation, readers form impressions of the news stories’ central theme/issue and attitudes towards the actors involved....”

While frames may reveal such attitudes held by the reporter, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) stress that frames “should not be confused with positions for or against some policy measure.” In this case, the authors are discussing how media discourse constructs public opinion on the topic of nuclear power. They contend that media “packaging” (or framing) of news events can construct “meaning over time, incorporating new events into their interpretative frames.” This suggests that frames are not simply one-hit affairs, that in fact they have deep cultural and psychological roots.

In a study of United States media coverage of when two different passenger aircraft were shot down, Entman (1991) examined how frames reassert themselves. In the Korean Airlines incident, a Soviet fighter jet shot down an airliner at 32,000 feet in Russian airspace. In the Iran Air incident, a United States Navy ship shot down an airliner that was flying over an area that had recently been a site of combat. Entman studied the frames used by *Time*, *Newsweek*, and the “CBS Evening News” for the two-week period following each incident. He found that the Soviet downing of the

KAL plane was framed as a moral outrage, while the U.S. downing of the Iran Air flight was a morally defensible tragedy. In other words, the frame that reasserted itself in these two incidents (which occurred in 1983 and 1988, respectively) was one that showed the United States as playing a relatively innocuous role and as simply having made a terrible mistake, and tended to attribute as much moral responsibility as possible to the foreign nation. In the case of the KAL incident, Entman found that the news “frequently attributed the act not simply to a Soviet pilot or the Soviet military but to the (immoral) Soviet Union or government as a whole.” In the case of the Iran Air incident, “the coverage neither attributed moral responsibility to the United States nor criticized U.S. leaders’ failure to apologize for the incident. Instead, the essays separated the act from the nation committing it....”

Framing studies related to international news suggest that media bring information closer to the audience. This is done to aid in the audience’s understanding and cognition of news events. International news presents a unique challenge to reporters, in that the reporter must not only explain events happening in different cultures but must also aid in audience internalization of events. To do so, reporters rely on devices that promote news frames. These frames, in turn, help bring the news home, so to speak, by “domesticating” foreign news events (Pan et al. 1999).

METHODOLOGY

All of the news stories covering the Czech Television crisis that appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Times* of London, and *The Prague Post* between December 1, 2000, and January 31, 2001, were examined. This totaled 24 stories; six of these ran in the *Times*, nine ran in the NYT, and nine in the *Post*. The stories were read several times, after which the author performed a qualitative content analysis on each story longer than 100 words. It was determined that this was the minimum length of a story that could be analyzed. This analysis sought to identify how the individual stories were framed and, by extension, the dominant news frames of each newspaper.

The first step in building the coding scheme of such a framing analysis is to identify the frames involved. After reading each story several times, three general frames were identified from the coverage: a pro-“rebel” frame, a pro-management frame, and a neutral frame. In order to classify each story into a general frame, the content of the stories was coded (see Appendix A for a sample coding sheet.) The coding sheet was roughly based on Gailey’s 1999 study of media framing of euthanasia. It was designed to analyze the content of the newspapers’ stories and, thus, to discern the frames each newspaper used.

What kinds of sources newspapers use are significant; equally significant is what kinds of sources are not used. Entman (1993) says that frames “call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions.” The coding scheme tracked the dominant sources in the

stories, be they journalists (such as the journalists at Czech Television), politicians (including members of the Czech Television council), lay public (a very broad term encompassing anybody not directly involved in the television dispute, including some psychologists and other intellectuals), and Czech Television management (such as Jiri Hodac.)

The coding sheet also records the anecdotes used in the stories. Identifying and tracking these is important because doing so helps reveal how the issue is related to a larger, more general truth. Greenblatt says the audience internalizes these anecdotes, which leads to simple representations and stereotypes (3). He further asserts that anecdotes “are among the principal products of a culture’s representational technology, mediators between the undifferentiated succession of local moments and a larger strategy toward which they can only gesture.” (*Ibid.*) Thus, while anecdotes do help relate the audience to the rest of the world, they are simplifications that are only somewhat representative of cultural truths, for “[t]hey are seized in passing from the swirl of experiences and given some shape, a shape whose provisionality still marks them as contingent...but also makes them available for telling and retelling” (*Ibid.*)

Syntactical structure (that is, headlines, sub-headlines, and the lead paragraph) was the next element coded. Headlines are defined in this study as the largest-font heading above a story; subheads are defined as the second-largest-font heading above a story. Headlines and sub-heads are sometimes the only items audience members actually read in a newspaper story, as readers will scan the headlines until they

become interested in an article. Equally important in providing salience and indicating frames for the reader are the lead paragraphs. The lead paragraphs considered in this study are the first, second, and third paragraphs of each story. Journalism students are taught that the lead has to both “hook” the reader and condense the story’s theme and subject matter; without the hook, readers tend to lose interest and will not read to the end of the story. In many cases, the reader will not even make it past the second paragraph.

Also coded were the symbolic devices that signaled the frames. These included metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, visual images, intensifiers/loaded modifiers, and concrete details (Gailey 1999). These are important because, as Gamson and Modigliani (1989) contend, “not all symbols are equally potent. Certain packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes. Resonances increase the appeal of a package; they make it appear natural and familiar. Those who respond to the larger cultural theme will find it easier to respond to a package with the same sonorities.” Because of this, the coding sheet recorded the symbols held within every story.

Finally, each story was analyzed for Entman’s (1991) four frame components. These appeared in his study of media coverage of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. In this study, he examined who was blamed for the act (agency), if the audience was encouraged to identify with one side of the issue or the other (identity), if the event was placed in a certain category to “elicit or omit moral evaluation” (categorization), and whether the issue is tied to larger truths (generalization).

All but three of the 24 stories were then coded. These three stories did not meet the minimum length of 100 words for coding, so they were excluded from the analysis.

RESULTS

As Entman (1993) argues, “a frame can exert great social power when encoded in a term like *affirmative action*. Once a term is widely accepted, to use another is to risk that target audiences will perceive the communicator as lacking credibility—or will even fail to understand what the communicator is talking about. Thus the power of a frame can be as great as that of language itself.” As a result, the earliest frames established by the newspapers in general are the ones that tend to reappear throughout the coverage of a particular issue. Such is the case with the Czech television news event. The frames established in the earliest coverage by each newspaper are, in general, the frames that are reinforced throughout their coverage. If a particular newspaper did not use an identical frame throughout its coverage, it at least used the same general frame (e.g., pro-“rebel,” pro-management, or neutral.)

After coding each story, more specific sub-frames were developed from the general frames. From the general frame of “pro-rebel,” three more specific sub-frames were formed: freedom fight, free speech, and repression by the system. There is only a slight difference between the freedom fight and free speech frames. In the freedom fight frame, the journalists were portrayed as fighting somewhat militantly for freedom of speech. The free speech frame, on the other hand, portrayed the journalists as protesting peacefully for freedom of speech. The general “pro-management” frame had only one specific sub-frame, political issue. The political issue sub-frame is pro-management because stories that promoted this frame largely

ignored the journalists’ strike and set up the conflict as one of a simple clash of political ideology. Also, the dominant sources in these stories were, by and large, either the management of Czech Television or the politicians that endorsed the appointment of Jiri Hodac. The general “neutral or other” frame also had only one specific sub-frame, workers’ strike. The workers’ strike frame is considered neutral in this study because it does not vilify either side of the issue. In general, strikes are presented as being a simple conflict between one side or another, and no rhetoric is used to describe the sides in either a positive or negative manner.

Overall, more stories promoted pro-rebel frames than promoted any other type of frame (see chart below.)

	Freedom fight, <i>n</i>	Free speech, <i>n</i>	Repression by the system, <i>n</i>	Workers’ strike, <i>n</i>	Political issue, <i>n</i>
<i>New York Times</i>	1	1	3	1	0
<i>Times of London</i>	3	2	0	1	0
<i>Prague Post</i>	2	0	5	1	1

This chart shows how many stories in each newspaper promoted particular frames. While pro-rebel sub-frames dominated the coverage by all three newspapers, perhaps

most striking is the lack of coverage that supports the political issue (pro-management) sub-frame.

Coverage by the New York Times

Of the *New York Times*' nine stories, five promoted pro-rebel frames: three in the repression by the system frame, one in the free speech frame, and one in the freedom fight frame. One of the NYT stories featured a neutral, workers'-strike frame. Three of the stories were too short to code for frames.

The newspaper used the free-speech frame in its Dec. 26, 2000, story. The headline of this story reads: "Czech TV Changes News Chief; Staff Says It's a Political Move." In the story's lead, the author contends that the "change of directors at state-run Czech Television has led to protests over whether its news programming will remain independent." Thus, from the very beginning, the author begins setting up the idea that the protests are about independence. Later in the story, the author legitimizes "the protest," saying that 2,000 calls and 1,000 faxes had been received to back it. The author also writes that the journalists were protesting a "politically motivated" appointment. But perhaps the most telling sentence with regards to how much political influence the station might be under comes when the author gives some political depth to the story by providing background about the council that appointed Jiri Hodac: "The council is controlled by members nominated by the governing Social Democrats and the Civic Democrats, which have a grip on the legislature through a power-sharing pact."

The most popular frame for the NYT coverage was decidedly pro-rebel. In the next eight stories (three of which were too short to code), the newspaper used the repression-by-the-system frame three times and the freedom-fight frame once. On Dec. 29, 2000, the paper ran its longest story of the coverage, headlined “Static Screens of Czech TV Mirror Deep Political Problem.” The subhead reads, “When television journalists balk at a state appointee, he pulls the plug.” In this story, which falls under the repression-by-the-system frame, the author includes the first phrases that hinted at the problem being even deeper than had first been reported. Catchphrases such as “editorial independence” and “the rebels” and implied metaphors such as “the murkiness of post-Communist politics” find their way into the story, giving the audience a sense of a deep-rooted political problem. The author even includes a description of the political pact between the Social Democrats and the Civic Democrats that had been described in earlier coverage by saying that “the main opposition party lies cozily in bed with the government 11 years after the Velvet Revolution overturned Communism.” More allusions to the rise and fall of Communism appear in the story, such as when President Vaclav Havel “compared it to the Communist takeover of Czechoslovakia, in 1948, which, as he pointed out, was also legal.” And, as the head of the Czech Film and Television union says that the possible ramifications of Hodac’s appointment could constitute “the most serious effort to weaken public broadcasting since 1989,” the Czech daily newspaper Mlada Fronta Dnes says the journalists’ rebellion represented “the defense of principles that form the basis of free, unbiased information.” In this story, however, the most salient

piece of information a quoted statement released by the journalists, which read, “ ‘All of us face a danger that before elections,’ which are due in 2002, ‘Czech TV will become an obedient instrument of the people who are in power.’” An advisor to President Havel corroborates this fear by saying, “The real issue here isn’t about a labor dispute but about a basic conflict in Czech society. The question is whether public television should really serve everyone, or whether it should be a tool for the political parties in power.”

Other stories run by the NYT tie the issue to larger truths linked to democracies emerging from former Communist states, such as the Jan. 4, 2001, story headlined “50,000 Czechs Rally for Striking TV Journalists.” In this story, whose lead says that the journalists were “trying to preserve their independence from political pressure,” the author links the protests surrounding the issue to the protests surrounding the fall of Communism. When the author describes the size of the crowds that gathered in Wenceslas Square (one of the main squares near the center of Prague), he says that people “packed at least half of the enormous Wenceslas Square, site of the protests that helped pull down the Communist government in 1989.” The story, which is put in the freedom fight frame, also draws a link between the political situation in the Czech Republic and the situation at Czech television, when it quotes a member of the crowd in the square: “The situation in the television is a symbol of the whole political situation here. On the one hand, it’s a sign of our political immaturity that the politicians try to control television. On the other, it’s a good sign that so many people have come out to express their opinion openly.”

In two more stories, both framed as repression-by-the-system, the NYT continued to label the issue as being representative of the political situation in post-Communist countries. In the Jan. 12, 2001, story, the newspaper quotes the chairman of the Independent Union when he spoke about Hodac's removal from office: "The tree has fallen, but the roots are still there." When giving background about the current political situation in the country (including the power-sharing pact between political parties), the author says that some political actions have "fed the suspicion of many Czechs that post-Communist politics has been marred by corruption and insider deals." The Jan. 14, 2001, story in the NYT (which is also in the repression by the system frame) furthers the stereotype of Czech politics, saying that the power-sharing pact "has riled many Czechs as a symbol of tainted post-Communist politics." Also, the article (which constitutes the last significant coverage by the NYT of the issue) says that the journalists' protest "has been backed by some of the largest demonstrations since the fall of Communism in 1989."

The NYT only ran one story that did not fall into a pro-rebel frame. That story, which ran on Jan. 9, 2001, framed the issue in a neutral way, as a workers' strike. In it, the only rhetoric referring to the journalists is fairly neutral, as they are only referred to as "striking employees" and their actions are "a strike by television employees." This article, though, came from the Reuters news service, so it may not be entirely representative of the NYT coverage as a whole.

Three more articles appeared in the NYT, each of which was too short to code for this study.

Coverage by the Times of London

The *Times* ran a total of six stories on the issue. Of these, five were framed as pro-rebel: three were in the freedom fight frame and two were in the free speech frame. The remaining story was in the neutral frame, workers' strike.

On Dec. 29, 2000, the *Times* ran a story headlined "Havel supports striking Czech TV journalists," which falls under the freedom-fight frame. In the lead of the story, the author writes that the station had been "blacked out" because "the conflict between striking journalists and a new, politically controversial, director-general escalated." The story goes on to say that Hodac's new head of news, Jana Bobosikova, said that she was "ready to let security guards and, if necessary, the police, do their duty" if the journalists did not stop producing their own programs. Most importantly, though, the author ties a direct link between this news act and another: "The conflict has bizarre echoes of the 1989 revolutions which toppled communism in Central Europe. Crowds of angry demonstrators gathered outside the television studios chanting 'Freedom! Freedom!' in encouragement to the journalists."

On Jan. 12, 2001, the *Times* most clearly implicates Hodac as being to blame for the Czech Television situation. The story's lead says, "The man who triggered the crisis at Czech television resigned hours before tens of thousands of people staged rallies nationwide yesterday to support striking journalists." However, this story, which was in the free-speech frame, does not tie the issue to any larger truths about residual Communism in the Czech political system nor does it make allusions to the

1989 Velvet Revolution. One of the Jan. 4, 2001, stories, however, does make such allusions. The story, which was also in the free-speech frame, includes such catchphrases as “independent reporting.” Also, it ties the issue to larger truths by saying that “in the biggest rally since the 1989 Velvet Revolution that ousted the ruling Communists, students, families, and pensioners gathered in support of independent reporting at the state-run Czech Television.”

While one Jan. 4, 2001, story compares the outcry with that of 1989, another story appearing on the same day and one of the stories appearing on Jan. 11, 2001, relate both the Czech Television crisis and its outcome to the 1989 protests and their outcomes. On Jan. 4, 2001, a second story was run, this one with the headline, “Prague replays its revolution” and in the freedom-fight frame. In this story, the *Times* includes images such as 90,000 demonstrators “crowd[ing] into Prague’s Wenceslas Square...in a protest reminiscent of the Velvet Revolution that toppled Communism more than a decade ago.” Also, the story links the journalists with the protestors of 1989 when it says, “President Havel has taken the side of the rebels, as he did in 1989.” The most significant points of the story, however, are when it speaks of the possible aftermath of the Czech Television situation. In quotation, a Czech pop singer says, “This generation overthrew the last regime; we can do it again.” Also, in the second paragraph of the story, it says that “the effect” of the protests “could be to bring down the Government as surely did as the street protests of 1989.” In one of the Jan. 11, 2001, stories, the *Times* places Hodac’s resignation in the freedom fight

frame. Most significant in this story, however, is who is blamed for Hodac resigning his post. In the third paragraph, the newspaper says:

His resignation came hours ahead of planned mass protests in Prague and more than a dozen other Czech cities and towns supporting the journalists' calls for Mr. Hodac's ouster.

In this paragraph, the newspaper suggests that Hodac knew how much he was disliked and knew that popular opinion was against him. Hodac then turned in his resignation and, in doing so, gave in to the mass protests.

The other story that ran in the *Times* on Jan. 11, 2001, was in the workers'-strike frame. This story, which appeared on the final day of *Times* coverage, provides fairly bland coverage of Hodac's resignation. If anything, it tends to be in a pro-rebel frame, as it includes such catchphrases as "rebellious newscasters and journalists", "mass protest", and "political bias." For the most part, though, the language in the story is fairly neutral, as it talks about a "newscasters' strike" in the lead and says that Hodac "decided to submit his resignation to the Czech Television Council after consultations with his doctors," thereby dispelling the notion that his resignation came under the pressure from the protests.

Coverage by The Prague Post

The *Post* ran a total of nine stories. Of these, seven were in the pro-rebel frame, with five in the repression by the system frame and two in the freedom fight frame. One of the stories was in the pro-management political issue frame, and one was in the neutral workers' strike frame.

The *Post* ran its first coverage of the Czech Television situation on Jan. 3, 2001. This is later than the first story ran by both the NYT and the *Times* because the *Post* is a weekly newspaper. It was distributed on Dec. 28, 2000, which was the date on which the first large public demonstrations took place in Prague. In the Dec. 28 issue, the *Post* did not include any coverage on Hodac's appointment. For the lead story of the Jan. 3 issue, which was in the repression-by-the-system frame, the newspaper ran the headline, "Toxic Television: Protracted battle for control of Czech State television demonstrates deep political divide, but also shows instability of post-communist institutions." This story immediately portrays the striking journalists as "television rebels" or "insurgent journalists" who are engaged in a fight about "press freedom" and "conflict-of-interest." Even more salient, however, are the first three paragraphs of the article:

Less than a year ago, Jakub Puchalsky stepped down as general director of Czech state television.

The 31-year-old former BBC reporter confessed he had tired of the meddling. "I got many phone calls from politicians saying, 'What are you doing? We are not in the news enough. Why were you not at this press conference? You should have covered this or that.'"

Picked by the Czech Television Council, a parliamentary body that selects top management for Czech Television, the embattled Puchalsky endured 22 months of turmoil before his Jan. 31 [2000] departure. "There were political pressures and there will be political pressures," he remarked ruefully.

The article continues to portray the journalists as fighting back against a corrupt system that seems designed to hold them back from a free expression of ideas. Shortly after saying that “the uprising represented a watershed in post-communist life,” the article quotes a member of an earlier political movement, who said that “the revolt represented a ‘milestone’ in public efforts to ‘defend themselves from the overgrown influence’ of mainstream politicians.” This article, like others that appeared in both the NYT and the *Times*, compares the Czech TV situation to the rise and fall of Czechoslovak Communism. It says that “President Vaclav Havel also questioned the ‘spirit and sense’ of Hodac’s appointment, suggesting comparisons with the legal but ultimately authoritarian rise of communism in 1948” and that the “dispute provoked the liveliest debate over press freedom and conflict-of-interest since the end of the communist regime in 1989.” This, however, is not the only generalization that appears in the article, as it says that thousands of people “turned out daily to support the rebels who...were depicted as combating not only their bosses, but a whole political culture that polls suggest the public sees as wasteful, corrupt, and, worst of all, inept.”

The second story in the Jan. 3 edition of the *Post* is also in the repression-by-the-system frame, and it immediately relates the issue to greater truths. The headline that ran with this story reads “Beyond TV’s *Outer Limits*,” a reference to the 1960s science fiction television program. The story’s lead explains the reference, saying that during the opening of the show, there was a “whining, static-filled screen” and a man’s voice saying, “ ‘There is nothing wrong with your television set. Do not

attempt to adjust the picture. We are controlling transmission.” The story’s author wanted to provide this reference to suggest that such “subjugation...would unsettle citizens of a self-styled democracy. “Three days before Christmas,” the story continues in the next paragraph, “the Czech Republic and its still-shaky democracy got its first post-communist *Outer Limits* installment.” The story reinforces the idea that the journalists and even the manager against whom they rebelled are under political control when it quotes Pavel Bobosikova (husband of Jana Bobosikova, the woman Hodac appointed as news director) as saying, “ ‘We are puppets...everybody is a puppet.’” The story also uses rhetoric to suggest that the nation has not fully emerged from the communist government that ruled it little more than a decade earlier. In fact, the story says that the Czech Republic is “a nation only a decade removed from authoritarian rule” and that Hodac’s cutting off broadcasts for a day “drew international attention and made the Czech Republic look more like an impoverished Latin American state than an aspiring European Union member.” The story also implies that the Czech Television Council is under much political control, calling its decision to appoint Hodac “Byzantine.” The article suggests that the journalists’ and public’s reaction to the appointment should have been expected, due to “resentment at the failure of national parties...to fulfill at least some of the promises implicit in the 1989 break from communism. Indeed, the parties and their leaders are sometimes described in polls as no better than graft-hungry communist *apparatchiks*.”

In the following week's coverage, dated Jan. 10, 2001, the *Post* ran a picture of crowds gathering in Wenceslas Square at night. At the head of the square is a statue of King Vaclav (Wenceslas), a legendary Czech leader. The statue sits at the foot of Parliament's headquarters, and immediately to the left is the headquarters for both Radio Free Europe and Czech Television. Certainly, the significance of the thousands of people gathered in the square was not lost on the readers in Prague, and it may have resonated with readers worldwide. After all, Wenceslas Square is the square into which Hitler's forces entered to declare their occupation of what is now the Czech Republic, the square in which Communism was declared the new government in 1948, and the square in which the Velvet Revolution protests were held. Above the picture is the headline, "What price, television?: Klaus may take a fall as state television crisis erodes his image and stirs public doubt." The headline accompanies a story that is in the repression-by-the-system frame. In this story, the journalists' depiction as "rebels" is continued, as is the depiction of their struggle as being one for "freedom of speech and public TV." The story even calls the issue "an elementary political clash between two concepts of democracy," saying that it is "among the more resonant authority battles in post-Communist Central Europe." One of the more significant depictions in the story, though, is of Ivan Langer. Throughout the story, former Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus is said to desire control of state television because of his "own presidential ambitions"; the story even says that Klaus had an "indirect role in the naming of Hodac." Langer, who is said to be Klaus' deputy chairman in the party, is said to have a "back-room influence [that] has long

been acknowledged as trooper-like.” Just as scintillating is Klaus saying that “self-government is a figment of the imagination,” certainly an emotion that would upset a largely liberal democratic audience.

More stories in the repression-by-the-system frame appeared in the Jan. 17, 2001, edition of the *Post*. In the lead front-page article, headlined “Mixed Signals,” the author continues the journalists’ depiction as “rebels” who are embroiled in a debate about “political meddling” and “who runs public television.” The story also says “collectivist bureaucracy endures.” It also asserts that, since Hodac resigned, the journalists and protestors alike showed “themselves able to slay institutional dragons” and “appeared to take another step in the slow detoxification from totalitarianism and the forced political sleepwalking it demanded of those it ruled.” The story further maintains that television is “a now-lucrative medium which was manipulated and debilitated by communism” and that the situation is the “first substantive post-1989 democratic crusade.”

The other story that appeared in the Jan. 17, 2001, edition of the *Post* that was also in the repression-by-the-system frame had the headline, “For strikers, fight continues: Czech ‘rebel’ journalist seeks further ousters.” This article does not specifically crucify Hodac, but rather places the entire system at fault and recommends completely overhauling how Czech Television is controlled. While earlier stories had intimated that there was a much deeper issue at stake, this is the first one that says specifically that the “political establishment” was at fault for the situation. Its main source is Antonin Dekoj, a broadcast director and one of the

strikers. Dekoj says that the station must achieve “economic independence” in order to gain true “political independence.”

The next frame examined in the *Post* coverage is the pro-rebel freedom-fight frame. This one appeared relatively late in the coverage, as its first occurrence is in the Jan. 17, 2001, edition. The story, which is headlined, “Broadcast love, in Czech style: TV couple supports each other to get through winter revolt,” is an article about two of the strikers who are dating and miss a trip to Brussels in order to fight for their cause. As usual, the article uses such catchphrases as “rebels” and “dissenting journalists,” saying that they are protesting against “big-party meddling in television affairs” and “control of news broadcast content by conservative forces.” This article, though, has some of the most resonant visual images and depictions. First, it says that the journalists depict their newsroom as “the ‘Kursk’ ...the Russian nuclear submarine that sank in the Barents Sea last summer [2000].” But the most powerful image comes when the story describes a nightly activity: “Each night supporters hoisted heaps of homemade goodies to the journalists via ropes... One supporter donated buckets of goulash.”

The other story in the freedom-fight frame, which was the final story ran on the issue by the *Post* and appeared on Jan. 24, 2001, is headlined “TV saga abruptly changes gears: Havel now may hold key to new legislation.” While this story still supports the idea that the journalists are fighting against an unjust cause, it also implies that their fight has reached an absurd level. The article quotes Ladislav Paluska, who held a press conference after being appointed by the rebels as leader of

the station. It says that his “tone, laced with charges of embezzlement against new senior management, seemed as heavy-handed as that of the political appointees the rebels sought to oust.” The article also quotes Langer, who says “the People’s Militia have occupied CT on the order of the revolutionary committee.” Indeed, even Jan Kasl, the mayor of Prague, said the situation was confusing: “ ‘There’s the law on one side, freedom of speech on the other, and incompetent people in the middle.’ ”

While the *Post* coverage was mostly placed in a pro-rebel frame, two stories were not. The lone story in the pro-management political-issue frame ran on Jan. 10, 2001. This article had only one substantial source, Petr Stepanek. Stepanek is a politician and a member of the same party at Klaus. The article’s headline reads, “‘ODS’ [Civic Democrats] Stepanek decries ‘café’ society rebels: Media board member insists real struggle pits Havel against Klaus.” In the story, Stepanek speaks against the “flag-waving triumphalism and easy slogans” being trumpeted by the journalists. He also says that an “elitist group” and their “perceived threat to free press” caused the “debacle.” In the second paragraph of the story, Stepanek is quoted:

In the Czech Republic, there exists an invisible and very hard-to-define web of people, politicians and certain journalists who I call the Prague Intellectual Café. Their influence on the media is huge. And it’s very difficult in this environment to present an opposing view.

The main point of Stepanek’s diatribe on the journalists is to say that their methods of protests were illegal. The newspaper quotes him towards the end of the story as saying

These are very popular slogans: 'freedom of speech,' 'freedom of the press.' It's much harder, much more boring, to talk about the rule of law and proper procedure. They stood against the law, and that's a problem.

Indeed, says Stepanek, while the journalists are protesting against what is called an "absolutely unbelievable conflict of interest," they themselves present conflict of interest. Stepanek refers to the journalists when he says, " 'They'll stop a film to make a political statement. I'd like to do the same! Television as an institution is being used to advance their own needs.'" While the story tries to provide an alternate viewpoint, one that is not overtly pro-rebel, Stepanek is shown as having given in to what seems to be the inevitable, that the issue will be decided in the streets. Whenever the article describes Stepanek's appearance, he is said to be "on the verge of exhaustion" and he occasionally "rubs his eyes to drive away the fatigue of a man who believes he's seen through the looking glass." While his ideas are not discounted and his experience supports his statements, his voice is drowned out, not only in real life, but also because the *Post* provides only his story supporting his argument versus seven stories supporting the claims made by the journalists.

Finally, there is one *Post* article that falls under the neutral workers'-strike frame. While it does describe the journalists as "rebels," the words used to describe the situation are words like "controversy," "situation," and "dispute," all of which are fairly neutral. The story's headline reads, "Bottom-Line Battle: Czech Television dispute may hurt prestige, cash flow." It is mainly about the economic impact the strike had on the station, which includes lost revenue from advertising sales. It also

reports that the private stations in the country benefited from the strike, as some advertisers took their business away from Czech Television.

DISCUSSION

As the results of the previous section indicate, pro-rebel frames dominated the coverage by the three newspapers. In fact, only four of the 21 stories that were coded were presented in a non-pro-rebel frame, and only one of these was presented in a pro-management frame. As a Jan. 3, 2001, *Post* article says, the situation “made the Czech Republic look more like an impoverished Latin American state than an aspiring European Union member.” Statements like these, and indeed the coverage as a whole, presents the Czech Republic as a nation that is still emerging from the specter of Communism. While the Soviet regime ended in 1989, the newspapers’ constant reminders that the demonstrations were very similar to those that helped bring the regime down serve to perpetuate a certain stereotype of Central and Eastern European nations. Specifically, the coverage does just what the *Post* article says: it portrays the Czech Republic as being no more politically advanced than, say, Bolivia, a nation that had 19 presidents in 25 years (1964 to 1989), and during one six-year stretch had seven presidents (1979 to 1985) (Medinal).

More importantly, though, the coverage by all three newspapers frames the issue in such a way that the audience is left with the impression that such political wrangling is quite a normal thing in the average Czech day. While there certainly are many political problems and while some vestiges of Communist-era policies do remain (if only because the political players have remained somewhat the same), the situation in the Czech Republic is much improved over, say, 1968, when wild reforms

swept through the Czechoslovak Communist party with the slogan, “Socialism with a human face.” In August of 1968, though, Moscow decided it had seen enough of such reformism, and Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces rolled into Prague to quell the so-called Prague Spring (“Aftermath”).

Naturally, a Russian peacekeeping force entering Prague to help control a strike by “rebellious employees” at a national television station would seem ridiculous today. Each newspaper, however, said that Jiri Hodac had asked the police to intervene, but that they had not done so. Perhaps the newspapers mention this in order to reassure the reader that it is not the police’s job to intervene when a member of the existing power structure in a post-Communist nation requests it. That the newspapers included the information at all, though, suggests that the audience still stereotypes the nation, and perhaps even the entire Central and Eastern European region, as a place where political power is frequently abused, and also implies that this is not something that occurs in Western, more civilized, nations.

The dominance of pro-rebel frames suggests that such stereotypes are deeply ingrained in both American and British minds. While the *Post* is written and produced in Prague, it is still representative more of American thinking than Czech, as it is written mostly by and for American expatriates (Sayer 9). Thus, the power of the pro-rebel frames is such that it may take several years of peace and a general opening up of the Czech Republic in order for the stereotypes to be fully broken down. While the coverage by the three newspapers did not help the English-speaking world think of the Czech Republic as a progressive nation that is a burgeoning member of the

European Union, it at least helped bring the nation's existence to the world's consciousness, if only for a few weeks. Two Britons, William Shakespeare and former Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain best exemplify the ignorance of the English-speaking world with regards to the Czech lands. When Adolf Hitler was on the verge of invading Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain depicted the country as “ ‘a faraway country’ inhabited by quarreling peoples ‘of whom we know nothing’” (Sayer 5). Shakespeare, the greatest of British playwrights, has Antigonus in act 3, scene 3, of *The Winter's Tale* ask, “Thou art perfect then our ship hath touched upon the deserts of Bohemia?” (Sayer 5) Chamberlain's depiction and Shakespeare's furnishing of Bohemia with a coastline both point are examples of Western ignorance about the Czechs and their culture.

Even more disturbing than such ignorance, however, is how these articles perpetuated stereotypes. Overall, the coverage of each newspaper was in a decidedly pro-rebel frame. This suggests that the United States and England still want to think of the Czech Republic as being a nation that is emerging from the specter of Communism. While the political system in the country still involves many of the same players as did the Communist political system, the country is certainly sophisticated and is trying to reach the same level as a France or an Austria. The newspapers' coverage, however, helps perpetuate the stereotype of the Czech Republic as a backwater state still undergoing a democratic makeover and trying to rid itself of any remaining vestiges of Communism. Indeed, the coverage may do so for the entire Central and East European region. Once in the all of the stories is the

Czech Republic's bid to become a member of the European Union mentioned, and this is in the Jan. 3, 2001, story in the *Post* that claims the event placed the Czech Republic on the same level as "an impoverished Latin American state." Besides this, no story refers to the Czech Republic's potential to join the E.U. in 2004. By omitting such information, the newspapers effectively lump the Czech Republic in with such countries as Yugoslavia, whose former president is about to stand trial for committing crimes against humanity.

The newspaper articles, then, promote a problem of understanding. Certainly, free speech is important to people in the Czech Republic. Why else would thousands of people gather to show their support for broadcast journalists on strike? But the country is not still in the process of shedding Soviet-era policies against freedom of speech, as the articles imply. It is one of the more sophisticated and progressive nations in Central Europe, and is on the fast track to membership in the European Union. As the coverage in all three newspapers show, however, the Western world still wants to think of former Communist nations as still existing behind an iron curtain.

SUGGESTIONS

There were two large deficiencies in this study, one of which could have been controlled had more time been available for research. The *Prague Post* was the newspaper from the Czech Republic that was studied; as was earlier stated, though, the *Post* is written in English by a largely American staff for a largely American audience. Had more time been available while conducting research in the Czech Republic, a newspaper that framed the issue from more of a Czech perspective rather than an expatriate perspective could have been translated.

The issues addressed in this paper, though, have not been fully resolved. If further study were to take place on the subject of news media framing of international news events in Central and Eastern Europe, it would need to examine an issue that had more worldwide coverage. While the Czech Television situation was front-page news in Prague for several weeks, it only received one lengthy article in New York and never made it to the front page. A new study could, for example, examine an event on the level of the Serbian-Bosnian conflict over a period of years. Such a study would also be able to determine whether or not the frames in which news is presented change over a period of time, something that this paper cannot do due to its limited scope.

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APPENDIX A
SAMPLE CODING SHEET

DATE: _____

PUBLICATION: _____

Dominant Frame: _____

Sources

Journalists _____

Politicians _____

Lay public (e.g., people in crowd) _____

CT Management _____

Dominant Sources:

Anecdotes

Supporting “rebels”:

Supporting management:

Other:

Syntactical Structure

Headline and sub-head

Lead (first one to two paragraphs)

Symbolic Devices Signaling Frames

Metaphors

Exemplars

Catchphrases

Depictions

Visual images

Intensifiers/loaded modifiers

Concrete details (such as political background)

Entman's Four Frame Components

Agency: Does the article imply blame or responsibility? How?

Identification: Does the article encourage identifications with a cause or a point of view? What and how?

Categorization: Is the event/issue placed in a certain category? What and how?

Generalization: Does the article tie the issue to larger truths? What and how?

VITA

Tolsun Waddle was born on April 3, 1980, in Ranson, West Virginia, a town in the part of the state that lies between Virginia and Maryland. Shortly after his birth, he and his parents moved to Njoro, Kenya, where his father taught agricultural engineering at a local agricultural university on a grant by the United States Agency for International Development. His father's work was to take Tolsun's family to other countries, including the Philippines (where his father again worked on a USAID-sponsored project) and Bolivia (where his father directed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's programs for rural electrification.) Waddle graduated from Oak Ridge High School in June 1998 and, after a summer spent flinging spaghetti at Fazoli's, enrolled at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He is currently in his final semester at UTC, and will graduate in May 2002 with a bachelor of arts in both Communications and English (with a literature concentration.) His research interests are varied, including communication law, media framing, Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and T.S. Eliot's role in the development of the bands of the "grunge rock" era.