

THE EUROPEAN CHARACTER OF THE SLOVAK REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRESS (PART TWO)

Andrej TUŠER

Department of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University,
Štúrova 9, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovakia

The second part of the study analyses the development of individual subsystems of the press (regional, district, town, and company). The regional and local press is estimated within the context of the structural changes in Czechoslovak society after World War II during the past more than 50 years. Special emphasis is laid on the period after November 1989, when the publication of the means of mass communication, their content and typology changed substantially. Attention is also devoted to the situation after the introduction of the new territorial division of Slovakia in 1996.

The period after 1945 is characterized by many political and social impacts on the whole system of the Czechoslovak and Slovak press. In our assessment of this period we use the classification according to V. Holina,¹ who sees the years 1944–1945, 1948, 1969, and 1989 as milestones in the country's history. The author also adds the year 1993, when the independent Slovak Republic was established.

The addressee, that is the reader, is attached to such a medium of mass communication which maximally fulfils his needs and interests. Sociological research confirms that the reader is most interested in what he knows, being most curious about things, events, which are closest to him, around which he moves and in which he lives. These are covered by the regional and local newspapers and journals. Their function follows from the differentiated appeal of the periodical press.

The content, processing and form of a piece of information will be different in a central periodical compared to local or regional journals. This is also valid within the local and regional communication: a company, a village, a city/town, a district, an area (region, county, other type of region).²

¹ HOLINA, V. et al.: *Pôsobenie PMK a žurnalistiky na spoločnosť*. Bratislava, Novinársky študijný ústav 1990, p. 10.

² TUŠER, A.: *Typológia periodickej tlače. Lokálna a regionálna tlač*. Bratislava, Univerzita Komenského 1995, pp. 6-12, 23-27.

All the subsystems of the press are comparable in their frequency of publication, polygraphic production, creative process, forms and means of appeal and, particularly, their universality in relation to the area of their appeal.

However, the different subsystems vary in that company papers fulfil the communicative function in the locality of the company, village paper in the particular village, municipal paper in the town/city, district papers within the district, regional (county, regional, supraregional, subregional) in the particular region (area, county or other region).

DEVELOPMENT OF TYPOLOGICAL GROUPS

The typological division of the press as we know it at present appeared after WWII. The periodicals established in that period corresponded to the administrative and political divisions of Czecho-Slovakia. Groups of the regional and local press were gradually created according to the particular territory in which they were published: company, town/city, district, regional.

After the liberation in 1945 the periodical press was institutionally differentiated in the Republic into the press published by political parties, the press of social organizations and the press of the state bodies.³ February 1948 brought the basic line of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and of the construction of socialism in the country into the press.

The new situation, the character and the mission of the press was confirmed by the Constitution of May 9, 1948. In addition to the declaration of the freedom of press, paragraph 21 of the Constitution stated that the right to publish newspapers and journals is applied primarily with regard to the fact that the profit would not be the aim. The law No. 184/1950 anchored the changes and it definitely prohibited any private enterprise in the press.

The territorial outlook was also unified and in 1949 new regions and districts were established. Six regions and 91 districts were formed in Slovakia.

The documents of the Communist Party placed the local and regional press more and more in the organizational structure of the party press. Company, municipal, district and regional papers were in fact party newspapers (their publishers or co-publishers were particular institutional or territorial organs of the Communist Party).

The affiliation of all typological groups of the local and regional press to party journalism (i.e. the Communist Party) made the content of the journals uniform although their typological signs were preserved.

The Communist Party had the leading position in its central periodicals and titles, but it also published 150 titles of company, municipal, district and regional

³ DUHAJOVÁ, Z. – ŠEFCÁK, L.: *Dejiny slovenského novinárstva 1918-1948*. Bratislava, Univerzita Komenského 1993, p. 160.

press of different frequency – appearing daily, every other day, weekly, fortnightly and monthly throughout Slovakia until 1989. It influenced all institutional and territorial areas. The regional periodicals are published in a region or a district, the local press includes the municipal (town/city, village) and the company press.

The regional press

The predecessors of the regional press were the regional periodicals that followed the particular political party lines. The Democratic Party published a daily *Demokrat* in Košice (1945–48), *Národné noviny* in Martin (1945–48), a weekly *Ozvena* in Prešov (1945–48), a fortnightly of the Ukrainian-Ruthenian section of the Democratic Party *Demokratichesky golos* (Democratic voice 1945–48), and a fortnightly *Demokratické hlasy Zvolen* (1945–46). The Communist Party of Slovakia had its daily *Východoslovenská pravda* (1945–52) in Košice, *Ludový týždenník* (1946) in Nitra, a daily, from 1947 a weekly *Hlas ľudu* in Prešov, a daily *Deň* (1945–48) and *Cieľ* (1948–49, earlier *Strana práce*), in 1949 published as a district newspaper in Žilina. The Labour Party published a daily, later a weekly *Československý východ* (1946–48) in Košice and the mentioned *Cieľ* in Žilina (1947–48).

After the establishment of the regions from 1949 to 1989 – that is the whole forty years – the periodicals were mostly published by the Communist Party. Papers were gradually set up in all six Slovak regions as organs of the regional committees of the Communist Party of Slovakia: in Bratislava it was a weekly *Hlas ľudu* for the region of Bratislava (from 1954), a weekly *Hlas Nitrianskeho kraja* (1949–60) for the region of Nitra, a weekly *Smer* (1949) for the region of Banská Bystrica, a weekly *Cieľ* published from 1953 for the region of Žilina, *Východoslovenská pravda* became a regional daily for the region of Košice from 1949, and *Hlas ľudu* was the regional weekly for the region of Prešov to 1950, when it was fused with *Východoslovenská pravda*. Later it was replaced in the Košice region by the weekly *Priekopník* in 1952 and by the weekly *Nový život* in the region of Prešov in the same year (with a version in the Ukrainian language *Nove žyttá*). In 1958 *Priekopník* was fused with *Nový Život* and a weekly and later a fortnightly *Východoslovenské noviny* was formed in Košice and in Prešov.

After the administrative and territorial reorganization in 1960, the number of regions was reduced to three: *Západoslovenský* (West Slovakia region), *Stredoslovenský* (Central Slovakia Region) and *Východoslovenský* (East Slovakia Region). The regional papers were then formed (or continued) as the organs of the Communist Party of Slovakia and of the regional national committees (until 1989): in Bratislava it was a weekly *Hlas ľudu* for the West Slovakia region (from 1965 daily), in Banská Bystrica – the weekly *Smer* for the Central Slovakia Region (from 1964 daily), its title being *Smer DNES* from 1991, Košice published the weekly

Východoslovenské noviny for the East Slovakia Region (from October 1960 daily) and newspapers Východ published from 1990 and Slovenský východ from 1991.

At the beginning of 1990, the publishers of the three dailies were only particular regional national committees without the regional committees of the Communist Party. During 1990, after abolishing the regional national committees, the publishers also changed. The affiliation to particular regions, as had earlier been proclaimed in subtitles, was cancelled. In 1995, Hlas ľudu was published by Danubia-print, n.e. Bratislava with the subtitle Regional daily, Smer DNES was published by BeBe-Press j.s.c. Banská Bystrica with a subtitle Nezávislý denník pre hospodárstvo, politiku, kultúru a šport (Independent Daily for economics, politics, culture and sport), Slovenský východ was published by the j.s.c. Slovenský východ Košice with a subtitle Denník občanov východného Slovenska (Daily of the citizens of east Slovakia). The daily Lúč Východoslovenské noviny started to be published in 1992 (publisher j.s.c. Lúč Košice) with a subtitle Denník východoslovenského regiónu (Daily of the east Slovakia region) an attempt at a regional daily Azet was made in Banská Bystrica in 1993 (published by j.s.c. Javor Banská Bystrica) with a subtitle Stredoslovenský denník (Central Slovakia Daily).^{4,5}

The district press

The revolutionary national committees, set up gradually in the liberated territories in 1945, can be regarded as the predecessors of district papers.⁶ The more important were: Vatra in Banská Bystrica (1945–46), Pohronie-Garamvölgye (1945–48) in Levice, Tatran in Liptovský Mikuláš (1945–46), Novohradský hlas in Lučenec (1945–48), Turčiansky hlásnik or Hlásnik in Martin (1945–46), Slovenský juh in Nové Zámky (1945–46), Nová doba in Prievidza (1945–46), Národný front in Rimavská Sobota (1945–48), Šafárikov kraj in Rožňava (1945–47), Vpred in Ružomberok (1945), Nové hlasy in Spišská Nová Ves (1945–48), Považský hlas in Trenčín (1945–48), Trnavské noviny in Trnava (1945–49).

During one year all the periodicals published by district national committees and/or by district committees of the National Front disappeared temporarily. It was not until 1950–52 that 'leaflet', so-called 'Žatevné noviny' (Harvest Papers) started to be published as organs of the district committees of the Union of Slovak Farmers in connection with the collectivization of agriculture in some districts. They usually appeared as seasonal newspapers.

⁴ *Adresár periodík a vydavateľstiev Slovenskej republiky 1995*. Bratislava, Novinársky študijný ústav 1995, pp. 17-25, 206-248.

⁵ TUŠER, A.: *Typológia...*, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

⁶ TUŠER, A. – ŠEFČÁK, L.: *Okresné noviny na Slovensku*. Bratislava, Slovenský zväz novinárov – Novinársky študijný ústav 1986.

Directives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Information and Public Education and the Interior Ministry were published in the Collection of circulars for KNV (Regional national committees) No. 25/1952, stating that all districts should publish two-page district farmers' papers on a weekly basis. Their publishers were the agricultural divisions of district national committees. In the second half of 1952, newspapers were published in more than 80 districts out of 91 with different frequency of publication. Two years later, district farmers' papers were published weekly in 62 districts, fortnightly in 11 and irregularly in 17 districts.

In 1956 and 1957 tendencies occurred in some regions to extend the narrow range of interests of district farmers' papers from agriculture to include coverage of the issues concerning the whole districts. This was the case in the districts of Piešťany, Prešov, Prievidza, Senica, Trenčín, Trnava, etc.

A (Communist) Party Document on the mission and tasks of the local press was published in 1959 and later the Party Resolution on the organization of the press in districts in connection with the new 1960 territorial division of the state. From 1960 onwards, the district farmers' papers changed into district papers published by district national committees of the Communist Party and the boards of district national committees.

There were only 33 districts instead of 91 in 1960 (the number was changed to 37 in 1968) and only three regions instead of six. The former regional papers *Ciel* in Žilina and *Hlas Nitrianskeho kraja* in Nitra continued as district papers and since Prešov had no regional newspaper at that time, district *Prešovské noviny* started to be published in 1960.

The year 1966 marked a sort of a breakthrough. The National Assembly adopted the law No. 81, Coll, on the periodical press and other mass media (it came into effect on January 1, 1967). The next Party Resolution led in 1967 to the restriction of the district papers with circulations of less than 8,000 copies. It was assumed that in these districts the district press would be replaced by regional newspapers with variable pages, which would solve the question of economic imbalance or loss-making by some district newspapers. At that time about 10 papers disappeared and thus only 21 district papers were published in Slovakia.

It soon turned out that one cannot look at the district (and the company) press only through the eyes of an economist. Therefore, in May 1968, the above-mentioned Party Document was abolished. Two years later, district papers again appeared in 29 districts except for Galanta, Lučenec, and the newly founded districts of Stará Lubovňa, Svidník and Veľký Krtíš. In the districts of Bratislava-vidiek, Banská Bystrica, and Košice-mesto a district press was not considered, because these districts were saturated with the central, regional or municipal press (e.g. evening papers). But in Banská Bystrica *Priekopník* was founded in 1979 as a district paper. District papers started to be published also in Galanta in 1971, in Lučenec (1978), and the municipal paper *Večer* in Košice (1969). District papers were

established in the new districts of Stará Lubovňa (1973), Svidník (1978), Veľký Krtíš (1974), and Vranov nad Topľou (1969).

The structure of the district press was gradually stabilized, and from 1978, 40 titles of district papers with a circulation of 350,000, including 5 titles in Hungarian, were regularly published in 35 districts of Slovakia (except for the districts of Bratislava vidiek and Košice mesto) on a regular weekly basis.⁷

Great changes took place in this subsystem between 1990 and 1995. District papers were not published by former district national committees any more, they were replaced by private publishers (individuals, companies) and the successive local district governments publish their gazettes in particular districts. It is not a district press any more but a regional (subregional or supraregional) press since a number of titles cover territories of several former districts or several villages. In greater district centres, several periodicals were founded for the same region (Nitra, Spišská Nová Ves, etc.). The number of the titles of the regional (subregional and supraregional) press increased almost three times.⁸

The municipal press

Evening papers were typical of our municipal press. Although after the 1945 liberation *Novosti Bratislavy* was founded in Bratislava (1952–56), it was replaced by *Večerník* in 1956 as a typical evening municipal paper. *Večer* was established in Košice (1969–) and renamed *Košický večer* in 1990 since at that time a new evening paper started to be published with the title *Večer* (with a blue heading). Towards the end of 1991, *Večer* ceased to exist and, today, only one evening paper appears again. However, there is another new municipal daily *Korzo* (1994–). *Prešovský večerník* was set up in Prešov (1990–) and *Žilinský večerník*, a weekly evening paper started to be published as a prospective daily (1990–), renamed *Žilinský večerník & nový Cieľ* in 1993. In Banská Bystrica *Pohronský večerník* (1990) was founded but it has already disappeared, but *Večerník* (1993) is published daily; there were also some other attempts at publishing municipal (and regional) evening papers or typologically related periodicals; one of them being *Poludník* (1991).

Thanks to the amendment to the press law of March 28, 1990, new municipal papers appeared with different frequencies of publication, different coverages and different qualities. They are published by local governments or by private publishers. The newly founded papers include the following: *Castrum novum* (Nové Zámky), *Copus* (Čadca), *Galantské noviny*, *Kežmarok*, *Michalovčan*, *Naše mesto* (Žiar nad Hronom), *Pezinčan*, *Piešťanský týždeň*, *Poprad*, *Prievidza*, *Revúcke listy*, *Rož-*

⁷ TUŠER, A.: *Typológia...*, op. cit., pp. 74-82.

⁸ SEČÍK, I.: *Vývojové tendencie trhu periodickej tlače na Slovensku*. *Otázky žurnalistiky*, 38, 1995, No. 3, pp. 193-202.

ňavské noviny, Senčan, Stupavan, Stropkovské centrum, Šalianske noviny, Zvolenské noviny, Život v Hlohovci.

Further development is anticipated of these types of papers at a local level. A number of new local government periodicals started to be published (but also those of private publishers in villages or town/city parts): Bratislava: B-V press, Dúbravské noviny, Hlas Nového Mesta, Karlova Ves, Ružinovské echo, Staromestské noviny; Košice: Barčiansky súčasník, Jazerčan, Kavečiansky spravodaj, Kvapka, NOSS, Terasa; in smaller villages: e.g. Baločan in Čierny Balog, Haličské zvesti in Halič, Slovak-Hungarian Jelčianske slovo-Jókai szó in Jelka, Ladecké zvesti in Ladce, Moravskolieskovský hlásnik in Moravské Lieskové, Nové sučianske zvesti in Sučany, Novinky spod Bradla in Brezová pod Bradlom, Panoráma Abrahámoviec in Abrahámovce, Pukanský klebetník in Pukanec, Smižiansky hlásnik in Smižany, Varínčan in Varín, etc.

The group of municipal, local and village periodicals can be regarded as the most dynamically developing, since, in 1995 it represented 150 periodicals with a total circulation of over 250,000 copies.

Information-advertising types of municipal and local journals also appear (DEVEX in Devínska Nová Ves, Senecký profil, Život in Sládkovičovo, etc.).

A new typological group of advertising periodicals was formed at the local and regional levels. These periodicals number about 29 with a total circulation of almost three quarters of a million. Some of the former district newspapers have gradually changed into typical municipal or evening papers.⁹

The company press

After the 1945 liberation, the first papers of company trade unions or particular company boards appeared.¹⁰ The first of them were ZKT (Závod kabelovej továrne, 1945), Kablo noviny (Kablo paper, 1946) in the Kablo factory in Bratislava, Závodné noviny produced in the Chemical Works Dynamit Nobel in Bratislava (1946), Naše zrkadlo of the firm Tibergien and sons in Trenčín. Several company papers were also published. There were about 20 company papers which often used to change their titles between 1945 and 1948.

An immense growth in the publication of company papers took place after the 1948 resolution of The Board of the Trade Unions Central Council about the company press in all enterprises with over 200 workers. Towards the end of 1948 their number was already 128, after three years 374 and the number reached 452 in 1953. They mostly appeared as stencil monthlies.

⁹ TUŠER, A.: *Typológia...*, op. cit., pp. 69-74.

¹⁰ TUŠER, A. et al.: *Slovník podnikovej tlače na Slovensku*. Bratislava, Slovenský zväz novinárov 1984.

The year 1954 brought a change after the resolution of the Communist Party had been put into effect; the company papers should be published only in factories with more than 1,500 workers, with the frequency of at least every two weeks and 800 subscribers. In 1955, the number of company papers was about 100. The following Party Resolution of 1966 stated that company papers should only appear in the press system if they reached a total circulation of 5,000, weekly frequency and a size of four pages. If the circulation reached 2,500–3,000 copies, they should only be published outside the system of the periodical press. The publication of other company papers was stopped.

This restriction had the result that while 91 company papers were published in Slovakia in 1966, at the beginning of 1968 it was only 53 (compared to 1953, it was 400 titles less). A slight change occurred after the 1968 Party Resolution: in 1972, 74 company papers were published in factories and companies with a total circulation of 500,000. In the following period some new titles appeared, some disappeared, and, towards the end of 1990, their number was 80 with a circulation of 530,000.

The transformation of the Slovak economy and the introduction of a market economy influenced the publication of the company papers. Many privatized enterprises were not interested in their magazines, particularly for financial reasons, probably not realizing the significant integrating function of the company periodical. The number of these periodicals decreased¹¹ gradually to 63 in 1994 with a circulation of 183,800. A revival is also taking place today in this area: in 1995, the number of company papers was 74 with a total circulation of 211,400.^{12, 13}

New trends

The new political system with its characteristic democratic features intervened significantly in the hierarchy of the system of the periodical press. While no significant changes had been observed in the system of the periodical press in the twenty years before November 1989; the year 1990 witnessed an unprecedented explosion not only of information needs but of the means of information, in particular (see tables at the end of the study).

The development of the periodical press was most influenced by the press law amendment of March 28, 1990. Before that date newspapers and journals could only be published – as has already been said in the introduction – by political, state, cultural, scientific, industrial organizations or institutions. The amendment enabled publication of newspapers and journals also by private entities. For instance, in the period from December 1, 1989 to October 4, 1990, The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Re-

¹¹ TUŠER, A.: *Typológia...*, op. cit., pp. 82-95.

¹² *Adresár...*, op. cit., pp. 186-199.

¹³ SEČÍK, I.: op. cit., p. 201.

public registered 241 periodicals in addition to dozens of others registered by regional and district national committees. Many titles are registered at lower levels.

The number of 326 periodicals in 1989 increased by some 550 titles and it reached 871 titles registered in Slovakia in 1995. The number of local and regional periodicals increased from 122 in 1989 to 231 by 1995.¹⁴

No remarkable changes in the system of the periodical press were observed after the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1993 with respect to the period after 1989. It is rather an imbalance in the development that is observable. Some 170 new local and regional periodicals appeared by 1992, whereas from 1992 to 1995 it was only 60, i.e. one third of that number. This indicates the creation of a more demanding economical milieu for the existence of the mass media after the formation of the new background as a result of the split of the Czechoslovak Federation and the establishment of the Slovak Republic. This initial state soon vanished. The publishers at local and regional levels adapted and adequately oriented themselves. In the following period, the number of central and supraregional but also of new regional and local periodicals substantially increased.

In some important centres of districts or regions several local or regional periodicals survive (Banská Bystrica, Bratislava, Komárno, Nitra, Prešov, Trenčín, Trnava, Žilina, etc.). On the other hand, the thriving ones could incline to higher frequency, indicating the foundation of new municipal or local dailies (e.g. Korzo or Korzár in Košice).

The situation is more complicated in the company press. Problems have arisen in connection with the financial issues and the ongoing changes in ownership and the structure of enterprises. A number of these periodicals have changed the form of printing (company printing), frequency of publication, format, scope, circulation – unfortunately to the detriment of quality. Some disappeared or will disappear soon. They are replaced by a new type of periodical, so-called ‘house magazines’ publicizing the trademark and the image of the particular firm as it has long been done in advanced European countries.

The new 1996 territorial and administrative division of Slovakia created the background for the foundation of new periodicals and/or their transformation. Eight regions (Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Žilina, Košice, and Prešov) replaced the three regions (West Slovakia, Central Slovakia, and East Slovakia) with their centres in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, and Košice and there are 79 districts instead of 38.

The research task of Národné centrum mediálnej komunikácie – Novinársky študijný ústav (NCMK-NŠÚ) – National Centre for Media Communication – under the title “Changes in the infrastructure of the media at regional and local levels under the conditions of the new territorial and administrative division of Slovakia”, adopted on October 15th 1997, brought interesting results.¹⁵ The most important is a signifi-

¹⁴ SEČÍK, I.: *op. cit.*, p. 193.

cant imbalance in the coverage (the number of titles, the total circulation and the frequency of publication) of individual regions and districts by regional and local press.

Districts were formed, in which no regional or local periodicals appear (Bytča, Sobrance) or where only a few periodicals are published (one periodical in the districts of Veľký Krtíš, Krupina, Stará Lubovňa, Kysucké Nové Mesto and Detva, two periodicals in the districts of Topoľčany, Levoča, Snina, Medzilaborce, Poltár and Turčianske Teplice). The following districts are saturated with periodicals: Trenčín (24 regional and local periodicals), Martin (23), Prešov (21), Žilina (19), Nové Mesto nad Váhom (17), Poprad (16), Nitra (15).

A total survey shows the saturation with regional and local periodicals within the particular regions. The greatest number is published in the regions of Žilina (94), Trenčín (79) and Prešov (74), followed by the regions of Nitra and Banská Bystrica (both 59 periodicals), Košice (56), Bratislava (43), Trnava (41). These data do not include the advertising press, the representation of which increased remarkably at local and regional levels after 1989: in 1995 there were 29 advertising regional and local periodicals with some 750,000 copies, in 1997 it was 91 periodicals with a total circulation over 3 million.

We may conclude that the existence of the new social and political system and of the new independent state has significantly influenced the system of the periodical press at both the regional and local level. The outcomes of the research task of NCMK-NŠÚ show a three-fold increase of the number of periodicals and an almost five-fold rise in the number of regional and local periodicals after 1989. The following tables listing the number of periodicals in different periods can serve as an illustration:

ALL PERIODICALS				REGIONAL AND LOCAL PERIODICALS	
Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1938	221	1991	533	1989	122 ^x
1948	232	1992	697	1990	182
1955	377	1993	753	1991	174
1965	286	1994	787	1992	293
1975	316	1995	871	1993	319
1985	314	1996	940	1994	301
1989	326^x	1997	1145 ^{xx}	1995	353
1990	492			1996	365
				1997	596 ^{xx}

^x the year of social changes, 1990 press law amendment adopted

^{xx} results according to the NCMK-NŠÚ research

¹⁵ BREČKA, S. – BENKOVIČOVÁ, D. – TUŠER, A.: *Regionálne a lokálne médiá na Slovensku*. Bratislava, NCMK 1998.

A SUMMARY OF THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRESS IN SLOVAKIA

Periodicals	Number	Circulation
regional	118	643 300
local	295	593 200
company, house magazines	92	366 400
together	505	1 602 700
advertising	91	3 195 000
together	596	4 797 000