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**An Analysis of the Czechoslovak Media Following the  
Act of Jan Palach's Self-immolation**

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## **MA Programme Euroculture Declaration**

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## Preface

I would like to thank the coordinators, contributors and other people who work on a multimedia project Jan Palach. Through this project, I was able to discover more about Jan Palach and I started to be more and more interested in this subject. After going through the whole project, I still wanted to know more and I started to read articles and discussions online. Despite the fact that there were more and more information about Jan Palach (except for the multimedia project, also a book, exhibition and numerous television and radio shows devoted to Palach, documentaries or a movie), I found many opinions which were either untrue or at least highly controversial. This caught my interest. How it is possible that historians have such a clear idea about Palach and other self-immolations and the public is sometimes so divided? And this is not only people in a pub or some anonymous in an internet discussion but also politicians or important people from the Czech cultural life.<sup>1</sup>The discussion about Palach is not only theoretical but it intervenes also with practical life of people. Several people decided for self-immolation in the past decades and claimed allegiance to Jan Palach.<sup>2</sup>

As people get more information through media than through reading books written by historians, I have decided to analyse the media and see where the rub is. I could work under two great supervisors - PhDr. Petr Blažek, Ph.D. and Prof. Dr. Petra Terhoeven, to both I would like to thank for guiding me, directing me into the right direction and giving me valuable advice. I would also like to thank the peer group from

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<sup>1</sup> One of the examples is Miroslav Grebeníček, a politician who represents the Communist Party in the parliament and said that Palach did not fight against the communist regime: “Palachova oběť nesouvisela s bojem proti komunismu, řekl Grebeníček (Palach’s Sacrifice Was Not Connected to the Fight against Communist, Said Grebenicek),” *Lidovky.cz*, August 2, 2013, [http://www.lidovky.cz/grebenicek-kscm-zpochybnil-tvrzeni-ze-palachova-obet-smeroval-p73-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A130208\\_102132\\_ln\\_domov\\_mct](http://www.lidovky.cz/grebenicek-kscm-zpochybnil-tvrzeni-ze-palachova-obet-smeroval-p73-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A130208_102132_ln_domov_mct);

Another statement is from Josef Mašín, who is known for his armed resistance against the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. He called Palach to be “labile young person in a state of mental depression”: “Mašín: Palach byl labilní, upálil se zbytečně (Masin: Palach Was Labile, His Self-Immolation Was Unnecessary),” *Lidovky.cz*, January 21, 2012, [http://www.lidovky.cz/masin-palach-by-labilni-upalil-se-zbytecne-fk2-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A120121\\_122938\\_ln\\_domov\\_mc](http://www.lidovky.cz/masin-palach-by-labilni-upalil-se-zbytecne-fk2-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A120121_122938_ln_domov_mc).

<sup>2</sup> In 2003, a student self-immolated himself in protest of the current situation in the society as he wrote in his statement Torch 2003. He also wrote that he is a follower of Jan Palach: “Studenta dohnalo k sebevraždě ‘zlo celého světa’ (Student Was Driven to Suicide “the Evil of the Whole World),” *Hn.ihned.cz*, July 3, 2003, <http://hn.ihned.cz/c1-12435190-studenta-dohnalo-k-sebevrazde-zlo-celeho-sveta>; Another practical remembrance of Palach is a self-immolation from last year, which however was not intended as a suicide but as a reminder of Palach: “Na václavském náměstí se zapálil muž, kvůli vzpomínce na Jana Palacha (A Man Inflamed Himself on the Wenceslaw Square for the Sake of the Memory of Jan Palach),” *Lidovky.cz*, January 20, 2013, [http://www.lidovky.cz/na-vaclavskem-namestise-pokusil-upalit-muz-fz4-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A130120\\_143118\\_ln\\_domov\\_hm](http://www.lidovky.cz/na-vaclavskem-namestise-pokusil-upalit-muz-fz4-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A130120_143118_ln_domov_hm).

Euroculture who took the time each month to read through my text and helped me significantly with my work.

My first idea was to analyse the media from January 1969 until today as this would show the whole picture. Unfortunately the master thesis has a limited place and therefore together with my supervisors, we have decided to focus only on January 1969.

Information that we today have about Palach are in many cases distorted and many times also untrue. Even people which were close to Palach, who worked on Palach's bibliography are mistaken and are spreading it further. Internet is of course a broad source of information as well as disinformation. Some articles are from the first sight suspicious. Other however seem to be a valid source of information about Palach or the time of 1968/1969. Lenka Procházková published an article called "My Lifelong Topic – Jan Palach"<sup>3</sup>. She was 18 years old when Palach self-immolated himself, she attended his funeral and later wrote a book about him which was published through samizdat.<sup>4</sup> Lenka Procházková collected information from Palach's brother and Palach's friend, after the change of regime in Czechoslovakia, she could also go through documents which were before not possible to see for public. And even such a person who belong to the most knowledgeable people in Czech Republic when it comes to Jan Palach was mistaken. She described Palach's act as very well prepared – he very well estimated the level of demands that he can give. He knew what can change the situation and his plan could succeed. Until here is Procházková correct. Her explanation of the failure of Palach's plan is however mistaken. Procházková claims that Palach knew that his letter has to be published in a media and therefore he send a copy to the Svobodné Slovo, Práce, Czechoslovak Radio and to the Organization of Czechoslovak Writers. However, this is incorrect. In my thesis, I will analyse all four media that are mentioned by Procházková, I will also analyse three more newspaper and among others, I will show that Svobodné Slovo published the whole unchanged letter from Palach with all his demands, including the threat of a group of followers who are ready to self-immolate themselves in case of not meeting his demands.

There are also many other disinformation that go around resulting from the fight of the Communist Party to suppress the topic of Jan Palach. One of the strikes back is

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<sup>3</sup> Lenka Procházková, "Moje celoživotní téma - Jan Palach (My Lifelong Topic - Jan Palach)," Information, *Britské Listy*, (October 2, 2013), <http://www.blisty.cz/art/67446.html>.

<sup>4</sup> She published a book in 1988 in samizdat's edition Petice. It was a former book of Jiří Lederer (1982) but she added some information and published it as a co-writer without an agreement of Lederer's wife or the Publisher. Later she wrote a novel about Palach - Slunce v úplňku. Příběh Jana Palacha (The Sun in Full Moon. The Story of Jan Palach), Prostor, 2008.

the new three part movie series *Hořící keř* (The Burning Bush) which starts with the self-immolation of Jan Palach, continues through his funeral, Jan Zajíc's self-immolation and most importantly covers the defamation of Palach's name done by Vilém Nový who said that Palach did not want to self-immolate himself and that certain people talked him into it by ensuring him that the fire will be a so called cold fire and therefore nothing would happen to him. The movie series got several awards.

The topic of Jan Palach, thought Palach self-immolated himself more than 45 years ago, on January 16, 1969, is still alive. Czech nation is split, one call Palach a hero, other lunatic. The topic of Jan Palach is not only theoretical – as may seem to be to a person who would consider it only as a topic which was alive 45 year ago. Although Palach's demands are long fulfilled, he still has followers that self-immolate themselves in a hope for better future. Not only because of this it is highly important that people would get the right information about Palach and about the whole situation which may seem to be long gone.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 General Introduction

Self-immolation is an act of intentional killing of him or herself in a public in order to react (condemn certain authorities/event/action; point out to certain problem or for example to convince public/authorities of taking certain steps) to current situation. Unlike other possible suicide attack, the self-immolation does not attempt to harm anyone else but him/herself. It is an extreme act of protest which is usually done in popular public place and is accompanied by a letter that explains the act and reasons behind it. The death in self-immolation is also unconditional – unlike with hunger strikes where people threaten with the possibility of their death in order to push the authorities into action.<sup>5</sup>

Although self-immolation literally means self-sacrifice (and therefore it does not say in what way), English socialist Michael Biggs argues that from 1960s the word self-immolation “has become synonymous with fiery death”<sup>6</sup>.

Biggs is further giving a number of people that self-immolated themselves between 1963 and 2002 – he estimates it between 800 and 3000, putting the Thich Quang Duc, a Buddhist monk who set himself on fire in 1963 in protest of the persecution of Buddhist monks by South Vietnamese government as first in line.<sup>7</sup> Biggs argues that the self-immolation of Quang Duc served as example for others and that self-immolations after 1963 have lineage in this one – in comparison of previous ones, which were rather isolated.<sup>8</sup>

In the same way, in which Quang Duc serves as a “starting point” for self-immolation in the world, we can see Jan Palach, a student who set himself on fire on January 16, 1969 as a model of series of self-immolators in Europe, particularly – but not only – in Czechoslovakia.

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Biggs, “Dying without Killing: Self-Immolations, 1963-2002,” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions.*, ed. D Gambetta (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 175–6, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~sfos0060/immolation.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 175, 179.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Biggs, “How Suicide Protest Entered the Repertoire of Contention” (Oxford University Press, 2012), 5, <http://www.sociology.ox.ac.uk/materials/papers/2012-03.pdf>.



The death of self-immolation is shocking, astonishing and hard to imagine. It is the reason why people choose this kind of death in protest and it is also why media are covering it.

Between January 16<sup>th</sup> and January 31<sup>st</sup> 1969, there is evidence of 10 self-immolations in the Czechoslovakia, two of them ended with death – the one of Jan Palach and Josef Hlavatý. There were also four suicides which were done in a different way.<sup>9</sup> Between January and mid-April, there is evidence of 29 people attempting self-immolation, seven of them died.<sup>10</sup>

In the recent history, there were number of significant cases of self-immolation. In September 1990, there was a mass wave of self-immolations in India, where about 200 people decided to protest in this way. In later years, many people in India followed, although the number decreased significantly. In 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation became a symbol of the Arab Spring revolution. Bulgaria had six politically motivated self-immolations in 2013, starting with Plamen Goranov who is often compared to Jan Palach. The longest way of political protests through self-immolation started in 2011 by the self-immolation of a 20 years old Buddhist monk Rigzin Phüncchog. Already about 130 self-immolation were done in protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 The Importance of the Topic Today

Information that we today have about Palach are in many cases distorted and many times also untrue. Even people which were close to Palach, who worked on Palach's bibliography are mistaken and are spreading it further. Internet is of course a broad source of information as well as disinformation. Some articles are from the first sight suspicious. Other however seem to be a valid source of information about Palach or the time of 1968/1969. Lenka Procházková published an article called "My Lifelong Topic – Jan Palach"<sup>12</sup>. She was 18 years old when Palach self-immolated himself, she attended his funeral and later wrote a book about him which was published through

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<sup>9</sup> Petr Blažek, "První Následovník. Sebeupálení Josefa Hlavatého 20. Ledna 1969 (The First Follower. The Self-Immolation of Jasef Hlavatý on January 20, 1969)," *Paměť a Dějiny* 2013, no. 1 (n.d.): 95.

<sup>10</sup> Petr Blažek, "Slovenský Následovník? (Slovak Follower?)," *Paměť a Dějiny* 2014, no. 01 (January 2014): 58.

<sup>11</sup> Petr Blažek, "Rigzin Phüncchog," Multimedia Project, *Jan Palach*, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.janpalach.cz/en/default/zive-pochodne/phuncchog>.

<sup>12</sup> Procházková, "Moje Celoživotní Téma - Jan Palach (My Lifolong Topic - Jan Palach)."

samizdat.<sup>13</sup> Lenka Procházková collected information from Palach's brother and Palach's friend, after the change of regime in Czechoslovakia, she could also go through documents which were before not possible to see for public. And even such a person who belong to the most knowledgeable people in Czech Republic when it comes to Jan Palach was mistaken. She described Palach's act as very well prepared – he very well estimated the level of demands that he can give. He knew what can change the situation and his plan could succeed. Until here is Procházková correct. Her explanation of the failure of Palach's plan is however mistaken. Procházková claims that Palach knew that his letter has to be published in a media and therefore he send a copy to the Svobodné Slovo, Práce, Czechoslovak Radio and to the Organization of Czechoslovak Writers. However, this is incorrect. In my thesis, I will analyse all four media that are mentioned by Procházková, I will also analyse three more newspaper and among others, I will show that Svobodné Slovo published the whole unchanged letter from Palach with all his demands, including the threat of a group of followers who are ready to self-immolate themselves in case of not meeting his demands.

### 1.3 Research Question

My thesis is focused on the legacy of Czechoslovak newspapers in relations to the self-immolations that occurred as a protest against the situation that arose in Czechoslovakia after August 1968. I will search for an answer to the question: How did the Czechoslovak media reflect on Palach's act and the situation that followed? Due to the limited space of my master thesis, I have restricted my research to media coverage of January 1969 – following the large media interest in Palach's self-immolation.

After January, the media coverage of Palach's act and other acts changed dramatically. For example in Mladá Fronta (The Youth Front) the self-immolation of Jan Zajíc was almost not mentioned at all and if than without the real motives. There was a brief coverage of his funeral where also the name of Jan Palach was reminded. The main topic of Jan Palach was than the accusation of Vilém Nový. I have decided to focus more on the time span of several days after Jan Palach's act and death. The

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<sup>13</sup> She published a book in 1988 in samizdat's edition Petice. Later she wrote a book about Palach - Slunce v úplňku. Příběh Jana Palacha (The Sun in Full Moon. The Story of Jan Palach), Prostor, 2008.

situation about Vilém Nový and his accusations are so striking that this topic has been analysed more than the days after Palach's death.<sup>14</sup>

#### 1.4 Structure of the Thesis

In order to fully understand analysis of this paper, I will first introduce in the second chapter necessary background – this includes the description of political situation of Czechoslovakia from 1968 until Palach's act (in relation to self-immolations and to my thesis). The reader will also gain basic knowledge about people who self-immolated themselves.

Third chapter is dedicated to theoretical background, methodology, literary review and materials used for further analysis. This will give the reader further guideline for my fourth chapter, where chosen materials will be analysed using methods described in the previous chapter.

The fifth chapter will present my findings. My final chapter will conclude this whole thesis with outcomes and suggestion for further research.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information about Vilém Nový and his „cold-fire“ theory, see for example: <http://janpalach.cz/en/default/jan-palach/proces>

## 2. Background

Before we start with the actual analysis, the political situation of the years 1968/1969 has to be discussed. In this chapter, I would like to give an overview of a political situation that is relevant to my topic. Firstly, I will give a brief introduction into the political situation of Czechoslovakia. I would like to concentrate on the moments that resulted into young people going and self-immolating themselves in a protest. I will talk shortly about what is Prague Spring, what happened in August 68 and about what is normalization and how it influenced the lives of Czechoslovak people. Secondly, I will introduce Jan Palach, his life and his influence. I will also briefly mention other significant people who self-immolated themselves.

### 2.1 Political situation in Czechoslovakia

#### 2.1.1 Prague Spring and August 1968

The start of the year 1968 brought significant changes into the political and social situation in Czechoslovakia. Antonín Dubček became the new First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and with him, the era of the Prague Spring started. It is a period of roughly half a year when the political situation in Czechoslovakia eased up. Dubček was promoting the so-called “Socialism with human face”. This meant that the Communist party played still the main role in the country but several democratic elements were introduced. Among the most prominent were freedom of press, speech and movement. Discussion about the possibility of decentralization of economy were led. The question of the equality between Czechs and Slovaks was open and the possibility of federalization was discussed. From the January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic became a federation of two national states – the Czech Socialist Republic and the Slovak Socialist Republic.<sup>15</sup>

The situation in the society however escalated. More and more criticism of the Communist Party appeared, accompanied also by some anti-Soviet polemics in the press. Although Czechoslovakia did not belong into the Soviet Union, they were – as other countries in the Eastern bloc – under an enormous influence. The Soviet party did not respond to the changes in Czechoslovakia very well and warned the Communist

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<sup>15</sup> With federation, there were two national governments created – that will be seen also later in the analysis where statements from the Czech, Slovak or Czechoslovak – federal - governments were given.

party that they have to normalize the situation, otherwise the Soviet Union may undertake some steps. The Soviet Union who was in the middle of the Cold War could not allow that a country in their block would go into a democratic direction and weaken the Eastern bloc by that. When after the warnings they gave to the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the situation did not improve, they decided to act. During the night of August 20. – 21. 1968, the Warsaw Pact Army<sup>16</sup> crossed the borders of Czechoslovakia. 108 people died and about 500 civilians were injured on the Czechoslovak side.<sup>17</sup>

With the invasion (or the “brotherly help” as it was called later by the Communist Party) the period of normalization started. Normalization in this sense means to restore the situation before January 1968. The Soviet Union replaced Dubček with more reliable and loyal Gustav Husák. The normalization included for example centralization of power in Czechoslovakia, reinstatement of the power of police authorities and strengthening ties with other socialist nations. The first weeks were in the name of purging reformist who were occupying more important positions within the Czechoslovak Party. Within the next year, several hundreds of thousands of people lost their membership in the Communist Party in the consequence of the Prague Spring. Many reforms were cancelled – including some from before 1968. A strict censorship was established.

### 2.1.2 Reaction to the invasion and normalization

The reaction both in and outside Czechoslovakia is a large topic. In my thesis, I am working with people who self-immolated themselves. There were however others that protested – and also had to suffer the consequences.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Warsaw Pact or also called the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance – defence treaty among eight states in Central and Eastern Europe under the leadership of Soviet Union, existing between 1955 and 1989. Members of the Warsaw Pact included USSR, Czechoslovak Republic, People’s Republic of Bulgaria, German Democratic Republic, People’s Republic of Hungary, People’s Republic of Poland, People’s Republic of Romania and People’s Republic of Albania). This Pact ensured that if one of these countries is attacked, the others will help. It stood in the opposition to NATO. In the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Romania didn’t refused to participate. Albania was already for 7 years only a passive member and the German Democratic Republic although ready to cross the borders, in the end only send few specialists.

<sup>17</sup> The Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, “Oběti okupace (The Victims of Occupation),” *1968/1969*, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.ustrcr.cz/cs/obeti-okupace>.

<sup>18</sup> Among those, I would like to mention a small group of eight protestors in Moscow, who came to the Red Square with posters in protest of the occupation. They were arrested only minutes after they started and the consequences were enormous – they were sentenced to years of imprisonment, labour camp or psychiatric treatment.

Only two and half weeks after the invasion, Ryszard Siwiec from Poland, self-immolated himself in Warsaw during a harvest festival – against the invasion, the participation of Poland on it and against the totalitarianism of communist governments in general. Although he did it in front of thousands of people and also during a live TV broadcast, people did not understand his protest and the Communist Party was able to convince the public that he was drunk and it happened only as an accident.<sup>19</sup> Another self-immolation as a political protest against the occupation of Czechoslovakia as well as for the free Ukraine was done by Vasyl Makuch from Ukraine. Until today, this act is not well-known both in Czechoslovakia and in Ukraine.<sup>20</sup>

During the months that followed, protests in Czechoslovakia were slowly going silent. This was crashed by the self-immolation of Jan Palach.

Jan Palach was a 21 year old student of Philosophical Faculty when he decided to awake the public of Czechoslovakia.

Palach was a quiet and rational person; he seemed like a philosopher. (...) He was serious-minded. He studied in order to understand things profoundly, not to excel in exams. He was always willing to help other people with their studies or with problems related to school. He primarily took part in debates connected with studies or political problems.<sup>21</sup>

Those are words of his schoolmate and this characteristic is similar to others given by Palach's friends or teachers. He also went twice to the Soviet Union for several months. This greatly influenced him.<sup>22</sup> He welcomed the changes that Prague Spring brought and he himself took part in it by attending political debates, distributing leaflets or other printed documents. After the invasion in August 1968, he went actively into the streets, talking to the soldiers in Prague and after that coming to his home town and with his friends writing anti-occupation inscriptions.<sup>23</sup> During the months following the invasion, he spend about 2 weeks in France, took part in few street protests and actively joined an occupational strike, which however was not successful. He wanted to go further and suggested that the main building of the Czechoslovak Radio should be

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<sup>19</sup> Petr Blažek, *Živá pochodeň na Stadionu Desetiletí. Protest Ryszarda Siwice proti okupaci Československa 1968. (The Living Torture on the Stadion of Decade. The Protest of Ryszard Siwiec against the Occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968)* (Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2008), 31, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Petr Blažek, "Vasyl Makuch," Multimedia Project, *Jan Palach*, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.janpalach.cz/en/default/zive-pochodne/makuch>.

<sup>21</sup> Petr Blažek, "Studie (Studies)," Multimedia Project, *Jan Palach*, accessed May 24, 2014, <http://www.janpalach.cz/en/default/jan-palach/studium>.

<sup>22</sup> Petr Blažek, Patrik Eichler, and Jakub Jareš, eds., *Jan Palach '69* (Praha: Filozofická fakulta UK v Praze, Togga, Ústav pro studium totalitních, 2009), 45–48.

<sup>23</sup> Blažek, "Studie (Studies)."

occupied and an appeal for a national wide strike should be broadcasted. He send a letter with this plan to the student leader in January 1969, only ten days before his self-immolation.<sup>24</sup> This protest was however never realized. According to his colleagues, he was disappointed by the inactivity and even resignation of Czechoslovak people.<sup>25</sup> This shows and proves that Palach's act on January 16<sup>th</sup> was an elaborated act of a person who tried also other ways of protesting but was not satisfied with results and therefore turned to a much more radical way. Jan Palach prepared himself very well for his act. His first aim was to awake the Czechoslovak public. He knew that no matter what protest he will choose, if he is going to be alone, he will never convince the government to change anything. Therefore his act was pointed at public. He believed that activated and protesting public can make a change.

Palach wrote a letter in which he claimed to be a part of a group of young people whose members are ready to self-immolate themselves one by one if following demands are not met. 1. Immediate abolition of censorship and 2. Cancellation of Zprávy<sup>26</sup>. He further wrote that if those demands are not met and the Czechoslovak public is not going into a general strike within five days in support of their demands, then another person will self-immolate.<sup>27</sup> Palach did not die during the self-immolation but a few days later in a hospital. Even in a hospital, he was very curious how the public is reacting. Several days after his act, people were active, especially but not only students. There were several demonstrations, hunger strikes and other events done in support of Palach's demands. Palach's funeral was a huge silent manifestation of hundreds of people. However, the support of Palach's demands slowly faded away. Two more people with clearly political motives decided to self-immolated himself. The act of Jan Zajíc, a young student of a high school, was hardly mentioned in a media and the act of Evžen Plocek was not published at all. There were also several self-immolations done abroad which followed the example and partly also the demands of Palach. Slowly however, the public went back to inactivity. The number of suicides in the manner of self-immolation raised significantly in the next few months (27 attempts to self-immolated between January and mid-April 1969) but very few were considered or are considered to be of pure political reasons the same way as Palach did. However, not

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<sup>24</sup> Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*, 53–54.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 52–53.

<sup>26</sup> The propaganda periodical published and disseminated by the Soviet occupying forces.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Palach, "Dopis Jana Palacha adresovaný Ladislavu Žižkovi (The Letter by Jan Palach to Ladislav Žižka)," January 16, 1969, <http://www.janpalach.cz/pdf/kniha/9.pdf>.

only people in Czechoslovakia followed Palach, also few people outside protested in the same way as he did against the regime and occupation of Czechoslovakia.

The regime in Czechoslovakia had to handle Palach as well as other self-immolation. They were able to cover other self-immolations the same way as with Siwec in Poland – by writing that the people had family problems, were alcoholics or tried to commit suicides already several times before. If those people got space in the media, it was always only a very short articles, sometimes only with initials instead of full names and either writing that the motives were unknown or describing them as someone who belongs outside the society. Furthermore, Vilém Nový, a member of the Czechoslovak parliament brought a theory that Palach did not want to die and that he believed that he was using a so called “cold fire” and that he was persuaded by a group of extremist who promised him that nothing would happen to him and therefore he did not mean to die etc. Later, the names from this group were given and they contained names of prominent Czech people who were active during the Prague Spring – this was an attempt to kill two birds with one stone – to put the aura of heroism from Palach away and discredit opposition by implying that they may have killed a young innocent student. The regime used also other ways how to make sure that Palach would not be used as a tool in the fight against the regime and also that it will not unite people against the Communist party. There were several unsuccessful attempts to build a monument to Palach but the only result was that the authors of those ideas got the attention from the State Security. Palach’s grave was a place where people (including foreign tourists and diplomats) gathered, brought flowers, candles and paid tribute to him. This was an unwanted attention for the State Security and it was decided that Palach’s grave has to be moved. The State Security forced Palach’s brother and his mother to agree with an exhumation and a cremation. Palach was moved to Všetaty (village where he was born). Only in 1990, he was moved back to his former place of rest.<sup>28</sup>

The regime succeeded in normalizing the situation and bringing it back to what was before the Prague Spring. Jan Palach and others who self-immolated themselves had to wait for almost 20 years before their act brought public into a larger action.

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<sup>28</sup> Petr Blažek, “Operation ‘Grave,’” Multimedia Project, *Jan Palach*, accessed May 27, 2014, <http://www.janpalach.cz/en/default/jan-palach/akcehrob>.



### 2.1.3 Jan Palach from 1989

In January 1989, a series of protests in remembrance of Palach's sacrifice was organized by several opposition movements: České děti (Czech Children), Charta 77 (Charter 77), Mírový klub Johna Lennona (The John Lennon Peace Club), Nezávislé mírové sdružení (The Independent Peace Association), and Společenství přátel USA (The Society of Friends of the USA).<sup>29</sup> Although it did not bring the end of the communist regime, it was the first larger action since the normalization period and a start of the beginning of the end of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

Shortly after the end of the communist regime, Palach's name appeared again in the media, several squares and schools were named after him and he started to be known as a national hero. In 1991, President Václav Havel gave to Jan Palach and Jan Zajíc the Order of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk<sup>30</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> rank, for their outstanding contribution to the development of democracy and human rights.

More and more information appeared about the people who self-immolated themselves in order to protest against the communist regime. People in Czechoslovakia could for the first time hear about Siwiec and others outside of their country who died the same way as Palach did.

The appearance of the name Palach reoccurs from time to time in a media – either because of the anniversary of his act or through other current events. In 2003 for example, a series of more self-immolations appeared starting with Zdeněk Adamec, who died in protest of the situation in current society and referred in his letter to Palach and Zajíc.<sup>31</sup> In 2013, a man tried to burn himself at the same place as Palach did – his motive was however to remind people about Palach and not to kill himself (he wore several layers of clothes and he was not seriously injured).<sup>32</sup>

Later that year, Palach's name came into the parliament as politicians discussed the possibility to make the day of his self-immolation as a new “red-letter” day. A huge outrage caused the speech of a politician from the Communist Party of Bohemia and

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<sup>29</sup> Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*.

<sup>30</sup> Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was the first president of Czechoslovakia.

<sup>31</sup> iDNES.cz et al., “Student se chystal na upálení už večer (The Preparation of Self-Immolation of a Student Started Already in the Previous Evening),” *zpravy.idnes.cz*, (July 3, 2003), [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/student-se-chystal-na-upaleni-uz-vecer-dhn-/krimi.aspx?c=A030307\\_121414\\_krimi\\_ton](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/student-se-chystal-na-upaleni-uz-vecer-dhn-/krimi.aspx?c=A030307_121414_krimi_ton).

<sup>32</sup> “Na Václavském náměstí se zapálil muž, kvůli vzpomínce Na Jana Palacha (A Man Inflamed Himself on the Wenceslaw Square for the Sake of the Memory of Jan Palach).”

Moravia who claimed that Jan Palach did not burn himself as a protest against the Czechoslovak Communist Party.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Stenographical record from the parliament, “DOKUMENT: Grebeníčkův projev k Janu Palachovi (Document: The Speech by Grebeníček about Jan Palach),” [zpravy.idnes.cz](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/miroslav-grebenicek-projev-o-jan-palach-fc0-/domaci.aspx?c=A130208_174001_domaci_mhk), (August 2, 2013), [http://zpravy.idnes.cz/miroslav-grebenicek-projev-o-jan-palach-fc0-/domaci.aspx?c=A130208\\_174001\\_domaci\\_mhk](http://zpravy.idnes.cz/miroslav-grebenicek-projev-o-jan-palach-fc0-/domaci.aspx?c=A130208_174001_domaci_mhk).

### 3. Theoretical framework and methodology

In this chapter, I would like to acquaint the reader with the theoretical background that served for my later analysis. Firstly, I will give a brief literature overview of work done related to the subject of this thesis. Secondly, the material chosen for the analysis will be introduced. Thirdly, theory concerning effect of media on readers will be explored. Terms such as agenda-setting role of media or framing will be explained. An overview of critical discourse analysis will be given in order to clarify my further analysis.

#### 3.1 Literature Overview

Despite the 45 years from Palach's act, there is not as much literature as people may expect. This is due to the fact that the archives were closed many years and of course people could not officially publish books or studies about Palach. Nevertheless we have a very important book published in exile in Zurich in 1982, written by Jiří Lederer. He was not a historian but his book was probably the best collection of facts about Palach that we have until 2009. Several books about Palach appeared but the focus was more on reflection essays, documents, photography etc. The first extensive study of Palach's act can be found in a book Jan Palach '69. It is a collection of historical texts and essays and it offers also documents from the State Security and others.

A few monographs or journal articles were written about other people who self-immolated themselves – Ryszard Siwiec<sup>34</sup>, Jan Zajíc<sup>35</sup> or Josef Hlavatý<sup>36</sup>

The idea of analysing newspapers at the time of Palach's act is not a new idea and was partly elaborated in several works. I would like to mention at least the book *The Prague Spring in Media* written<sup>37</sup> by Jiří Hoppe where the topic of media in connection to Jan Palach is touched. Another example is *To Think Socialism without*

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<sup>34</sup> Blažek, *Živá pochodeň na Stadionu Desetiletí. Protest Ryszarda Siwice proti okupaci Československa 1968. (The Living Torture on the Stadion of Decade. The Protest of Ryszard Siwiec against the Occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968).*

<sup>35</sup> Branislav Dorko, *Jan Zajíc* (Matices slezská, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Blažek, "První následovník. Sebeupálení Josefa Hlavatého 20. Ledna 1969 (The First Follower. The Self-Immolation of Jasef Hlavatý on January 20, 1969)."

<sup>37</sup> Jiří Hoppe, *Pražské jaro v médiích (The Prague Spring in Media)* (Doplněk, 2004).

Tanks<sup>38</sup> by Matěj Stropnický. The topic of analysing media at that time was also a topic in several master theses – for example: “Suicide in the Czech Press - the Analysis of the Case of Jan Palach”<sup>39</sup> in this case, the student took three newspapers, analysed them and then compared the media agenda with the public one. The articles chosen for analysis were specifically connected to Palach and therefore there is no further analysis of the political and social situation. It is also effected by the fact that the student could not use the information from a book Jan Palach '69 as it was published few months later.

Another example of a thesis which worked with Jan Palach, this time however more from a factual point of view was: “Communist Propaganda in Czechoslovakia between the Years 1968 and 1969 and the Opposition and Resistance against the Regime”.<sup>40</sup>

As my thesis is related also to the Prague Spring, I would like to mention at least two books which cover this topic. The first would be “Prague 1968” by Jan Pauer where the events which led to the invasion in August 1968 are described. The second one “1968 – The Year That Shook the World” brings the events of the year 1968 from the whole world, including the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia.

### 3.2 Material for Analysis

Due to the limited amount of time and space that the research and this thesis offers, I have limited the amount of analysed material to the followings: main Czechoslovak newspapers that covered the event of Jan Palach (and partly others) in January 1969,

As the language of the material is entirely in Czech, the translation is needed and will be done in order to support fully given arguments. The copies of my newspaper materials from 1969 that I am working with, were taken at the Research library in Olomouc, Czech Republic with the exception of Rudé Právo which is available fully at the website of the Institute for Czech Literature<sup>41</sup>. Television broadcasts are taken from

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<sup>38</sup> Matěj Stropnický, *Myslet socialismus bez tanku (To Think Socialism without Tanks)* (Scriptorium, 2013).

<sup>39</sup> Tereza Štampachová, “Sebevražda v českém denním tisku – analýza případu Jana Palacha (Suicide in the Czech Press - the Analysis of the Case of Jan Palach)” (Master thesis, Masaryk University, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> Tereza Gerátová, “Komunistická propaganda v Československu v letech 1968–1969 a opozice a odpor vůči režimu (Communist Propaganda in Czechoslovakia between the Years 1968 and 1969 and the Opposition and Resistance against the Regime)” (Bachelor Thesis, Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> <http://archiv.ucl.cas.cz/>

the Czech Television's archive which is available online. As a material for analysis served both the available videos of the TV programme as well as reports from the broadcasting in January 1969.<sup>42</sup> I have chosen not to include the analysis of the Czechoslovak radio for two reasons – one is the limited space of this thesis and second is the limited amount of material I was able to obtain as that would result in inaccurate analysis.

Following newspapers were chosen to be analysed:

*Rudé Právo* (The Red Right/The Red Law) – which was the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (therefore also highly propagandistic). It was founded in 1920 and after the communist take-over, it became the most influential and also most widely read newspaper in Czechoslovakia with a circulation of over one million daily. It can be compared to the newspaper *Pravda* in the Soviet Union. It didn't survive the change of regime in Czechoslovakia.<sup>43</sup>

*Mladá Fronta* (The Youth Front) – was a popular newspaper before and after the Velvet Revolution (1989). After the revolution it was renamed to *Mladá Fronta DNES* (The Youth Front Today). During the socialism, it was the newspaper of the Socialist Union of Youth.

*Práce* (The Work) was published and distributed by the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement.

*Lidová Demokracie* (People's Democracy) was the newspaper of the Czechoslovak's People Party.

*Svobodné Slovo* (The Free Word) was published by the Czechoslovak Socialist Party.

### 3.3 Role of Media – Especially Press

Before diving into the methods and methodology, I am going to use later in the analysis, I would like to explain the difference between the role of journalism today and in 1969 in Czechoslovakia – as I believe that it is important to clarify this. In 1997, a Project for Excellence in Journalism was founded by the Pew Research Center. This

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<sup>42</sup> <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>

<sup>43</sup> “*Rudé právo* (The Red Law),” Information, *Wikipedia*, accessed April 4, 2014, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rud%C3%A9\\_pr%C3%A1vo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rud%C3%A9_pr%C3%A1vo).

project seeks to “assess the state of news and information in a changing society”<sup>44</sup>. One of their findings from their first three years of work was a set of nine main principles of journalism. I would like to mention some of them – especially those which are different when we look at journalism today and in 1969 in Czechoslovakia.

According to the research, the main principle is “Journalism’s first obligation is to the truth”. It is not a truth in absolute, philosophical sense, but truth practical. The “journalistic truth” is “a process that begins with the professional discipline of assembling and verifying facts. Then journalists try to convey a fair and reliable account of their meaning, valid for now, subject to further investigation”<sup>45</sup>. Journalists should be transparent about their sources and methods in order to allow the audience to assess the article and information given to them and put it into a context.

Second principle is that the first loyalty of a journalist is to a citizen. This means that the interest of the public should be placed on the first place and also that the media should represent all parts of the society.<sup>46</sup>

Third principle is that journalists “must maintain an independence from those they cover”<sup>47</sup>. This does not necessarily means neutrality but more “independence of spirit and mind”. This goes hand in hand with another principle mentioned in this research and that is that journalism is an independent monitor of power<sup>48</sup> and therefore important stone of democracy and democratic society.

Let us have a look now at the media in Czechoslovakia in 1969. The mass media (newspaper, radio and television) were controlled by the Communist party. The policy towards media was of course “copying” the general turns of the country and society. Important document for my thesis is the Press Law which was introduced in October 1966. During the Prague Spring, this law was abolished which contributed to the freedom of press. This law was however reintroduced after the invasion of Warsaw Pact army. On September 13, the censorship was “temporarily” implemented. The implementation of this law was one of the main conditions which Czechoslovakia had

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<sup>44</sup> PewResearch Center, “About the Project,” *Journalism.org*, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.journalism.org/about/>.

<sup>45</sup> PewResearch Center, “Principles of Journalism,” *Journalism.org*, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.journalism.org/resources/principles-of-journalism/>.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

to sign in the so-called Moscow Protocols. This law was rewritten only in 1990.<sup>49</sup> In the very first article, paragraph 2 talks about the function of periodical printed material, among others, it is mentioned that the printed material has to “cooperate in the development of socialist consciousness of citizens within the spirit of the principles of the constitution and policy ideas of the Czechoslovak Communist Party as a leading force in the state and society”<sup>50</sup> Article 4 then talks about the cooperation between the state and the editor in chief. It further states that state authorities and organizations as well as cultural and scientific institutions and economic organizations are obliged to take a stand in a significant socially beneficial proposals, recommendations and initiatives within one month and the editor in chief is obliged to publish this.<sup>51</sup> This may serve as one of the possible explanations why tens of statements on Palach’s act written by different organizations and institutions were published in January 1969. From the view of the reader of today’s newspapers, to find statement from the society of blacksmiths on Palach’s act may seem to be strange, at that time it would not struck anyone.

The Press Law from 1966 of course does not mention anything about censorship – on the contrary, it is stressing out the freedom of speech, word and press – in line with the Constitution. People however, were aware of the tighten censorship after the August 1968, one of the examples of course is Palach’s act and his letter where he demands that the censorship will be abolished, otherwise another young person will die.<sup>52</sup> As a reaction to the situation that appeared after Palach’s act, the Federal office for press and information gave an order to all newspapers on January 20<sup>th</sup> 1969 that they can publish only official information and should avoid dramatizing the situation.<sup>53</sup>

Later in this thesis, I will argue that the act of Jan Palach was used by the government to propaganda. Although propaganda is used widely also in the democratic world, it has a negative connotation. This is due to the association with Nazi Propaganda which served as a justification for holocaust or the Communist propaganda

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<sup>49</sup> Milan Šmíd, “History of the Czech Press Law. A Missing Definition of Public Interest - The Obstacle to the New Media Legislation in the Czech Republic?,” *International Journal of Communications Law and Policy*, no. 2 (Winter /99 1998): 1–2, [http://ijclp.net/old\\_website/2\\_1999/ijclp\\_webdoc\\_13\\_2\\_1999.html](http://ijclp.net/old_website/2_1999/ijclp_webdoc_13_2_1999.html).

<sup>50</sup> *Zákon o periodickém tisku a o ostatních hromadných informačních prostředcích (The Law of Periodical Material and Mass Media)*, 36, 1966, 433, <http://www.psp.cz/sqw/sbirka.sqw?cz=81&r=1966>.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 435.

<sup>52</sup> Palach, “Dopis Jana Palacha adresovaný Ladislavu Žižkovi (The Letter by Jan Palach to Ladislav Žižka).”

<sup>53</sup> Blažek, “První následovník. Sebeupálení Josefa Hlavatého 20. Ledna 1969 (The First Follower. The Self-Immolation of Jasef Hlavatý on January 20, 1969),” 96.

which used many opportunities to denigrate the capitalistic world<sup>54</sup>. I will later show how the government worked with Palach's case in order to calm the situation but also to gain more support from the general public.

The reader has to remember that the situation in press in January 1969 in Czechoslovakia was different from the situation we have today. The newspapers were state-owned and had to publish with agreement of the Communist Party. In order to do that, the truth had to be put on second place as the press didn't serve the public but the state. The contribution of public was also greater than today.

### 3.4 The Effect of Media

The discussion on the effect of media on the public opinion has a long tradition, by some it is put even thousands years back but the scholarly debates goes back approximately eighty years.<sup>55</sup> Although the research about this subject has a long history, the primary question of what kind of effect have media on their recipients, is still unclear and largely discussed. At the beginning, it was believed that the effect of media is "immediate and evident"<sup>56</sup>. The theory was called "magic bullet theory" or "the hypodermic effects theory". The effect of media was observed on examples of "propaganda and psychopathology posited an all-powerful government propagandist manipulating passive and atomized audience who lacked independent sources of information". To such a strong idea of media having a powerful effect on its readers, an opposite theory emerged – the "minimum effects school". As the title suggests, this theory believes that the effect on readers through media is minimal – as their prior life experience, beliefs and motivations are stronger. The current stage of research is trying to disapprove this minimum effects school in order to "to justify the discipline itself and to demonstrate significant effects through refined theories, better measurement tools, and improved methodological designs"<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> As example may serve the case of „Potato Beetle“. This beetle infested Europe in 1950. Communist parties in several countries, including Czechoslovakia, used this outbreak to serve their purpose. On the title pages of all newspaper appeared an article about agents from the West who were coming to the borders of Czechoslovakia during night and bringing in boxes those beetles and letting them loose in Czechoslovakia in a hope that they will go and eat the potatoes of Czechoslovak people.

<sup>55</sup> W. Russell Neuman and Lauren Guggenheim, "The Evolution of Media Effects Theory: Fifty Years of Cumulative Research," *Communication Theory* 21, no. 2 (2011): 171, [http://www.wrneuman.com/nav\\_pub\\_95\\_397962857.pdf](http://www.wrneuman.com/nav_pub_95_397962857.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 176.



As we can see, it is very difficult to prove certain effect of media on a reported event (or any other kind of news), I will therefore only tackle this problem later in my analysis. Nevertheless, it is not possible to create a theory in which we can say that most people were effected by media in certain way. Although we may argue that the broader social and cultural context of message reception was for most people similar, the structure of beliefs among people is of course different as well as the psychological predispositions of them.<sup>58</sup> Palach's act is also closely connected to Prague Spring and the invasion in August 1968 – we can therefore assume that people where more affected by those events (journalists, intelligence, politicians, students etc.), took also Palach's act more closely and their reactions were stronger than of those who were not as affected by the events proceeding Palach's self-immolation.

To make the situation even more complicated, I would like to mention that although media were the primary source of information in case of Palach, we cannot eliminate interpersonal communication. There are several theories concerning the importance of interpersonal communication. Although it is clear that there is not one theory that would fit all or even most possibilities<sup>59</sup>, I would like to draw attention to a study conducted by Hill and Bonjean. In their research, they interviewed 200 randomly chosen people from the city Dallas about how they found out about the assassination of President J. F. Kennedy. Through 15 pages long questionnaire, among other information, they also found out that approximately 57% of respondents learnt about this event through interpersonal communication. This study showed that when it comes to extraordinary event, the interpersonal communication plays a significant role.<sup>60</sup> For the act of Palach, we don't have any study similar to this, so at this moment, we can only assume that his act was so shocking and extraordinary for Czechoslovak people, that the interpersonal communication also played a significant role in this case. To support this claim, we can see that on January 17<sup>th</sup> only two newspapers (Práce and Mladá Fronta) out of five that I have studied, came out with a news about Palach (There were however also news on the radio and television – but they were also very brief and short, informing of a self-immolation by a student of a Philosophical Faculty, from the Charles University in Prague. The motives were – according to the first news – unknown). Mladá Fronta was also brief and didn't give much information on this case.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>59</sup> Tomáš Trampota, *Zpravodajství (Reporting)* (Praha: Portál, 2006), 106–109.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 108.

Práce however, mentioned that 4 or 5 people may reportedly follow Palach's example. This information together with young person self-immolating himself, can be already seen as extraordinary and start a spread of information among people outside the readers of newspaper. This would mean that a person comes to contact with the news before reading reports and discussion in the newspaper. Bringing this together with what I mentioned already earlier (people read information based on their previous experience etc.), we may conclude that at least part of the public already had an opinion about Palach before even reading newspapers.

### 3.5 The Agenda-Setting Role of the Mass Media

We have already indicated how the censorship, propaganda and the time of communism affected media. We have also tackled the problem of how difficult is to assess how much effect can media have on readers or viewers. There may be different opinions on how much is media affecting us, media do however tell us what is important (in their eyes) and what we should think about. When we watch news on television, we understand that the main topic is going to be broadcasted first in the same way that the most burning news are on the title page of a certain newspaper. If for example a reader of Lidová Demokracie bought this newspaper on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1969, he would find a title page covering only events related to Palach's act and in the whole newspaper, he would be able to read 11 articles on this topic. For this newspaper, Palach's self-immolation and actions undertaken because of it, were the number one news and the reader would understand it immediately. If however, the same person would instead of Lidová Demokracie, buy newspaper Práce, he would have completely different view of the importance of Palach's act. One article of less than 200 words (although on the front page – but only in the middle with small headline) does not put much significance to this event.

The same may go for television. If the planned program is interrupted and instead of movie, a discussion, speech or news break is put, this signals the viewer that the message coming is of the highest importance.

Those are only small examples of the agenda-setting role in media and we will talk about it more broadly in the section of analysis. Let us have a look at what the research is saying. The Agenda Setting Theory was created by Drs. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1970s. They presented their findings of a 1968 US presidential election, known as the Chapel Hill Study. In their very introduction to this study, they

wrote: “In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position”<sup>61</sup>. There are two assumptions when it comes to the agenda setting: First: media do not show reality, they filter it and shape it; Second: when media are concentrating on certain topic, the public identify this topic as more important than other.<sup>62</sup> The importance of media setting however, does not lie only on the side of media but also on the characteristics of readers. The most influential are the following three. The first two are: interest in the content of the media and uncertainty related to the topic. People who have this characteristics, like to seek for orientation within the topic and it is therefore more exposed to the agenda setting. The third case of characteristics is effort which is put into seeking reliable information. This group of readers is a bit different from the other two because according to research, this group already has a political background, they are more critical and therefore harder to influence.<sup>63</sup>

Important term is also gatekeeping. Gatekeeper is a person who is choosing which news will be put on media and therefore has a significant role in what kind of information will the reader or viewer get. The selection is based on subjective matter and are influenced by the experience, stance and expectations of the gatekeeper.<sup>64</sup> In our case of January 1969, we also have to see outside pressure from the Communist party as well as the gatekeeper’s own stance towards it.

### 3.6 Framing

The media not only can choose what they will inform about, in what kind of amount and whether that kind of article belongs to the front page or as a first in television news but one event can be processed with different frames. Under the term frame, we understand to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem

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<sup>61</sup> Maxwell McCombs and D. Shaw, “The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0033-362X%28197222%2936%3A2%3C176%3ATAFOMM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5>.

<sup>62</sup> Amber M. Freeland, “An Overview of Agenda Setting Theory in Mass Communications” ([www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)), 3, 12.12.2012, accessed April 20, 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/3355260/An\\_Overview\\_of\\_Agenda\\_Setting\\_Theory\\_in\\_Mass\\_Communications](https://www.academia.edu/3355260/An_Overview_of_Agenda_Setting_Theory_in_Mass_Communications).

<sup>63</sup> Trampota, *Zpravodajství (Reporting)*, 121–122.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–41.

definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described”<sup>65</sup> Framing is also accenting or omission of some aspects of the event.<sup>66</sup>

In my research, I am going to look for frames and the way certain media were framing Palach’s act and self-immolation. We will later see that each newspaper or media put accent on different aspects of the situation in January 1969. Although I already wrote about the difficulty to assume what kind of effect media have on their readers, it does not mean that journalists do not want to influence. I believe that it is very visible in our case. As Palach wrote in his letter, more young people may follow him, many messages broadcasted or written in newspaper were done in order to prevent that to happen. The idea of framing is therefore rooted in social context in which an article is written.

### 3.7 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis is a name for a specific approach to a study of text or speech, arising from different humanitarian branches (such as critical linguistics, critical semiotics etc.).<sup>67</sup> It is based on the premises that text and speech are the most important keys in “maintaining and legitimizing inequality, injustice and oppression in society”<sup>68</sup>. CDA is therefore mainly interested and motivated by important social problems and is hoping to better understand it. CDA is based on a multidisciplinary approach, it assumes that the society is too complex to be studied and understood from only one perspective and therefore the analysis has to be done from more perspectives.<sup>69</sup> There is a difference between the CDA and other discourse analysis: “Unlike other discourse analysts, critical discourse analysts (should) take an explicit socio-political stance: they spell out their point of view, perspective, principles and aims, both within their discipline and within society at large.”<sup>70</sup> CDA is focused on problems in society, for example racism, identity, social changes. To understand the problems in CDA, the researcher is always going

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<sup>65</sup> R. Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52, [http://sotomo-ve.geo.uzh.ch/sotomo/pps/lit/entman\\_93.pdf](http://sotomo-ve.geo.uzh.ch/sotomo/pps/lit/entman_93.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Trampota, *Zpravodajství (Reporting)*, 123.

<sup>67</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, “Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Japanese Discourse I* (1995): 17.

<sup>68</sup> Jan Renkema, ed., *Discourse, of Course: An Overview of Research in Discourse Studies* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2009), 277.

<sup>69</sup> Seale Clive et al., *Qualitative Research Practice: Concise Paperback Edition* (SAGE, 2006), 187.

<sup>70</sup> Teun Van Dijk, “Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *DISCOURSE & SOCIETY* 4, no. 2 (1993): 252.

back and forward between theory and the evidence, also the historical context is analysed and used in the final data. There is no single way of how to do CDA, there are different grammatical theories to be used depending on the subject that is studied. The first step is to analyse the problem (object) and then use analysis and theorizing – study from the inside – this way the analysts avoid fitting the data to the theory.<sup>71</sup>

There may be more descriptions of what CDA is but one rule they have in common and that is the goal: “the critique of dominant discourses and genres that effect inequalities, injustices and oppression in contemporary society.”<sup>72</sup>

One of the examples of the usage of CDA may be when scientists want to find out why some powerful speakers or groups have so much influence. They want to learn what structures of language and strategies were involved and used. In order to explore that, they pay attention to all levels and dimensions of discourse. They look into the grammar (phonology, syntax, and semantics), style, rhetoric, schematic organization, speech acts, pragmatic strategies as well as interaction among others.<sup>73</sup>

Many relations may be hidden or not immediately obvious from the first sight and CDA is trying to reveal that. Therefore, CDA has to focus also on “the strategies of manipulation, legitimation, the manufacture of consent and other discursive ways to influence the minds (and indirectly the actions) of people in the interest of the powerful.”<sup>74</sup>

How exactly may be a research done through CDA made? A newspaper has a powerful impact on readers. A scientist may study articles from particular newspaper just before election and through language find out whom the newspaper support. He would search for example repeated verbs that appear throughout the articles. He may find out that for quoting the political parties, the newspaper use for one party the word “claim” whereas for the other the word “say”. The scientist then would argue that, if the writer's first language was English, the word “claim” gives less credibility to the sentence then the word “say” and therefore this would be one of the supporting evidence in the statement that that newspaper favours the “say” political party.

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<sup>71</sup> Clive et al., *Qualitative Research Practice: Concise Paperback Edition*, 188.

<sup>72</sup> Jan Renkema, *Discourse, of Course: An Overview of Research in Discourse Studies* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2009), 278.

<sup>73</sup> Teun Van Dijk, “Aims of Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Japanese Discourse I*, 1995, 18.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

## 4. Analysis

In this chapter, we will go through each newspaper and chronologically go through the most important articles in order to analyse how Palach, his act and the situation that emerged, was portrayed. There will be a small summary of results after each newspaper. After five printing media, the broadcasting of a television will be analysed in a similar way to the newspapers.

In order to choose an article or broadcasting for analysis, it was not necessary to contain information about Palach's act or other self-immolation. Those that reflected the current situation that emerged were included also.

### 4.1 Written Media in January 1969

As already mentioned earlier in this thesis, I have chosen five newspapers – *Práce*, *Rudé Právo*, *Mladá Fronta*, *Lidová Demokracie* and *Svobodné Slovo*.

#### 4.1.1 *Práce* (The Work)

Compared to the other newspapers, the topic of Jan Palach was described the least. There were 24 articles about the theme of self-immolation of Jan Palach, other self-immolations or related topics. The peak of published articles was on January 22<sup>nd</sup> (6), first article appeared on January 17<sup>th</sup> (the day after Palach's self-immolation) and last on January 29<sup>th</sup> (see diagram nr.1).

The first time that Palach was mentioned was on January 17 in a short article entitled "The tragedy of This Era" which informed of the act of Jan Palach, adding that his current condition is critical.<sup>75</sup> This article was short and informative but importantly mentioned that there may be four or five people prepared to follow Palach's example.

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<sup>75</sup> šh, "Tragédie doby (The Tragedy of this Era)," *Práce*, January 17, 1969.

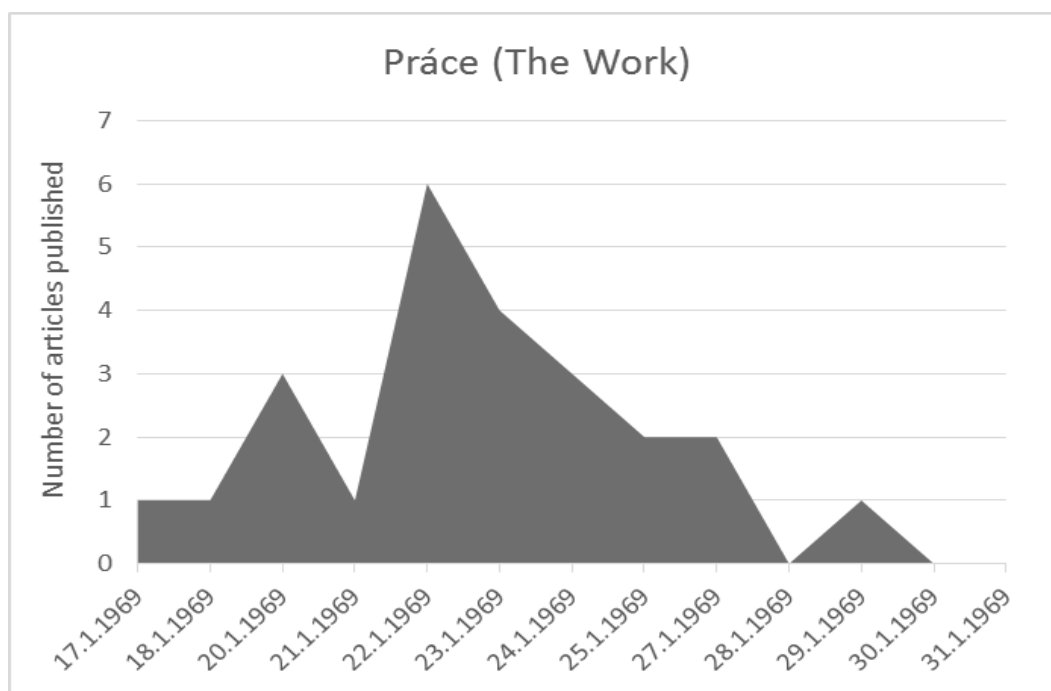


Diagram nr. 1 – Number of published articles related to self-immolations in the newspaper Práce in January 1969

The next day Práce stated that the cabinet held a meeting and brought its statement which gave the public more details about the reason behind Palach’s act.<sup>76</sup> They informed that Palach confided to his doctor that he did not expect to end like this. (It is of course impossible to know if this is true or not. However, according to the testimony of the nurse taking care of Palach, he said that they want to demonstrate like Buddhist monks in Vietnam.<sup>77</sup> Together with the fact that although the State Security was collecting all possible testimonies, the statement of a doctor was not included anywhere, we can say that this claim was only a speculation with the intention to stop others in following Palach.) According to the cabinet, although the love of the youth to their country is appreciated, there exist entirely different and realistic ways and tools which lead to the better tomorrows of the republic. The cabinet further states that Palach’s act happened at the time when the situation after August 1968 was slowly normalized and that the whole cabinet is working hard on resolving any problems or difficulties and is in need of people with patience and optimism in the work of the government and that these attributes are of real patriots. This cabinet’s statement is already foisted to the public that although Palach was a hero, his sacrifice was

<sup>76</sup> šh, “Prohlášení vlády ČSR k tragickému činu J. Palacha (The Statement of the Czechoslovak Cabinet to the Tragic Act of J. Palach),” *Práce*, Spring 1969.

<sup>77</sup> Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*, 70, 78.

premature, his chosen way of protest was not realistic and as the government is already working on solving the situation, it was also needless.

On Monday January 20, 1969, *Práce* published a statement of the Central Trade Union Council<sup>78</sup> where the Council claims that although agitated by the act of Palach, they say that for the socialisms with its humanistic basis, it is necessary to live and to fight and be prepared that it is going to last long and the journey is not going to be easy. Nevertheless, according to the statement, the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement is prepared to stay alongside students and young people and work on solving all difficulties.<sup>79</sup> This articles follows the agenda of the previous articles in a way that Palach's act was tragic, he was a patriot but we should try to solve this situation more wisely and while being alive.

As already mentioned, January 22<sup>nd</sup> is the day of most published articles on Palach's topic. The list is bringing a reflection essay on the topic of Buddhist monks self-immolating themselves against the Vietnam War.<sup>80</sup> The author emphasises that although the first self-immolation of the monk was significantly publicized in newspapers all over the world, the others that followed were no longer so shocking and therefore uninteresting for the media and public, and therefore also not so many people knew about them. He claims that to have a bigger impact, it is better when this kind of act is alone and really stands out and that potential followers would make the act of Jan Palach only less important, less shocking and less influential. He brings to life Czech history, reminding the reader of other two Jans that died for Czech people – Jan Hus<sup>81</sup> and Jan Opletal<sup>82</sup>. He says that together with Jan Palach, they are creating an analogy to Holy Trinity and that they will be remembered. The Holy Quartet, says the writer, does not exist. Josef Volařík, the author of this essay, is clearly trying to talk out the potential

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<sup>78</sup> Central Trade Union Council was the leading body of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí or ROH in Czech) which was a national trade union centre in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1990.

<sup>79</sup> “Stanovisko ÚRO k tragickému činu studenta Jana Palacha (Statement of the Central Trade Union Council to the Tragic Act of Student Jan Palach),” *Práce*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>80</sup> Josef Volařík, “Vzomeňte na buddhisty a Guevaru (Remember the Buddhists and Guevara),” *Práce*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>81</sup> Jan Hus (or John Huss), c.1369-1415 was a Czech priest and reformer, who was a follower of John Wycliffe and was burn at a stake for heresy after denying to call off his former suggestions of reforms of the Catholic church. He was a predecessor of the Protestant movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and his teaching had strong influence around Europe.

<sup>82</sup> Jan Opletal (1915-1939), was a student of Charles University in Prague who died after being shot in a demonstration during the German occupation of Germany. His funeral became another anti-Nazi demonstration. As a result of this, all Czech Universities were closed, more than thousand students were send to concentration camp and nine students and officials were executed on November 17th. Later, November 17th became known as an International Day of Students.



followers from acting as Palach did by saying that although Palach's sacrifice is heroic, their act may not only be not known and have no influence but may even worsen the impact of Palach's act.

An important article is "Details about the case J. Hlavatý. A Press Conference with the Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior"<sup>83</sup> The Minister is bringing the news about Josef Hlavatý, a person who self-immolated himself a day before. He is stressing that motives of Palach and Hlavatý were very different and that Hlavatý had "morally qualitative different background". He described him as an alcoholic, who didn't work properly and already mentioned before to many people that he wants to commit a suicide. This conference with the Minister of the Interior is the reason why people didn't consider Hlavatý as a follower of Palach. Nowadays however, historians agree that the interpretation is not so clear. Hlavatý had personal problems but according to his family and friends, he was very much disturbed by the intervention of the Warsaw Pact army and since then, he hated Russians. According to the treating doctor who inquired about the motive of Hlavatý's act, Hlavatý said that he did it as a protest against the occupation and that he doesn't like Russians.<sup>84</sup> This side of story may have been very dangerous if it would get to the public, the Minister therefore used Hlavatý's personal problems and presented them as the only motivation of his act.

The Minister also confirmed the authenticity of Palach's letter and interpreted words that Palach said to his colleague and student leader Holeček (Holeček visited Palach in the hospital) as a message to his followers: "The living must fight". According to the documents that we have today however, Palach was most certainly not able to articulate properly when Holeček visited him. It is therefore unlikely that he send any message to his friends. Moreover, from what we know today, we can say that it is also unlikely that even if he would be able to talk that he would send a message like that<sup>85</sup> This is yet another evidence of the effort of all people to prevent another self-immolation. I would like to also point out that although the Minister did mention Palach's letter, he did not talk at all about its fulfilment. All the attention was turned to saving a potential suicide and prevent another tragic event.

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<sup>83</sup> "Podrobnosti o případu J. Hlavatého. Tisková konference s minisrem vnitra ČSR (Details about the Case J. Hlavatý. A Press Conference with the Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior)," *Práce*, January 22, 1969, 1, 3.

<sup>84</sup> Blažek, "První následovník. Sebeupálení Josefa Hlavatého 20. Ledna 1969 (The First Follower. The Self-Immolation of Jasef Hlavatý on January 20, 1969)," 100.

<sup>85</sup> Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*, 80.

January 23<sup>rd</sup> is partly devoted to summarizing of what is written in the media abroad about Jan Palach. The article entitled “The Tragedy of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>86</sup> is giving the reader the idea that other countries have about Czechoslovakia and about the act of Jan Palach. Most of the newspapers that are covered here are from the countries that are under the communist influence. The first part of the article has more positive to neutral impression where it is described what the Belgrade newspaper wrote and that is that Palach’s act came from the “idealistic belief of a proud youth” and that the “power of belief and the desire of moral purity were stronger than self-preservation instinct”. “Jan Palach decided to fight dead (...) he burnt himself as a political protest in the name of freedom and dignity of his nation”. The mood of the article changes during the second part when it comes to other newspapers. Neues Deutschland is for example emphasising the fact that the unrest in Czechoslovakia is done by extremists and the ADN Agency is coming to the conclusion that Palach was driven to the death by one secret agency which is influenced by West German espionage service. The Polish media also agree with it when the headlines in their newspaper claim that “Extremist Political Powers Misuse Emotions of Young People”. From the West (the German newspaper quoted are from German Democratic Republic), *Práce* quoted only one sentence from the *Frankfurter Rundschau* which had a neutral impression. What can an average reader take from this article? That most of the surrounding countries think that Palach was influenced by extremist powers (and therefore did not act on his own) and that the world around may have a bad picture of Czechoslovakia because of Palach.

After publishing the whole speech of President Svoboda on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup>, *Práce* informed its readers of responses which the editorial office received.<sup>87</sup> Those reactions had several similar points, the most repeated was the confidence and faith people have in the government and the president, closely followed with “in order to realize the ideal of socialism, you have to be alive and fight”. Interesting points are stated by the Czech writers. According to them, “even the most pure acts can bring the very opposite results than the originator planned”. Their statement was finished with a plea that “today’s escalated situation cannot lead to the point where one would stepped away from the progressive aims, it is only important to find new ways of implementation”. In this type

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<sup>86</sup> “Tragédie XX.století (The Tragedy of the 20th Century),” *Práce*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>87</sup> “Důvěra i odhodlání. Z dopisů k projevu presidenta republiky (Faith and Determination. From the Letters to the Speech of the President of the Republic),” *Práce*, January 23, 1969.

of article, we can see very well the importance of a gatekeeper who is choosing which reactions are going to be published.

Last article I would like to mention from January 23 is written by the delegates of the first all-union congress of the Czech ROH.<sup>88</sup> Their statement claims that Palach's sacrifice cannot be ever and by anyone forgotten. Although they feel co-responsible for even one more young life having to do the same as Palach and that they see Palach as brave patriot who fought for his country and freedom, they do not mention anything about Palach's letter and his demands.

January 24 was in the name of preparation for Palach's funeral which took place a day later. In the newspaper, we can find that the government is afraid of "irresponsible elements causing disorders" during the funeral and it is also mentioned that leaflets insulting the government and the president appeared. Small remark about several unusual suicides which "although having different motives, can be seen somehow tied to this atmosphere", is made. The government is therefore "emphasising the responsibility of workers in the media".<sup>89</sup> The article "How to Continue?"<sup>90</sup> is giving an overview of articles written outside Czechoslovakia. The mood is similar to the previous article covering world newspapers, only now some of them step even further. The Bulgarian media talk about Palach being "a victim of irresponsible propaganda of antisocialist and contra-revolutionary powers" whereas the media in the West discussing the possibility of another Soviet intervention.

January 27 is covering Palach's funeral. In the speeches given, it is once again stressed that young people should not repeat this act and that "this torch (...) is rousing all people of good will to consistently but also deliberately continue the way started with January 1968"<sup>91</sup>. The references to the Prague Spring was very common at that time. The newspaper is however not mentioned again anything about Palach's demands and their fulfilments.

January 27 and 29 is bringing again the reaction of media outside Czechoslovakia. Interesting is that on January 29<sup>92</sup>, the newspaper is mentioning Blanka

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<sup>88</sup> "Sjezd k uctění památky Jana Palacha. (The Congress in Honour of the Memory of Jan Palach)," *Práce*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>89</sup> Vláda České Socialistické Republiky (The Government of the Czech Socialist Republic), "zabezpečit důstojné rozloučení s J. Palachem. Sdělení vlády ČSR veřejnosti (To Ensure the Respectable Funeral of J. Palach. The Message of the Government of Czechoslovakia to the Public)," *Práce*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>90</sup> jh, "Jak nyní dál? (How to Continue?)," *Práce*, January 14, 1969.

<sup>91</sup> "Chceme být hodni oběti (We Want to Be Worth the Sacrifice)," *Práce*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>92</sup> "O Československu v zahraničí (Foreign Countries about Czechoslovakia)," *Práce*, January 29, 1969.

Nacházellová, a girl who committed suicide in Prague – this is done however only through foreign media and there is no separate article about her.

#### 4.1.1.1 Results from the Analysis of the Newspaper Práce

I went through all 24 articles written in Práce during January 1969. Práce covered the event of Palach's self-immolation broadly. Thirteen articles appeared at the title page, showing the importance that Práce gave this topic. The word "tragedy" appears 4 times in headlines and together 28 times inside the articles. When describing the act of Palach, following adjectives are the most used: tragic (8x), heroic (2x), patriotic (1x), terrible (1x) and extreme (1x). See diagram nr. 2.



Diagram nr. 2 visualizing words used together with the word „act“ in Práce

Práce was one of the few that mentioned possible followers of Palach. It happened in the very first article when they said that there may be people prepared to follow Palach. They however did not elaborate on that topic.

Práce focused in many of the article on trying to prevent another similar act – either by quoting politicians, transcribing letters from different organizations or associations or giving a space for reflection essays. In the first articles, the phrase “tragic event” appeared even up to five times in one article. Práce was writing in a style full of understanding and sympathy for young generation but also trying to show that self-immolation is not the way of building the society and democracy. The self-immolation of Jan Palach was showed in the light of desperation and impatience of a young person. Through the world newspapers, it was showed that Palach may have been influenced by another person or by contra-revolutionary powers. In the articles about the situation in Czechoslovakia those suggestion were not mentioned, on the contrary,

Palach was pictured more as a young student who wanted to change the world but unfortunately wanted fast results and thought that change can be done within a short period of time. There were no additional data about his previous life and therefore no space for humanizing the actor. The letter of Palach is mentioned only marginally, as if of no importance. Almost no attention is given to demonstrations or other events which were done in support of Palach and his demands. This puts Palach's self-immolation into isolation.

Práce also published several false information (such as Palach saying to his doctor that he didn't expect his act to finish like this or his supposedly last words to his friends) but this could not be seen by the reporters as they were citing someone else. The decision of not informing the public about demonstrations (such as hunger strikes in Prague, Brno and other cities) however lied upon them.

#### 4.1.2 Rudé Právo (The Red Right)

Rudé Právo wrote 54 articles that were related to the topic of Palach's self-immolation or the topic was mentioned in one of those articles. As we will see later, Rudé Právo did not write more about Jan Palach, I would even argue that less than other newspapers, but the topic of the current political situation caused by Palach, was very often mentioned indirectly. The topic of Jan Palach was introduced on January 17 and was frequent until the end of the month (although – as stated above – often with only passing indirect reference). The peak of the coverage was January 25, when 7 articles were published (see diagram nr. 3).

The first article about Palach was put on the very bottom of second page of January 17 with only very basic information. A day later is Palach already on the title page when the statement of the government is given (same as published in Práce) as well as information about his current state of health. In the article "...Even the Most Critical Generation"<sup>93</sup> the author is denouncing the act of Palach. He says that the young generation experiences from their school desks difficult times and that the loss of life certainty then transfers to extreme acts. This articles implies that Palach's act was naïve (the use of the phrases "school desks" or "nullity") and unacceptable.

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<sup>93</sup> "... i generace nekritičtější (... Even the Most Critical Generation)," *Rudé Právo*, January 18, 1969.

January 20 is bringing the news of Palach's death<sup>94</sup> on the title page together with brief information about his life. It is also stated that during Palach's conversation with his doctor, he mentioned that he does not wish that anyone else would follow. This statement was published in more newspapers as we already saw in *Práce* and will see also later. The speech of dr. Císař, the chairman of the Czech National Council was

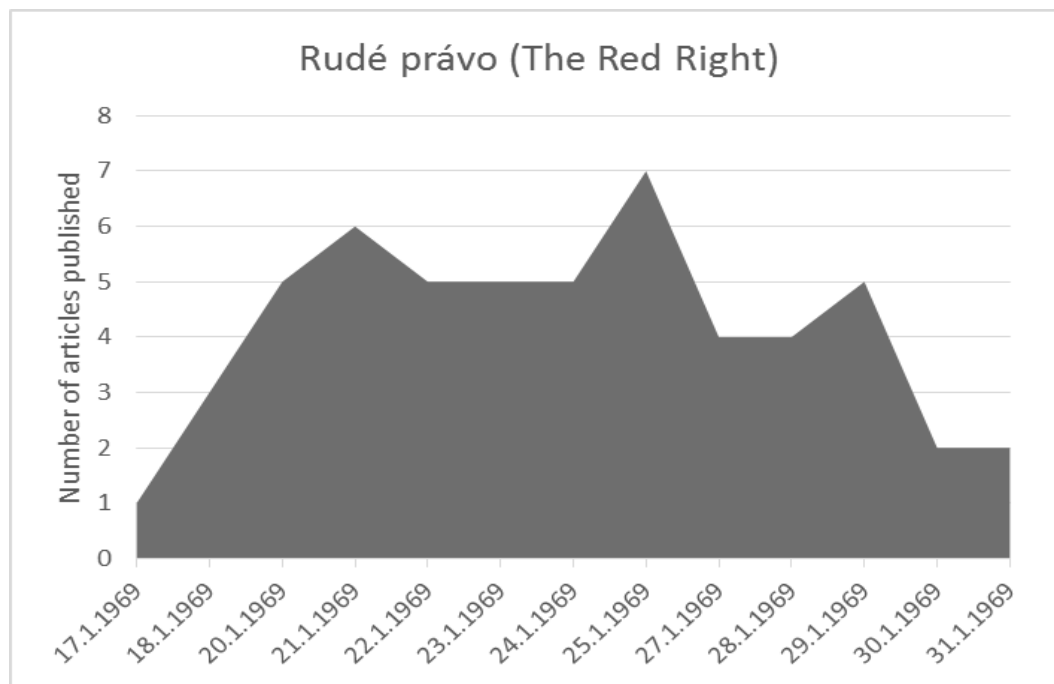


Diagram nr. 3 – Number of published articles related to self-immolations in the newspaper Rudé Právo in January 1969

transcribed. On the second page, we can find a note with the title Food for Thought<sup>95</sup>. Here is the author talking about the importance of patience, believing in the political representatives. He is warning against exaggerating critique against them. He further states that in some cases, events are presented as if there is a danger of abandoning the politics introduced by the Prague Spring. He claims that some people are making it look as if the political representatives are forced into this direction, which is not true. In this article, Palach's name is not mentioned, there is not even anything direct said but reader can guess that the words are meant to calm the situation and to show that the political representatives are following the direction of Prague Spring.

An articles "About the Tragic Act of the Student J. Palach"<sup>96</sup> is bringing several reaction of the political representatives to Palach's act. Beside other things, it is

<sup>94</sup> "Student J. Palach zemřel (Student J. Palach Died)," *Rudé Právo*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>95</sup> "Slova k zamyšlení (Food for Thought)," *Rudé Právo*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>96</sup> "K tragickému činu studenta J. Palach (About the Tragic Act of the Student J. Palach)," *Rudé Právo*, January 20, 1969.

mentioned that “It (the act of Palach) is not the solution to our situation”. Towards Palach’s demands it was said that the censorship was abolished in spring 1968 and that it was never reinstated. The interference into the media is very limited and only in the name of the highest public interest. Second Palach’s demand was about abolishing the publishing of Zprávy. The reaction to that in the article is that Zprávy were already abolished and therefore there is no further action needed. In this way, the reader may get the idea that Palach’s act was pointless because everything he demanded was already fulfilled.

Next day is in the name of Palach’s death and reactions to it. On the front page is an article about the reaction of public in Prague as well as in other cities of Czechoslovakia.<sup>97</sup> Reverences, manifestations as well as hunger strikes are mentioned. The importance of living for the future of socialism is stressed. Large place in the front page is dedicated to the speech of the president. In the middle of the front page, a small article is published where it is written that in connection with Palach’s act, extremist powers are trying to take advantage of this situation and cause actions that would endanger piece and order.<sup>98</sup>

The article entitled “About the Development of the Political Situation”<sup>99</sup> does not mention Palach or any self-immolations. It is however one of the articles that although talking about different things, certain cues are given in the article, which a reader can either knowingly or also inadvertently connect with Palach’s act. This article is a summarizing some of the information from what was said at a meeting from the central board of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

The senior management of the party and of the republic is however all the time put in front of new and further demands, which are many times unworkable from the point of society-wide position. It would be therefore a manifestation of irresponsibility towards our people to make a commitment to their acceptance. (...) All the members of the party, our people and especially the young generation with their deliberate advancement will surely also in the future give a proof of a full political understanding and will contribute with their united efforts towards peaceful and dignified solutions of our problems.

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<sup>97</sup> “Tragickou smrt studenta J. Palacha přijala veřejnost s hlubokým pohnutím (The Tragic Death of the Student J. Palach Was Received by the Public with Deep Emotions,” *Rudé Právo*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>98</sup> “Extremistické Skupiny chtějí ohrožovat klid a pořádek (Extremist Groups Want to Endanger Piece and Order),” *Rudé Právo*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>99</sup> “K vývoji politické situace (About the Development of the Political Situation),” *Rudé Právo*, 1969.

What is the purpose of such article? The Communist Party is sending out an information that they have to deal with a lot of demands and that those demands have to be seen from wider view point and that their highest interest lies with people. Furthermore, they emphasizes that they work on finding solutions and that they need people to act with patience and trust in them. One of the interpretation of this article may be that Palach's letter is only one of many other demands that the government/party have to deal with. In order to do a good work, they have to see everything from wider point of view and people therefore should trust them when they do not meet those demands – as it is a result of a careful consideration.

There are many more article throughout this issue which encourage people to trust politicians and towards politicians/party members/unions etc. it is emphasized the essentiality of being united and working towards calming the current situation.<sup>100</sup>

The second page of the January 21<sup>st</sup> issue, is next to the small article about the self-immolation of Josef Hlavatý (only information about the act with an information that motive is at that moment unknown), also bringing a note entitled “We All Are Responsible”. The author is pointing out that the leaders of the state are acting responsibly, calmly and constructively. “It is too soon for the maximally sensible and constructive stances which are demonstrated by the leaders of all political bodies during solving this tense situation to be appreciated.” Rudé Právo took the advantage of the situation of Palach and used it for promoting the leaders of the party/government etc. Throughout many articles – not only in Rudé Právo but here it stands out – we can see the more or less clear message – “our leaders are doing their best, they are having our future in mind and they are handling the situation. People should be calm and trust them and if they do, the future will be bright”. We can see clearly here how the media in general were collaborating with the party and especially in Rudé Právo, there is almost no page were there would not be at least a small reference to the good work of the party/government etc.

The eleventh page of Rudé Právo on January 21 is bringing a brief article mentioning a Hungarian student self-immolating himself. The motives were (according to the article) unknown. We now know that this was Sándor Bauer who, although only 16, had a strong interest in Hungarian nationalism and had strong (negative) feelings

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<sup>100</sup> For example: “Sekretariát ÚV KSČ jednal o lednovém plénu (The Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Talks about the January's Plenum),” *Rudé Právo*, January 21, 1969.



about the Soviet Army. In his letter which he wrote before he self-immolated himself, he wrote “I wish to live on, but the nation and the proletariat need my body, burnt to coal“. He also mentioned „a Czech brother who did the same“. <sup>101</sup>

The most interesting article of January 22<sup>nd</sup>, is placed on the second page and is covering the press conference of the minister of interior. <sup>102</sup> The minister claims that the only aim of the State Security is to “prevent repetition of similar tragedies”. He also expressed discontent with friends and colleagues of Palach who do not demonstrate understanding for the work of the State Security and do not cooperate with them. The press is also informed that the security was increased in places where other self-immolations may occur. As well as in *Práce*, *Rudé Právo* is speculating on motives of Hlavatý. Unlike *Práce*, the stress is not so much on alcoholism but more on unresolved issues between him, his wife and children.

*Rudé Právo* is also bringing reactions of academia and artists on the current situation. <sup>103</sup> An article full of showing respect and paying tribute to Palach is ended with an appeal to all people to “fully support leaders of state and the Communist Party in their efforts to continue despite all obstacles accumulated by agitators (...) and unknown elements”.

The seventh page contains information about foreign countries. The very first to catch the eye from the reader is the reflection of Czechoslovak situation in foreign newspapers. <sup>104</sup> It seems that each country has its own point of view on the situation – from being afraid of another Soviet intervention, reporting of demonstrations to commenting on the president’s speech from Monday.

The title page on January 23 shows that the *Rudé Právo* is still receiving a lot of (positive) reactions to the speech of president – claiming to have hundreds of letters, telegrams or resolutions. <sup>105</sup> The faith and trust is showed also in a commentary written by Jan Lipavský where he fully supports the Communist Party and is reminding the readers of recent speeches by the political leaders and explaining on those examples that

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<sup>101</sup> Petr Blažek, “Sándor Bauer,” Multimedia Project, *Jan Palach*, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.janpalach.cz/en/default/zive-pochodne/bauer>.

<sup>102</sup> “Ministr vnitra České Socialistické Republiky k tragickým událostem v Praze a v Plzni (The Minister of Interior of the Czech Socialist Republic about the Tragic Events in Prague and Plzen),” *Rudé Právo*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>103</sup> “Vědecká a umělecká fronta k současné situaci (The Academia and Artists about the Current Situation),” *Rudé Právo*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>104</sup> “Zahraniční tisk komentuje poslední pražské události (The Foreign Press Comments on Latest Prague Development),” *Rudé Právo*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>105</sup> “Jedině z tvořivé práce vyroste lepší budoucnost lidu této země (Only from Creative Work Will the Future of the People of Our Country Grow),” *Rudé Právo*, January 23, 1969.

the Communist party is open for dialog, have the people's best interest in minds and only when people will fully support them, they can bring the better future to Czechoslovakia.<sup>106</sup>

The seventh page is traditionally bringing news about reactions to current situation in Czechoslovakia abroad. *Rudé Právo* is choosing quotes that say that the government has full trust from the people or that in Prague there are some antisocialist disturbances with the connection of Palach's death but numerous citizens are against this.<sup>107</sup>

January 24 is on the first two pages bringing 4 articles that mention topics that we are interested in but all are remarks are brief and informative (paying tribute, restricted transport in Prague during Palach's funeral etc.). More detailed information can be found through the reactions from abroad, again on the seventh page.<sup>108</sup> *Rudé Právo* is warning here that understandably the reactions are of all characters, some of them far from truth and misrepresented, others are closer or even the same as of the opinions of the public and political leaders. Within the article we can read that some newspapers are afraid that the current crisis in Czechoslovakia may become a world crisis and are calling for solution. Bulgarian newspaper is describing Palach's act as "tragic, unreasonable" and he himself is said to be a "victim of irresponsible propaganda of antisocialist and contra revolutionary powers". In other newspapers, Czechoslovak political leaders are quoted: "what the Communist party is wishing, that is a wish of the people of our country. With other words, the politics of the party is a politics that the great majority of people of our country agree with – workers, farmers, intelligence, young generation, Czechs, Slovaks and members of other nationalities". University students of Groningen, Vienna and Copenhagen are mentioned as they paid a tribute to Palach.

On January 25, the title page is partly dedicated to the government's evaluation of current situation.<sup>109</sup>

Although majority of citizens understand and support the efforts of the government, tendency to the anarchy accompanied also with antisocialist manifestations are disturbing political and economic stabilization of the

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<sup>106</sup> Jan Lipavský, "Možnosti rozumu (The Possibilities of Reason)," *Rudé Právo*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>107</sup> "O situaci v Československu (About the Situation in Czechoslovakia)," *Rudé Právo*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>108</sup> "V popředí zájmu zahraničního tisku (At the Forefront of the Foreign Press)," *Rudé Právo*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>109</sup> "Rozhodná opatření pro klid a bezpečnosti. Vláda ČSSR k současné politické situaci (Decisive Arrangements for Peace and Safety. The Czechoslovak Government About the Current Political Situation)," *Rudé Právo*, January 25, 1969.

country. From side of the extremist groups is carried out constant pressure on the government and its bodies in the form of ultimate and at the same time objectively impossible to fulfil demands.

The whole article is in the spirit of above mentioned lines. Second page is among others bringing small note entitled “We Will Not Allow to Discredit the Student Community”<sup>110</sup>. This article is written in the name of cultural workers, scientists, artists and journalists (though there is no signature or showed who specifically wrote it) and is calling for calm funeral without disturbances and saying that Palach’s funeral should be an example of how the people want to lead the fight in the name of Palach’s spirit (and his demands). The question may be if Palach, who wanted people to go into an indefinite a general strike, would prefer a calm funeral without further action.

Also other articles talk about the funeral of Jan Palach, emphasising the large number of people coming already before the funeral to say goodbye from all social classes as well as the calm atmosphere without disturbance. Article about the foreign press is stressing the importance of closer tight with the communist party which is the only solution for current political situation. Another argument is that only because of the “deliberate and considerate acts of the Czechoslovak government” the situation did not escalate. The article is mentioning both press from East or Communist press from the West.<sup>111</sup>

Also in Saturday’s Insert, there is a small note about Jan Palach.<sup>112</sup> It includes emotions (which we would otherwise not find in *Rudé Právo*) but is also calling for deliberation in people’s further actions.

Monday’s issue is focused on Saturday’s funeral, commenting on the large number of people who came (about one hundred thousand) as well as on the calm atmosphere without riots.<sup>113</sup>

Second page is mentioning two other suicides – first is a very short message of the death of Josef Hlavatý, the second one is a longer note on Blanka Nacházelová<sup>114</sup>. She was an 18 year old student who committed a suicide with the help of a coal gas. In her suicide note, she mentioned Jan Palach saying: “(...) I didn’t have the huge courage

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<sup>110</sup> “Nedovolíme zdiskreditovat studentskou obec (We Will Not Allow to Discredit the Student Community),” *Rudé Právo*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>111</sup> “Zahraniční deníky o situaci v Československu (Foreign Daily Newspapers about the Situation in Czechoslovakia),” *Rudé Právo*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>112</sup> “Při sobotě (On Saturday),” *Rudé Právo - Haló Sobota*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>113</sup> “V sobotu byl pohřben J. Palach (Jan Palach Was Buried on Saturday),” *Rudé Právo*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>114</sup> “K sebevraždě svítiplynem (About the Suicide by Coal Gas),” *Rudé Právo*, January 27, 1969.

as J. Palach. Therefore I am dying in this way, it is much easier but it is cruel, I want to live so much! (...) I don't want to but I have to! (...)" The articles further stating that the motivation of this act is unclear and if we want to prevent any other speculation and myths, the State Security has to investigate it properly.

Third page is focused on the foreign press where an article about expressing support of many people and institutes for the Communist party and the government in Czechoslovakia is published.<sup>115</sup> The importance of calming the current situation is emphasized with the argument that the government need better atmosphere to fulfil their promises of continuing with the reformist politics from the first half of 1968. In a similar direction goes an article which describes the articles published in the foreign press.<sup>116</sup> It is mentioned here that the press although on Saturday the press was mainly describing concerns about the situation in Czechoslovakia and was afraid that it may escalate, on Sunday they praise the calm situation during Palach's funeral. Larger stir is caused by the suicide of another student Blanka Nacházlová whose act caused many questions – including whether she was a victim of a terror or if she was forced to commit suicide. *Rudé Právo* is however evaluating the next articles to be more noteworthy than those about Blanka Nacházlová. The more noteworthy articles include mentioning a possible campaign against the process of normalization and supporting antisocialist elements. The *Washington Post* is also saying that the current situation is “not pressed by any serious censorship” and should not allow the political leaders to be “pushed by the radical powers to return to the methods before January (1968)”. The last quoted article is a very valuable one for the *Rudé Právo*. It says that there is no censorship in the Czechoslovakia – which of course devaluates the work of people who wants to fight for Palach's demands (the main being abolition of censorship). Another hint of “the government wants the best” is in the second quote where it says that the radical powers want actually to go back before the Prague Spring! This of course is not true as it was the government who wanted to “normalize” the situation and return it before 1968. The people however were constantly reminded that the government is working hard on keeping the political situation in the lines of Prague Spring. However, the government was under a great influence of the Soviet Union which of course had no

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<sup>115</sup> “Plná podpora výzvě státníků (Full Support for the Call of the Statesmen),” *Rudé Právo*, January 27, 1969

<sup>116</sup> “Zahraniční tisk kvituje přechod od napětí k uklidňování situace v Československu (Foreign Press Acknowledges the Change from Tension to Calming Situation in the Czechoslovakia),” *Rudé Právo*, January 27, 1969.

interest in having a Czechoslovakia which would be going through reforms as it was doing under the first half of 1968. An argument for this is the invasion in 1968 – if the Soviet Union who approved of the government which was in power in January 1969 supported Prague Spring reforms, they would not invade Czechoslovakia in the first place. However, especially (but not only) *Rudé Právo* was publishing numerous articles in support of the government working hard on following the political model of Prague Spring.

Also the articles in the rest of the January is in similar mood. In the main role is government who is trying to follow the politics after January 1968 but this is complicated by the work of antisocialist powers. Apart from this line of articles, we can also find a note about another young (17 years old) student who tried to self-immolate himself.<sup>117</sup> The motives are not mentioned.

The reactions of the foreign press are on January 28 focused on praising the calm situation during the funeral of Palach<sup>118</sup>, whereas a day later it is writing about the difficult work of the government who has to fight the extremist powers in Czechoslovakia<sup>119</sup>. The foreign press a day later is supposed to judge the situation in Czechoslovakia as slowly calming down.<sup>120</sup> Whereas the following day reveals among other things that *Neues Deutschland* writes in an article entitled “Bonn Is Involved in the Game” that “the suicide of Jan Palach is a result of an obvious consequence of intrigues prepared by one western country, especially the closest neighbour of Czechoslovakia.”<sup>121</sup>

#### 4.1.2.1 Results from the Analysis of the Newspaper *Rudé Právo*

As already mentioned earlier, *Rudé Právo* was the most important newspaper in Czechoslovakia. As an official newspaper of the Communist Party, it had the largest number of copies each day and was also available in many factories or other places for free. We can therefore assume that *Rudé Právo* was the most influential of all newspapers analysed in this thesis.

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<sup>117</sup> “Z černé kroniky (From the Black Chronicle),” *Rudé Právo*, January 28, 1969.

<sup>118</sup> “O posledních událostech u nás (About the Last Events Here),” *Rudé Právo*, January 28, 1969.

<sup>119</sup> “Československo stále v popředí zahraničního zájmu (Czechoslovakia Still in the Forefront of Foreign Interest),” *Rudé Právo*, January 29, 1969.

<sup>120</sup> “ve znamení uklidňující se situace (In the Name of Calming Situation),” *Rudé Právo*, January 30, 1969.

<sup>121</sup> “Stálá pozornost Československu (The Permanent Attention to Czechoslovakia),” *Rudé Právo*, January 31, 1969.

I have chosen 54 articles for my analysis – this included articles where Palach or other suicides were mentioned as well as demonstrations or manifestations or general description of the political situation in Czechoslovakia. Out of those 54, only 24 are actually focused more or less on Palach or mentioning his name. 7 of those have Palach’s name in headline.

When describing the act of Palach, the adjective “tragic” was used 19x. Other adjectives were used only once, see diagram nr. 4.



Diagram nr.4 visualizing words used together with the word „act“ in Rudé Právo

The analysis of this paper showed that Rudé Právo put the government in the centre of this cause and not Palach. The remarks of the government was always positive as well as the described mood of the public towards to government. There were no negative notes about the work of the political leaders. It was also hinted that the government has a better overview of the possible consequences and therefore the public should trust them fully.

As for Palach, his act was mentioned and described. However, not so much place was given to humanizing him. Articles about Palach were more focus on facts and were usually brief. Also visual elements were restricted, only three pictures related to Palach were published in January 69 – namely once a portrait of Palach and twice a photograph from his funeral. Majority of the articles were also published inside the issue, usually only one or two articles were on the title page (with the exception of January 21<sup>st</sup> – where 3 articles were put on the title page). The word “tragic” appeared 3 times in the headlines and 15 times the word (including also the word “tragedy”) was inside the article.

Rudé Právo did not published Palach's letter, nor did they say what exactly his demands are or what will happen if they are not met.

Through the reaction from the foreign press, an idea of Palach's act not being sincere is appearing: "the suicide of Jan Palach is a result of an obvious consequence of intrigues prepared by one western country, especially the closest neighbour of Czechoslovakia."<sup>122</sup> or "victim of irresponsible propaganda of antisocialist and contra revolutionary powers"<sup>123</sup>.

Rudé Právo is portraying Palach's act as possibly unnecessary as the government presented that his demands (which however were not explained in Rudé Právo or even mentioned) were fulfilled already before his self-immolation, claiming that there is no censorship in Czechoslovakia and that Zprávy were never allowed and therefore there is nothing the government can do. Furthermore, the political leaders also mentioned that they have to deal with many demands (implying that Palach is one of many, the only difference is that people know about him) and it is important to assess all of them from a wider point of view.

The most repeated argument is that people has to trust the government and have to be patient. In 24 articles this motive or similar one appeared! This means that more than 50% of analysed articles mentioned that in order to achieve better future, people should trust and support the government and work together with it on solving the situation. To strengthen this argument, letters and statements from various people, organization or trade unions are published with their expression of full support for the government.

The events in support of Palach are mentioned several time – but more as a paying respect than a real demonstration – with the exception of articles where it is stated that the State Security had to intervene and stop the extremist powers from disturbing the piece – for example in articles on January 20<sup>th</sup><sup>124</sup> or January 25<sup>th</sup><sup>125</sup>.

The analysis showed that Rudé Právo was publishing articles which were in line with the interest of the Communist Party – and that was to try to prevent any further increase of opposition, look at Palach as if with lenient smile which one shows to a

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> "V popředí zájmu zahraničního tisku (At the Forefront of the Foreign Press)."

<sup>124</sup> "Sdělení vládních orgánů ČSR (Message from the Government Bodies of Czechoslovakia)," *Rudé Právo*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>125</sup> "Oznámení ministerstva vnitra (Announcement of the Minister of Interior)," *Rudé Právo*, January 25, 1969.

young, impatient student who wanted to change the world but – as it is explained in the newspaper – this is not the right way to do it. *Rudé Právo* used Palach’s event to show the wide support of people to the government and to emphasize the importance of it.

#### 4.1.3 Mladá Fronta (The Youth Front)

Mladá Fronta wrote 37 articles, starting on January 17 and ending on January 29. Most of the articles were published between January 21 and January 25 (see diagram 5).

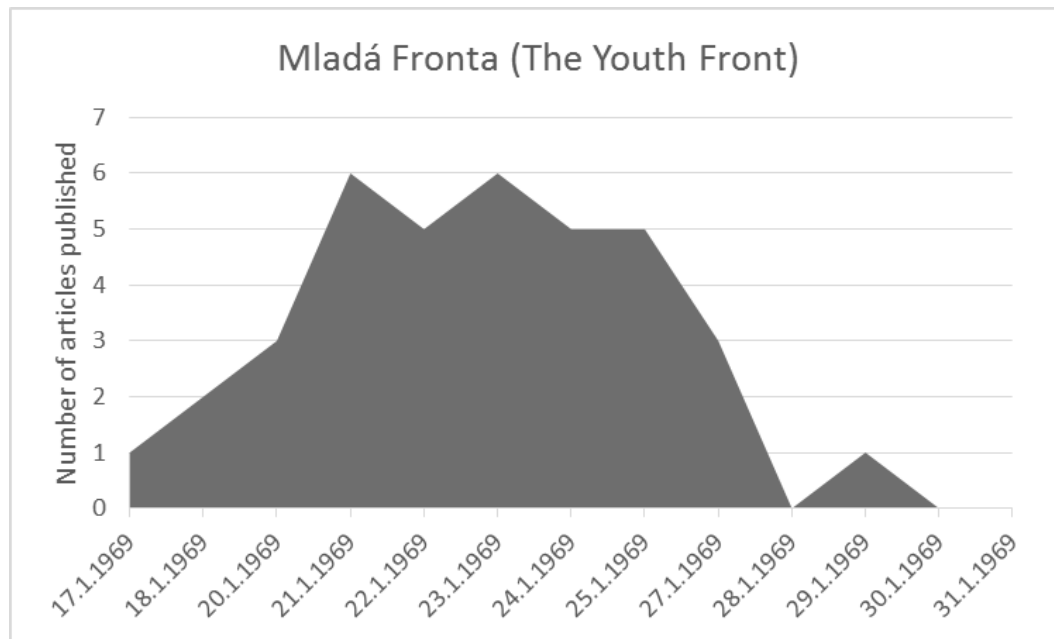


Diagram nr. 5 – Number of published articles related to self-immolations in the newspaper Mladá Fronta in January 1969

Mladá Fronta started the series of articles devoted to Jan Palach, his act and reaction to it with a brief message on January 17 about Palach’s act, not bringing any further information or speculation. The issue informs about Palach’s current health condition and is bringing another article entitled “About the Tragic Act of Jan Palach”<sup>126</sup>. The word “tragic” appears five times in this article. The seriousness of this act is showed also on the information that three political leaders went to the hospital to inform themselves about the condition Palach is in. It brings also more details about Palach’s act. However, Palach’s letter and his demands are not mentioned and the only indication of this being more than an act of a normal suicide is suggested by the sentence “(Palach’s act) will have to be assessed in the broadest political aspects” and that the government will be dealing with it within next few hours.

<sup>126</sup> “O tragickém činu Jana Palach (About the Tragic Act of Jan Palach),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 18, 1969.



January 20 and *Mladá Fronta* is informing about Palach's death. The article "The Tragic Act of Jan Palach at the Forefront. No One Can Stay Indifferent" is bringing the fact that Palach's act had definitely a political motive and that it was "a protest against the situation in which our nations are caught in". His letter as well as his demands are mentioned with the important information about followers if his requests are not met. Further in the article, the speech of dr. Havelka, the minister for press and information is mentioned in which he claims that censorship was cancelled and never renewed and that "Zprávy" were never allowed.

Different statements are published in this article, the repeating opinion is that Palach was morally pure, brave and patriotic. Each time this or similar information is mentioned, it is also stress how important is to live in order to fight for the better future.

Zbyněk Vokrouhlický<sup>127</sup> wrote an essay entitled "The Courage to Live and Fight"<sup>128</sup>. The author is expressing shock from Palach's act but is denouncing it as not a realistic solution from the situation. Most of the article is dedicated to discourage young people from following Palach and convincing them that they have to find the courage to "live, fight and work".

"We Will Stay Loyal"<sup>129</sup> is a title of an article published on January 21, in which the reverence procession in Prague is described. This was organized by the students but many workers joined and also had speeches. The article follows with informations about other demonstrations done in support of Palach's demands – in Brno, Ostrava and České Budějovice. Another article on this day<sup>130</sup> is bringing statements of young working people, University students from Czech and Slovak part of Czechoslovakia as well as from factories and various organizations and institutions. They all are united in support of Palach's demands and some of them are call for democratic elections within the shortest possible time.

The message of the University Students Union of Bohemia and Moravia is published separately in a longer article. The students call for organized and united action done by students and workers. They are also calling for early elections and in the end promising Palach that they will never betray his legacy.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Former politician, supporter of Prague Spring, from 1969 removed from political life.

<sup>128</sup> "Odvalu žít a bojovat (The Courage to Live and Fight)," *Mladá Fronta*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>129</sup> "Věrní zůstaneme (We Will Stay Loyal)," *Mladá Fronta*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>130</sup> "V duchu odkazu Palacha (In the Spirit of Palach's Legacy)," *Mladá Fronta*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>131</sup> "Poselství svazu Vysokoškolského studentstva Čech a Moravy (The Message of the University Students Union of Bohemia and Moravia)," *Mladá Fronta*, January 21, 1969.

Palach's demands are also supported by a group of University students on a hunger strike in Brno. The newspaper is also bringing their names as well as their call for democratic election.<sup>132</sup>

Mladá Fronta is also bringing a news that the government met, discussed the current situation and agreeing that it is necessary to do a further analysis of the causes and connections of this situation. This will be than done on a next meeting which will be held in the nearest days.<sup>133</sup>

A very interesting article written by the redaction of Mladý Svět (Young World – a popular magazine for youth) was published in Mladá Fronta. It says that in December 1968, the redaction of Mladý Svět received a letter written by five fifteen year old boys (the letter was however not signed) who wrote that because of the humiliation, censorship and pressure, they want to self-immolate themselves. The redaction answered publically in the magazine explaining that nothing is lost so far.<sup>134</sup>

January 22<sup>nd</sup> is bringing information about Josef Hlavatý whose motives are described as “unsettled personal life and precarious family situation”.<sup>135</sup>

Article entitled “Discord between Emotion and Reason”<sup>136</sup> talks about the moral obligations that Palach with his act put on everyone. The author is however stressing the patience as steps can be done only step by step and pointing out that demands such as cancelling censorship or call for an election is much dependent on powers outside Czechoslovakia. Elections are also mentioned in a statement from an Organization of Children and Youth.<sup>137</sup> The call for launching the work on the election law is put next to other demands, namely the discontinuation of the radio Vltava and Zprávy. “Brno to Jan Palach”<sup>138</sup> is describing various events in support of Jan Palach – hunger strikes, walk from Brno to Prague or Reley from Brno to Prague. Large support from the public institution as well as from people in general is expressed here also.

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<sup>132</sup> “Hladovka v Brně pokračuje (The Hunger Strikes in Brno Continues),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>133</sup> “Z jednání vlády ČSR (From the Meeting of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>134</sup> Editors of Mladý Svět, “K oběti Jana Palacha (About the Sacrifice of Jan Palach),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>135</sup> “Nad dvěma tragédiemi (Over Two Tragedies),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>136</sup> “Svár citu s rozumem (Discord between Emotion and Reason),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>137</sup> “Návrhy rady sdružení Organizací dětí a mládeže (Proposals of the Board of the Organization of Children and Youth),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>138</sup> “Brno Janu Palachovi (Brno to Jan Palach),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 22, 1969.

January 23 brings a statement of radio journalists.<sup>139</sup> Here, they first try to get on the same wave as the readers by saying that “majority of those signed under this statement you know (...) because we didn’t stop talking to you even in the most agitated and most difficult days (August 1968)”. Later they express their loyalty towards the current government. According to this statement there are two possible solutions. One is the unpopular and difficult – meaning everyday hard work of everyone with the current government in lead. The second one would find place if that government would not want to continue work face in face of elemental events. In that case, a new government would take place but they would probably do the opposite of what people from this country want. According to this article, the only thing that the government is asking is piece and that what also the signatories are asking. Under this statement is also a small note that the communists working at Mladá Fronta agree with this article.

“Busy Wednesday in Brno”<sup>140</sup> talks about another self-immolation which happened in Brno – Miroslav Malinka, worker, self-immolated himself – the motives are according to quoted father “fear from prosecution” and it has nothing to do with Jan Palach. The truth is however, that he self-immolated himself next to the catafalque of Jan Palach – as it is also written in the article. His real motives however are not known and historian do not usually consider him as a follower of Jan Palach with clear political motives.<sup>141</sup> Article further quotes lieutenant coronel, a member of the State Security, who evaluated the situation in Brno as “very tense”. It is mentioned that leaflets against the government are distributed in Brno and student are taking part in several actions in support of Palach’s demands.

The most interesting article this day and with its own way also exceptional is “That was Jan”<sup>142</sup>. This article is of the only kind among all analysed newspapers. Its writer visits Palach’s friends and teachers and describes his visit, introducing Jan Palach as a person.

Shy, courageous, diffident and brave, with knowledge that others can only dream of (...) so different from all people around (...) he trusted everyone (...) he trusted them in 100%. He loved Masaryk, also Marx, Viktor Hugo and Michelangelo. Distinctive personalities. He wanted to understand the present and to come in useful. (...) He liked life, he had a gentle humour.

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<sup>139</sup> “Hlas publicistů - Plnou důvěru vládě (Voice of Journalists - Full Support for the Government),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>140</sup> “Rušná středa v Brně (Busy Wednesday in Brno),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>141</sup> At least he is not mentioned among the most important here: <http://www.janpalach.cz/cs/default/zive-pochodne>

<sup>142</sup> “Takový byl Jan (That Was Jan),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 23, 1969.

(...) What he did was a realistically considered act. (...) In August (1968) he was everywhere (...) Taking picture, talking with those who came without invitation (...) He was very sensitive to injustice. He spoke up for everyone, who was in the right, even against the majority. (...) He always said – if I want to achieve something, I cannot achieve it at the detriment of others and cause pain to others, even if it is my worst enemy. He tried not to oppose evil with violence.

This is a short digest from a long article which for the first time is presenting Jan Palach as a person with friends, feeling and also past. Personalization of Palach gives the people who wanted to support him even more followers reading that Palach did not do it spontaneously but that he was a thinking man who was also active before helps tremendously.

January 24 is bringing news of yet another self-immolation – Josef Jaroš, motives are described as “family problems and disagreement with his step father”. He survived the act of self-immolation and claimed that he didn’t have political motives.<sup>143</sup> *Mladá Fronta* is also paying attention to the reactions of the foreign press.<sup>144</sup> The fear of possibility of the tension spreading from Czechoslovakia also to other states is expressed together with a real power of the Czechoslovak people.

On January 25<sup>th</sup>, *Mladá Fronta* talks about several manifestations which were organized in order to pay tribute to Palach. This does not go only for Czechoslovakia but also for other countries – e.g. France and Italy.<sup>145</sup> Italy is mentioned also in another article which talks about a self-immolation of Enrico Autagnotti in Italy.<sup>146</sup> Going back to Czechoslovakia, *Mladá Fronta* is claiming to receive letters that show respect to Jan Palach and warn against following him.<sup>147</sup> An article also describes how people were saying goodbye to Palach in Prague on his funeral.<sup>148</sup> A Saturday issue has also a place for a column of a Czechoslovak famous actor Rudolf Hrušínský.<sup>149</sup> His emotive writing is expressing the shock that went over Czechoslovakia after hearing about Palach. “Man! Live! This is a terrible, tragic mistake. It is not you, who should have burn

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<sup>143</sup> “Nepodařený pokus o sebeupálení (Unsuccessful Attempt of Self-Immolation),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>144</sup> “Napsali o nás (Written about Us),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>145</sup> “Svět Uctí Památku J. Palacha (World Will Pay Tribute to J. Palach),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>146</sup> “Tragédie v Itálii - další upálení (Tragedy in Italy - Another Self-Immolation),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>147</sup> “Pietní slavnost v Brně (Reverential Ceremonial in Brno),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>148</sup> “Tiše, se slzami v očích (Silently, with Tears in the Eyes),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>149</sup> Rudolf Hrušínský, “Sloupek pro Rudolfa Hrušínského (Column for Rudolf Hrušínský),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 25, 1969.

himself. It is not you, who is living in vain. It is not you! My dear man, live. Live also this life and believe, as I believe that spring will come.” Rudolf Hrušínský is ending with a sarcastic note that “At 3:30pm, Jan Palach left. That night the radio Vltava was playing for their few friends in Czechoslovakia ballroom music”.<sup>150</sup>

On January 27, more articles describing funeral and other actions to pay tribute to Jan Palach are published. On those occasions, his act is called to be: “a great act of genuine patriotism, high moral courage and nobility”.<sup>151</sup>

#### 4.1.3.1 Results from the Analysis of the Newspaper Mladá Fronta

Already from going through the summary above, we can see that Mladá Fronta had yet completely another approach to Palach’s event and situation that resulted from that.

Although Mladá Fronta titled the articles only 4 times with the word “tragic” (once it belonged to the self-immolation in Italy), they certainly showed a phantasy when coming up with their titles, e.g. The Courage to Live and Fight; Discord between Emotion and Reason; Silently, with Tears in the Eyes or Sadness has a Human Face. Mladá Fronta was trying to catch the reader’s attention. Mladá Fronta went probably furthest when it comes to use the potential of the story – they had personal stories and memories from friends and teachers, making Jan Palach closer to an average person. The way how Palach was described – which was always in positive tones, shows a support and puts him into a heroic position. Mladá Fronta also published a statement from Mladý Svět where young people wrote that they will self-immolate themselves. This implies that Palach is not the only person who thought about this and actually more young people are ready to sacrifice their lives or kill themselves because of the current political situation.

From 10 days that Mladá Fronta is covering these events, 9 had at least one article on the title page. Together 23 articles out of 37 were on the title page. This suggests the great importance of Palach’s and related events that Mladá Fronta gave to it.

Mladá Fronta is publishing news also about other protests or reactions to Palach’s act. 15 articles out of 37 is informing about different acts done in support of

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<sup>150</sup> Radio Vltava was a propagandist radio at that time.

<sup>151</sup> “Rozloučení S Janem Palachem. Tvůj odkaz naplníme (Goodbye to Jan Palach. We Will Fulfil Your Legacy),” *Mladá Fronta*, January 27, 1969.

Palach's demands. It covers events not only in Prague and Brno but also in Ostrava, České Budějovice as well as fragmentally from Europe.

When describing the act of Palach, the adjective "tragic" was used 10, heroic (3x), political (2x) and desperate (2x). Other adjectives were used only once, see diagram nr. 6.



Diagram nr. 6 visualizing words used together with the word „act“ in Mladá Fronta

Mladá Fronta did not publish whole Palach's letter but they extracted the most important information (demands and that if they are not met, another person will self-immolated himself). However, nothing about a general strike that Palach wrote about, is mentioned.<sup>152</sup> Other demands, such as early elections, are several times repeated in different articles.

The important position of the Soviet Union in the interior politics of Czechoslovakia is mentioned indirectly (by saying that there are outside factors that decide about Czechoslovak inside situation) and it is said that because of it, it is not only Czechoslovak government who decides about censorship or earlier election.<sup>153</sup>

The column of Rudolf Hrušínský is very outspoken. Rudolf Hrušínský, Czechoslovak famous actor, was one of the supporters of Prague Spring and signer of The Two Thousand Words manifestation<sup>154</sup> and from early 1970s he could not continue with his work due to the normalization. His column is seemingly describing the four seasons of the year, however, everyone knew that he is describing the current political

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<sup>152</sup> "Tragický čin Jana Palacha v popředí zájmu. Nikdo nemůže zůstat lhostejný (The Tragic Act of Jan Palach at the Forefront. No One Can Stay Indifferent)," *Mladá Fronta*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>153</sup> "Svár citu s rozumem (Discord between Emotion and Reason)."

<sup>154</sup> The Two Thousand Words manifestation was a document written in the middle of Prague Spring by Lubomír Vaculík and it supported the reforms that were already implemented and encouraged their fulfilment. It supported further democratization of the society. During the normalization period it was however seen as a contra revolutionary document.

situation. Hrušínský was optimistic here, claiming that the sun will come and it will be warm and the grass will be green, although others say that it will not happen. His P.S. “At 3:30pm, Jan Palach left. That night the radio Vltava was playing for their few friends in Czechoslovakia ballroom music” is however a clear poke for the political leaders who were trying to normalize the situation.<sup>155</sup>

Mladá Fronta used Palach’s event to present several angles. Throughout the 37 articles, we could find information about Palach’s act, his demands, reactions from the political leaders as well as students and workers. Mladá Fronta gave a place to people who supported the government as it was as well as presented new demands from students and workers. However, Mladá Fronta still withdrew some important information – such as what Palach wanted from people if his demands are not met – and that was a general strike. Although demonstrations were presented, not as widely as they were actually happening, the focus was on student on hunger strike or running from Brno to Prague – which was always only a very small group. There was no clear support for demonstration or fulfilling Palach’s demands visible.

#### 4.1.4 Lidová Demokracie (People’s Democracy)

Lidová Demokracie covered the event of Jan Palach and related topics broadly but within the shortest time span of all newspapers. The first article appeared on January 18 and last on January 28. The largest amount of articles (11) was published already on January 20 (see diagram nr. 7). There were forty articles all together within January 1969.

Lidová Demokracie is one of the two newspapers (together with Svobodné Slovo) that brings the news of Palach one day later, on January 18<sup>156</sup>. Throughout the article, the word “tragic” is used five times to describe the act of Jan Palach. As in other newspapers, the description of Palach’s act is given together with his health condition. It is also mentioned that this act has to be considered on the political level. The letter of Palach is mentioned together with a claim that he self-immolated himself in order to “express his dissent to the spreading of “Zprávy” and censorship”. It is further stated that the students and the broader public should not be denied information. The speech of

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<sup>155</sup> Radio Vltava was a propagandist radio at that time.

<sup>156</sup> “O tragickém činu studenta Jana Palacha (About the Tragic Act of Student Jan Palach),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 18, 1969.

the national artist, poet Jaroslav Seifert was transcribed from the TV news from previous evening (more in the section of analysis of the television).

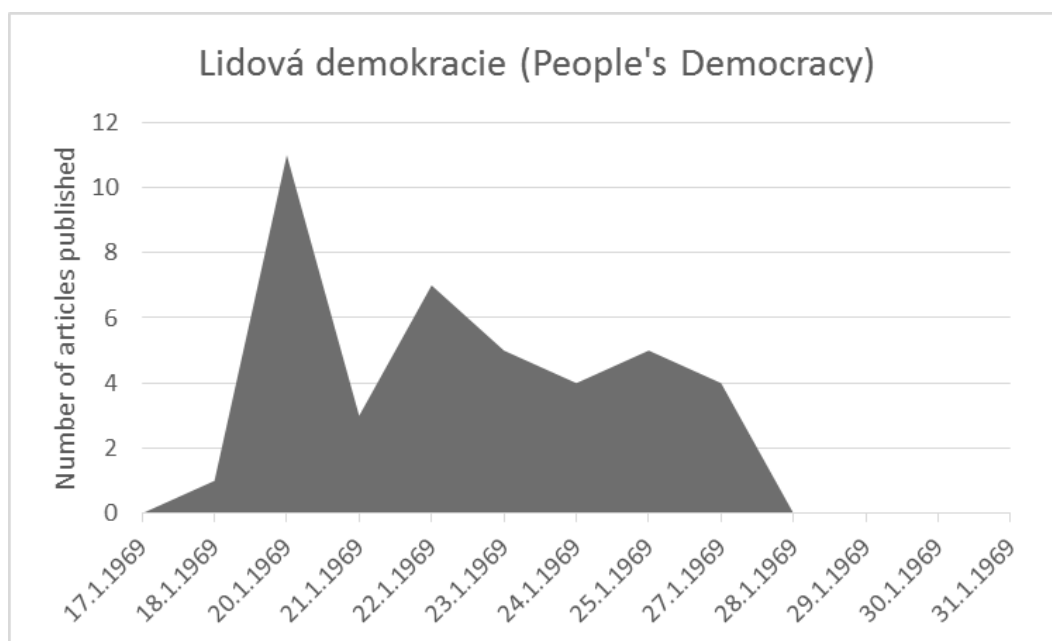


Diagram nr. 7 – Number of published articles related to self-immolations in the newspaper Lidová Demokracie in January 1969

January 20 is starting with the message of the death of Jan Palach, bringing also a short information about Palach’s personal life and characteristics.<sup>157</sup>

Other articles published on January 20, can be divided into three categories – statements of political leaders or students, personal pleas for staying alive and condolences. The statements<sup>158</sup> are informing about a meeting between political leaders and students addressing the current situation; assurance of understanding the goals and demands of Palach as well as refusing a possible disparagement and downplaying of Palach’s act. It is also mentioned that students are on hunger strike in support of Palach’s act and that more events are to be expected. The board of the central committee of the Czech Socialist People’s Party (ČSL) is pointing out that the act of Palach came at time when “our government concentrates on overcoming the difficult political, social and economic situation and its effort is directed at calming down the agitated level of our political life”. This may indicate that they believe that Palach’s act was unnecessary

<sup>157</sup> “Z lásky k lidu a svobodě (From the Love to People and Freedom),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>158</sup> “Ohlasy tragické doby (Reaction to the Tragic Times),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969; “Stanovisko a Požadavky Studentů (Statement and Demands of Students),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969; “Postoj předsednictva ÚV ČSL (Stance of the Board of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Socialist People’s Party),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969.



and is only deflecting the government of continuing the work on it as they have to now deal with this situation.

Two articles are also emphasising the importance of Christianity.<sup>159</sup> Both those articles are paying tribute to Palach but they cannot agree with it, claiming that not even the most desperate circumstances should lead to suicide. With one of these articles<sup>160</sup> we turned to the second category which we can name “personal plea”. Here we have again three articles which were written in order to prevent more suicides, stressing out the importance of living and fighting. I would like to mention one of them, which is entitled “The Last Message from Jan Palach”<sup>161</sup> As in other newspapers, Palach is quoted while giving the last message to his followers by saying that his act already fulfilled the purpose and that no one should follow his example. As we already know, Palach most probably did not say anything like this.

The third category is informing of important political figures (president, prime minister etc.) sending their condolences to Palach’s mother as well as a message of condolence and plea to Palach’s mother so that she would help with convincing people not to follow her son in his steps.<sup>162</sup>

After exhausting 11 articles on January 20, *Lidová Demokracie* is continuing the next day only with three article, one being a transcript of a speech done by the president, second is a short note bringing a news of a student self-immolating himself in Budapest and the third about a procession done in memory of Jan Palach in Prague. In this article Jan Hus is remembered and Palach’s name is used as a synonym for better tomorrows. Students as well as workers giving speeches are mentioned. A brief remark is done on mourning act in Brno.<sup>163</sup>

January 22 is informing about Josef Hlavatý and that in his case the motives were very different and the cause of his self-immolation is alcohol.<sup>164</sup> There is also a detailed article about events that happened in Brno in support of Palach – speeches,

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<sup>159</sup> “Ve jménu života (In the Name of Life),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969; “Postoj předsednictva ÚV ČSL (Stance of the Board of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Socialist People’s Party).”

<sup>160</sup> “Ve jménu života (In the Name of Life).”

<sup>161</sup> “Poslední vzkaz Jana Palacha (The Last Message from Jan Palach),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>162</sup> “Vzkaz matek matce (The Message from Mothers to a Mother),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>163</sup> “Věrní odkazu Jana Palacha (Loyal to the Legacy of Jan Palach),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>164</sup> “K tragické události v Plzni (About the Tragic Event in Plzeň),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 22, 1969.

demonstration, hunger strike (both in Brno and in České Budějovice). In the speeches it is mentioned several times the importance of living and fighting alive. Nothing is however said about concrete steps or even following Palach's demands.

“All positive political and working activity of individuals and collectives is welcomed” says another article<sup>165</sup> which “appeals to all citizens, that they will with a great responsibility think about acts and forms that they choose to express their stances and suggestions and avoid radical demonstrations, strikes and similar”. This article states that the activity of people is welcomed but the important thing is to stick with the Communist party and avoid any illegal or other ways which may have a sad ending “as in the tragic case of Jan Palach”.

January 23 informs readers in detail about several events that happened in support of Palach – in Brno, Ostrava and Prague.<sup>166</sup> Difficulties of the organizers and students with the State Security is expressed (e.g. in Ostrava the State Security ended a silent demonstration of student in an “uncultivated way”. The author is also asking why to students in Prague who were on a hunger strike was recommended (at night, by the State Security) to put away a tent which they had there although only a short time ago, the whole Prague supported a Greek woman who did the same in front of the Greece embassy and she had the full support.

A statement of the Czech writers<sup>167</sup> is bringing into light “a fear of the existence of the nation” due to the increasing escalation of the situation in Czechoslovakia. A concern of the international powers not being understanding is also expressed. The writers are emphasising the importance of seeing the whole situation from a wider perspective and to have a long term plan. Without that “we will open a space for a catastrophic alternative”. “The movement of all people (...) can succeed only in affiliation with the leaders of this country (...) there should be a mutual critical relationship”.

A message to the followers of Jan Palach is published claiming that the sacrifice was not in vain, “many woke up from lethargy. It woke up the conscience of the nation, conscience of the human being and partly also the conscience of the world”. It also points out that some people don't have conscience and therefore not even a living torch

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<sup>165</sup> “Na okraj událostí (On the Edge of Events),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 22, 1969.

<sup>166</sup> “Citlivě řešit problémy studentů (Sensitively Solving Student's Problems),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>167</sup> “Prohlášení českých spisovatelů (Statement from Czech Writers),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 23, 1969.

can wake them up. The point of the article comes towards the end when the author is stressing that no more can be done in this thing and other followers that would self-immolated themselves would make it worse as “every act which should stay great and should not be forgotten, has to be act one and only”. The repetition would decrease the value of Palach’s act.<sup>168</sup>

A small note about another 2 self-immolations, this time from Argentina, is also published. One of the man was supposedly speaking with Slavic accent. His identity is however unknown.<sup>169</sup>

January 24<sup>th</sup> brings an article about yet another self-immolation – this time of Josef Jaroš from Czechoslovakia. The motive was – as written in the article – a disagreement with his father and there were no political motives.<sup>170</sup> Another self-immolation is from Ljubljana, Belgrade.<sup>171</sup> Marijan Lombar is said to have spent 8 years in correctional school and was already three times persecuted for theft. Other news from abroad are describing various events that students from abroad did in order to pay tribute to Palach and show their support for students in Czechoslovakia.<sup>172</sup>

January 25<sup>th</sup> is continuing with news from abroad. A manifestation in Paris and London are briefly described with the communist party from Great Britain’s statement where they – among other things – write: “the solution for this situation can be found only if the working people will unite with the Czechoslovak Communist Party”.<sup>173</sup> The Pope spoke twice this week about Czechoslovakia – according to other article.<sup>174</sup> He mentioned Palach’s bravery and that he “certainly acted according to his best consciousness and conscience”. The Czechoslovak people “are going through a difficult times but the pope stated that he is sure that they will succeed with honour”.

A number of student and scientific organizations and institutions sent to *Lidová Demokracie* statements or appeals.<sup>175</sup> *Lidová Demokracie* quotes from one: “We are outraged by the provocations, which use the act of Jan Palach for insulting the highest political leaders. We denounce events focused on increasing the unrest”. *Lidová*

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<sup>168</sup> Alena Smetanová, “Těm dalším (To the Others),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>169</sup> “Další případy upálení (Other Cases of Self-Immolation),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>170</sup> “Pokus o sebevraždu (Suicide Attempt),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>171</sup> “Upálení v Lublani (Self-Immolation in Ljubljana),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>172</sup> “Sympatie Čs. studentům (Sympathy to the Czechoslovak Students),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 24, 1969; “Zemřel student Jan Palach,” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>173</sup> “Tichá manifestace v Paříži (Silent Manifestation in Paris),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>174</sup> “Papež o událostech u nás (The Pope about the Events Here),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>175</sup> “Za důstojný ráz pietních aktů (For Dignified Nature of the Pieta’s Events),” *Lidová Demokracie*, January 25, 1969.

Demokracie is adding the words of a Minister of Interior who says that with the approval of the government, he will use all possible means in order to suppress any provocation.

The Czech Catholics are also giving their statement on Palach's event.<sup>176</sup> They call Palach a "self-less hero". They are also emphasising that Palach's act was not focused on the four main political leaders. Palach's act is "with its exceptionality beyond human judgement, also from the point of view of faith, the judgement will come from the God's judgement, where he is now". Palach's supposed last words "No one should repeat it" are also stressed.

January 27<sup>th</sup> is condemning other suicide attempts by calling them "imprudent, useless, irresponsible and reckless".<sup>177</sup>

The main focus of this day is however funeral of Jan Palach. The article of Lidová Demokracie is descriptive, informative but lack the emotion that were in other newspapers.<sup>178</sup> Paying tribute by students from Rome, Paris, Oxford and Oslo are described.<sup>179</sup>

The most interesting article is however on the title page.<sup>180</sup> It talks about the importance of not putting – even with the purest intentions – one demand after another one. People should think about the international situation and what is possible to achieve in these times.

#### 4.1.4.1 Results from the Analysis of the Newspaper Lidová Demokracie

Lidová Demokracie published 40 articles which covered Palach's event and the situation after it. 30 articles were published on the title page which shows the importance of the topic. There were almost no photographs, with the exception of two – from a reverence event in Brno and from a funeral. The word "tragedy" (in any form) appeared 3 times in headlines and 41 times within the articles themselves.

The search for a word phrase with the word "act" (and with the connection to Jan Palach's act) showed that most often used word was the word "tragic" (20x),

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<sup>176</sup> "Naše odpověď na hlas Janova srdce (Our Answer to the Voice of Jan's Heart)," *Lidová Demokracie*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>177</sup> "Sebevražedné pokusy (Suicide Attempts)," *Lidová Demokracie*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>178</sup> "Rozloučení s Janem Palachem (Funeral of Jan Palach)," *Lidová Demokracie*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>179</sup> "Svět památce J. Palacha (The World to the Memory of J. Palach)," *Lidová Demokracie*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>180</sup> "Zázemí, jež nesmí osiřet (Basement That Cannot Be Deserted)," *Lidová Demokracie*, January 27, 1969.

desperate (5x), heroic (2x) and protest (2x), the rest appeared only once (see diagram nr. 8).



Diagram nr.8 visualizing words used together with the word „act“ in Lidová Demokracie

Lidová Demokracie is the only newspaper that is mentioning also the Christian point of view – not only from average people, from the Czech Catholic church but also from Pope. In all cases, the act suicide as such is refused but in case of Palach, he is called “a self-less hero” with an addition that the God will judge this act, the Pope said that Palach “certainly acted according to his best consciousness and conscience”.

Important part of Palach’s act was his letter. In Lidová Demokracie, the letter is mentioned as well as his demand of abolishing censorship and Zprávy. The demand of people going into general strike if those demands are not met is withhold as well as the fact that other people may follow in case that those demands are not fulfilled. People are however warned not to put more demands as that would not be a solution and also with Palach’s demands, they should think about the international situation and what can be done in it.

The importance of being active in a political life is mentioned but with the remark that it is important to remember to see things from a wider perspective. The necessity of people uniting with the Communist party is emphasised.

Lidová Demokracie brings a mixture of articles that look at the situation from more points of view. There are articles that warn the possible followers (4 were focused on this topic), others that describe activities done in support of Palach’s demands (10 articles covered follow-up events in and outside of Czechoslovakia) and also those where a support for the government is emphasized (5 articles). Lidová Demokracie does not put more stress on only one part of the story and rather brings something from

everything. Lidová Demokracie also wrote about six other people who self-immolated themselves.

#### 4.1.5 Svobodné Slovo (The Free Word)

Svobodné Slovo informed its readers about Palach's act and related topics in together 38 articles, between January 18 and January 29. The day with most articles (9) is January 22 (see diagram nr. 9)

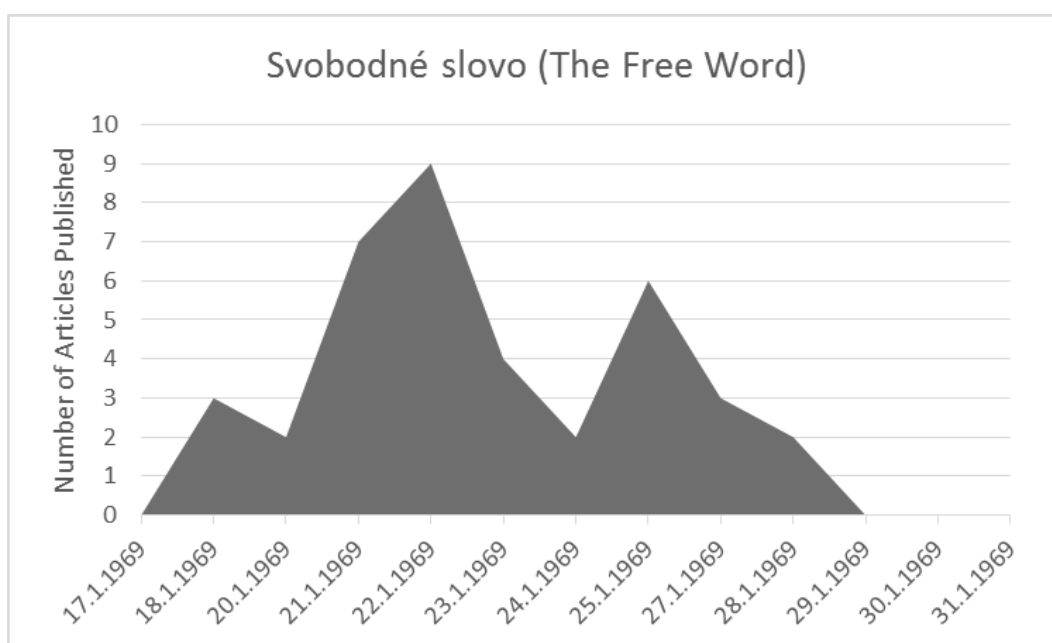


Diagram nr. 9 – Number of published articles related to self-immolations in the newspaper Svobodné Slovo in January 1969

As stated already earlier, Svobodné Slovo did not publish anything on January 17. However, their article on January 18 brought the most information of all the other analysed newspapers. Svobodné Slovo was able to publish Palach's letter, which they had as a photocopy, on their title page.<sup>181</sup> Svobodné Slovo is therefore the only newspaper that is bringing this letter without only paraphrasing it. This letter is not the only article about Palach on the title page, another one – covering almost half of the page – is asking in its headline: “Why Did It Come to the Tragedy of Jan Palach?”<sup>182</sup> This article presents similar information to the other newspaper, however further to that, it also brings more critique. Through the statement of Student Parliament, it is asking to wake up from the commencing lethargy and choose the high civil engagement. The

<sup>181</sup> “Dopis Jana Palach (The Letter of Jan Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 18, 1969.

<sup>182</sup> “Jak došlo k tragédii Jana Palacha? Prohlášení (How Did It Come to the Tragedy of Jan Palach? The Statement),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 18, 1969.

statement of the Academic Council of the Philosophical faculty of the Charles University (Palach studied at this faculty) is full of criticism:

We are being constantly asked to have confidence, patience (...) How should we trust, be patience (...) when we do not have influence on who and how is governing us? (...) We do not have a single body of power that would come out from our free will. (...) The act of our colleague is the first terrible scream of warning against the threat of doom of our entire work.

Although some of the other newspaper were also publishing extracts from several statements, including the two mentioned above, they never printed anything that would criticize so openly the government or call for larger support.

Svobodné Slovo is also the first newspaper to inform about reactions of Palach's act in foreign newspapers.<sup>183</sup> Unlike other newspapers later, they are not starting with the socialist press but with the one from the West where Palach's act had a deep impression on public and is considered to be a protest against the return of cabinet politics. The socialist press is said to report on speeches done by Czechoslovak political leaders.

January 20 is a very calm day when it comes to reactions on Palach's act. Only two articles are published.<sup>184</sup> One is informing the readers about Palach's death and second is informing about a letter written by more than 50 women to Palach's mother and asking her to convince young people to live instead of following her son. This article also mentions that Palach's mother was herself admitted to a hospital.

Svobodné Slovo is on January 21 going further than any other newspaper. Most of the title page is dedicated to Jan Palach. Many of the articles are composed in order to show the large support of public and various organizations to Palach's demands as well as showing support from abroad. It is interesting to see that in other newspaper, it was mention that Holeček, the student leader to whom Palach talked before dying, the newspaper cited his message to Palach's followers in which he supposedly said that the work is done and that they should not follow him. In Svobodné Slovo however, it is written that Holeček met with Palach, he had a conversation with him but the only result is that Holeček may know the name of the person who should self-immolate next.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> "Tragický čin Jana Palach v zahraničním tisku (The Tragic Act of Jan Palach in Foreign Press)," *Svobodné Slovo*, January 18, 1969.

<sup>184</sup> "Zemřel student Jan Palach"; "Dopis mamince (A Letter to the Mother)," *Svobodné Slovo*, January 20, 1969.

<sup>185</sup> "Tichá demonstrace desetitisíců. Věrní zůstaneme (Silent Demonstration of Tens of Thousands. We Will Stay Loyal)," *Svobodné Slovo*, January 21, 1969.

This may be explained by either not trusting the information which Holeček was publically saying or it did not fit into the agenda of the newspaper – we have already seen and will see in further articles, that Svobodné Slovo was trying hard to continue with what Palach started and wake up people from inactivity. The editorial staff is also signed under a statement of the board of the Union of Czech Journalists which comes with several proposals, including election in the closest possible time. The editorial staff is also stating that they have hundreds of letters which are of support of those statements.<sup>186</sup> Similar message can be seen also in another article on the title page “After the Legacy of Jan Palach”<sup>187</sup> where the statement of Czechoslovak Socialist Party is published. Apart from a call for election, it is also appealing to people to “unite their efforts to the realization of that, for what was the young life sacrificed”. Other articles are further calling for fulfilling demands for which Palach died.

Second page is bringing the reactions from abroad. The introduction to this article is citing witnesses from Palach’s last moments – saying that Palach was very interested in how the public took his act. Today we have evidence of it<sup>188</sup> and therefore we can state that Svobodné Slovo had most probably a source from the hospital. The article is however focused more on the reactions abroad. There Palach is called “Martyr” or the “New John Huss”. It is also stated that many classes of the population do not agree with the official politic line and that also with the workers there is coming through hidden unrest. The choice of quotes for this article is in support with previous articles.<sup>189</sup>

January 23 informs about the preparations for Palach’s funeral and also disproves possible information about a one day strike at the Charles University.<sup>190</sup> An informative articles is published about another self-immolation done by Miroslav Malinka. His motives are investigated but it is assumed that they are influenced by his criminal past. Another self-immolation was done by František Bogyi in prison where he was serving his time as a dangerous habitual criminal. He already tried to commit suicide while in prison six times.<sup>191</sup> There is also an information about a problems in

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<sup>186</sup> “Naše pravda zvítězí (Our Truth Will Win),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>187</sup> “Za odkazem Jana Palacha (After the Legacy of Jan Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>188</sup> Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*, 78.

<sup>189</sup> “Smrt Jana Palach otřásla milióny lidí na celém světě (Millions of People Were Shaken by the Death of Jan Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 21, 1969.

<sup>190</sup> “K pohřbu J. Palacha (About the Funeral of J. Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 23, 1969.

<sup>191</sup> “Další pokusy o sebeupálení (Other Attempts to Self-Immolation),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 23, 1969.



Brno between students and the State Police which is however a day later cleared.<sup>192</sup> January 24 is also a day of a news of another self-immolation, Marijan Lombar from Ljubljana.<sup>193</sup>

January 25 is inviting people in Brno to take part in paying tribute to the national hero.<sup>194</sup> This is the first time that newspapers put “hero” in a headline and are calling Palach a national hero.

On the second page, reactions from abroad are published.<sup>195</sup> It is mentioned that Italians are collecting money in order to build a monument to Palach. A silent manifestation in memory of Palach is planned for Paris whereas London is calling for finding a solution and Stockholm is planning a meeting where the situation before and after August 1968 in Czechoslovakia should be discussed.

*Svobodné Slovo* is giving an opportunity also to a creativity and publishes a poem called “Requiem for Jan Palach”<sup>196</sup> and a reflection essay<sup>197</sup>. Palach’s sacrifice is wrote to be “not premature nor needless”. Jan Palach is “a pressing appeal to our fatigue”. The author is also addressing the issue of a society who is deriving their values only based on economy and emphasizing also other values. He concludes with an appeal to live and not follow Palach in his steps and he writes that he understands Palach’s last words as a plea to the others to live and fight alive.

January 27 is focused on describing the funeral of Jan Palach in Prague as well as the paying tributes in Brno and other cities in Czechoslovakia. Palach is called by the author of this article a “young hero who gave his life for truth and freedom, ideals that are for us the most valuable”.<sup>198</sup> The foreign press is emphasizing the piece of more than 100 000 people who came to say goodbye to Jan Palach in Prague. “It was a mass demonstration of grief and solidarity”. They also write that already now it is visible that Palach’s death was not in vain.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> “Brno památce J. Palacha (Brno for the Memory of J. Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>193</sup> “Upálení v Lublani (Self-Immolation in Ljubljana),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 24, 1969.

<sup>194</sup> “Brno se loučí s hrdinou (Brno Is Saying Goodbye to a Hero),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>195</sup> “Svět truchlí S Čs. lidem (The World Grieves with Czechoslovak People),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>196</sup> Jiří Robert, “Rekviem za Jana Palacha (Requiem for Jan Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>197</sup> Jan Procházka, “Povinnost pozůstalých (Survival’s Obligation),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 25, 1969.

<sup>198</sup> “Rozloučení s Janem Palachem (Goodbye to Jan Palach),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>199</sup> “Svět hluboce skloněn (The World Is Deeply Bowed),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 27, 1969.

Svobodné Slovo is also informing about a second attempt to self-immolation in Austria.<sup>200</sup>

January 28 is coming back to the funeral while citing foreign newspapers and their reactions to it.<sup>201</sup> “The silence is the proof of the mental strength and discipline of the Czechoslovak people.” This and more positive remarks are mentioned about the Czechoslovak nation. The history of Munich Agreement in 1938 is reminded and how the people at that time were also possible to silently take on its fate.

The last article from Svobodné Slovo that I would like to mention here is an article written by a psychiatrist who is giving his point of view on self-immolation, especially on those done after Palach.<sup>202</sup> He concludes that most probably the people who followed Jan Palach had different motives than he had. Due to their family issues, problems with alcohol or authorities, he puts them into a category of people who are sick, psychopathic or hysteric and their motives were personal. He says that in case of Palach, a psychiatrist is on the same level as a normal person. “Such a sudden and great act becomes a test for everyone.” The psychiatrist is also praising the political leaders who handled the situation well. He also says that the young generation shows that they are prepared to fight for their rights and that a nation with such a people who are not afraid to put their lives for goals of all, will never get lost.

#### 4.1.5.1 Results from the Analysis of the Newspaper Svobodné Slovo

Svobodné Slovo published 38 articles connected to the event of Jan Palach. 20 articles were published on the title page – however, only until January 23, articles after that were published only inside the issue. The word “tragedy” (in any form) appeared 2 times in headlines and 29 times within the articles themselves.

The search for a word phrase with the word “act” (and with the connection to Jan Palach’s act) showed that most often used word was the word “tragic” (7x), significant (3x), desperate (3x), serious (2x), political (2x), unexpected (2x), pure (2x) and heroic (1x). See diagram nr. 10.

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<sup>200</sup> “K druhému pokusu o sebeupálení v Rakousku (About the Second Attempt to Self-Immolation in Austria,” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 27, 1969.

<sup>201</sup> “Pietní mlčení desetitisíců (Reverent Silent of Tens of Thousands),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 28, 1969.

<sup>202</sup> Jaromír Rubeš, “Případ TI DRUZÍ (Case THE OTHERS),” *Svobodné Slovo*, January 28, 1969.



Diagram nr.10 visualizing words used together with the word „act“ in Svobodné Slovo

Svobodné Slovo put the coverage of Palach’s act on a different level – compared to the other newspaper when they published his letter. No commentary, no explanation who Jan Palach is, just a copy of a letter on a title page on January 18 with a headline “The Letter of Jan Palach”. This was the first note that Svobodné Slovo wrote on Jan Palach. The Czechoslovak public therefore got the whole truth behind Palach’s act – his demands, his appeal to people to get into a general strike if his demands are not met and also the warning of a group of followers who will self-immolate themselves on January 21 if there is no strike or his demands met.

Svobodné Slovo is not afraid of publishing also a criticism of the situation after August 1968. They also publish more from the speeches that are quoted in all newspapers. Svobodné Slovo is also writing more detailed articles showing demonstrations and manifestation in Prague, Brno or other cities in support of Palach’s demands.

Svobodné Slovo is giving almost no space for articles that would try to talk to the people that were in Palach’s group. Svobodné Slovo is also publishing almost no speeches from political leaders. Instead of this, it is more focused on Palach’s demands. However, January 23 seems to bring a twist in the publishing and Svobodné Slovo is much calmer and as if careful of what they are writing. There are no more appeals to people or visible support for Palach’s demands. Most likely the newspaper could not publish so openly what they wanted and the censorship stepped in. Despite that, they are still covering the situation, bringing also news about other self-immolations as well as the opinion of an expert – a psychiatrist.

## 4.2 Czechoslovak Television in January 1969

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, a short video was published where colleagues from Palach from school are talking about him. They refuse that Palach would be mentally disturbed and they describe him rather as a rational, thinking person with an interest in Marx. An expert, a psychiatrist, is also invited to talk about self-immolations. He assessed the act of Palach as unique and tragic. He also said that in general the young generation has a very weak bond to life, that they lost self-preservation instinct. He is emphasizing that a suicide is not a solution to any situation. He is also afraid that more people may appear who would see Palach as his model and will follow him in this kind of suicide.<sup>203</sup>

January 19<sup>th</sup> brought two special guest talking on Television – apart from a famous Czech actor Miroslav Horníček, it was also Luděk Pachman, popular Czech Grandmaster and influential personality who was asked by the president to talk on the television.<sup>204</sup> In his speech, he directly addressed people who wanted to follow Palach. He assured the followers that he and they are striving for the same thing and that he does not agree with the current reality. He added that to live for a really great idea is often more than for to die for this idea.

Contact me, let us think together, I will also tell you about realities that you may not know (...) I will not betray you! (...) Our think is not lost (...) you are the generation, that will for the most of their life live according to our ideas (...) without people like you, the society probably cannot be realized (...)"<sup>205</sup>

Luděk Pachman offered his private phone number in a hope that one of the people from Palach's group will call him and they can talk about it. Instead, he spend three days talking almost non-stop to people from all over the Czechoslovakia. However, no member of Palach's group called him.

From January 20, there are archived reports about the broadcasting so we have more detailed information about. The News on Television at 19.00, brought shots from

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<sup>203</sup> "Názory spolužáků Jana Palach a psychiatra Zdeňka Dytrycha (Opinions of Colleagues of Jan Palach and of a Psychiatrist Zdenek Dytrych)" (Československá televize, January 18, 1969), <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

<sup>204</sup> Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*, 79.

<sup>205</sup> Luděk Pachman, "Proslov Lud'ka Pachmana (Speech of Luděk Pachman)," January 19, 1969, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

a peaceful manifestation in Prague.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, a statement from a Czech journalists was read where they called for a day of national grief on a day of Palach's funeral. The appeal for calming down the political situation through united efforts from the Communist party and party institutions.<sup>207</sup> The Slovak government is giving their statement in which they say that it is necessary to work on calming the situation. They also express the necessity of each young person's life and the hope that they will use it for working on better future for all people.<sup>208</sup> The News also bring reactions from abroad in which they say that Palach's photography was published and the situation together with his demands is analysed. The whole situation in Czechoslovakia is assessed as tense.<sup>209</sup>

During the News, the national poet Jaroslav Seifert talked to the people who "decided to die".<sup>210</sup> In his emotive speech, he pointed out that not all decisions are made in Czechoslovakia and he called for unity in the fight for national freedom. He finished with an appeal "If you don't want all of us to kill ourselves, don't kill yourself!"

After the News, the president of Czechoslovakia gave a speech. He called Palach a "person of a pure character and pure intentions". As a soldier<sup>211</sup> he appreciated self-denial and personal bravery of Palach, as a president however, he said that he cannot agree with this kind of expression of political stance. He tried to talk possible followers from self-immolating themselves. He emphasized the necessity of patience and that short-cuts often are ways to ruins. He ensures the viewers of his and the government's continuous efforts to ensure that the country will be free, independent and stay on democratic principles. He says that their goals are not only abolishing illegal printed materials or the freedom of print but all democratic freedoms. He asks for faith to him, Dubček and to the whole government.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> "Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 20. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 20. 1. 1969)" (Československá televize, January 20, 1969), 3, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-20-1.pdf>.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>210</sup> Jaroslav Seifert, "Proslov Jaroslava Seiferta (The Speech of Jaroslav Seifert)," *News* (Czechoslovak Television, January 20, 1969), <http://www.janpalach.cz/cs/default/archiv/audio>.

<sup>211</sup> Ludvík Svoboda fought in both World Wars (became army general) for which he was considered a national hero.

<sup>212</sup> "Projev presidenta republiky (The Speech of the President of the Republic)," January 20, 1969, <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

The News from 22.00 repeated some of the information mentioned already at 19.00. They added for example that the student leader Holeček and academic Charvát. From the prepared news scripts we can also see things which actually were crossed before the broadcasting and were never mentioned. Among other things it is for example parts of speech by Holeček:

The generation of us, young people has to prepare itself. We have to think about our alternative to a socialist society, where we want to live and which we will build with constant activity.

From the speech of Charvát, it is crossed out this: “Jan Palach wanted to mobilize the nation, everyone from us, so that we will ensure a dignified today and better tomorrows.” Instead, what was left was only their statements who emotional Palach’s act left them.<sup>213</sup> With newspapers, I can now only analyse what actually was published. With this records of TV News however, I can also see what didn’t go through the last control and was stopped from being broadcasting. Here, we can see the work of a gatekeeper in praxis. Another message is about the Hungarian student who self-immolated himself. There is nothing said about his motives or that he was inspired by Palach.<sup>214</sup>

During evening, short messages from influential people from the Czechoslovak society were broadcasted with the hope of prevent repetition of Palach’s act. The speakers were Dana and Emil Zátopek and Jan Procházka. Dana and Emil as gold medallists from Olympic Games were well known to every young person in Czechoslovakia. They confided that they consider Palach’s act to be “heroic and uncompromising”. They also expressed their love and understanding for the young generation and that this generation should be taken seriously and they should be helped.<sup>215</sup> Jan Procházka is going similar way, bowing in front of Palach’s act where “admirable purity and bravery” are united. However, he warns that impatience is not a way and people should wait and see and most importantly they have to be alive for the future.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> “Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 20. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 20. 1. 1969),” 31.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>215</sup> “Proslov Dany a Emila Zátopkových (The Speech of Dana and Emil Zatopek)” (Československá televize, January 20, 1969), <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

<sup>216</sup> “Proslov Jana Procházky (The Speech of Jan Procházka)” (Československá televize, January 20, 1969), <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

The news on January 21<sup>st</sup> started with a report from a meeting of ROH. The members paid a tribute to Palach with a minute of silence and said that “With his act, he (Palach) talks to each of us, he gives us a question whether we truly stay behind the ideals of January (1968)”.<sup>217</sup> Some of the reactions to the speech of president from previous evening, were read. The writers expressed full support to the president’s ideas. They respect what Palach did but they agree that there are better ways to fight. They also stated their faith in the political leaders.<sup>218</sup> A coverage from a press conference with a minister of education and the leader of a University Student Organization of Bohemia and Moravia is broadcasted. Among other things, it is mentioned that the current situation is not possible to solve with ultimate demands.<sup>219</sup> After that there is an interview with two girls, friends from Jan Palach. One of them is Eva Bednářiková, which talked to Palach last before his death. She said that Palach confided to her that five days to fulfil the demands are not enough and that he suggest to wait for time when there will be better time for realization of his demands. She adds that Palach also told her that no one should repeat his act that they should stay alive and fight.<sup>220</sup> Later in the News, there is also a brief reflection of foreign media: “the death of Palach agitated the people of Czechoslovakia and it became also an excuse for activation of the antisocialist powers” writes Poland. Moscow’s message is “behind this act we can find antisocialist powers and at the moment it is used for provocative purposes”.<sup>221</sup> Slovak writers send their statement to the Czechoslovak television. The main message was a plea to the young generation not to repeat Palach’s act.<sup>222</sup> After that, Václav Voska had a speech toward the public who emphasized the value of life and ask people to fight alive.<sup>223</sup> The viewers also get the information about the self-immolation of Josef Hlavatý, as his motivation unsettled personal and family life.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> “Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 21. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 21. 1. 1969)” (Československá televize, January 21, 1969), 3, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-21-1.pdf>.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 4–5.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 11; srov. Blažek, Eichler, and Jareš, *Jan Palach '69*, 80.

<sup>221</sup> “Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 21. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 21. 1. 1969),” 15.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 36; “Proslov Václava Vosky (The Speech of Václav Voska)” (Československá televize, January 21, 1969), <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

<sup>224</sup> “Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 21. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 21. 1. 1969),” 39.

Very interesting is the speech of Václav Havel. He was the first one who reflected on Palach's letter and his demands. He saw that moment as a chance for the living to change something. He said that just to try to talk to the young generation is not enough anymore, "we have to show that we are able to change something alive" – that would stop potential followers. He also talked to the government, asking several political leaders to step down: "you have now a chance to change something, to save the people". He also addressed people: "we cannot accept passive roles, which others are giving to us".<sup>225</sup> From the website of the Czechoslovak television is however not entirely clear if this speech was really broadcasted. On the records from the broadcasting it is not mentioned.<sup>226</sup>

January 22<sup>nd</sup> is the first day when Palach and the situation around him was not mentioned. Further reaction to the Monday's speech of the president are put out, this time the TV is going to a state farm to ask farmers.<sup>227</sup> Information about Palach's funeral, when and where it will happen, are mentioned. Furthermore it is emphasized that the information about a possible strike at the Charles University is untrue.<sup>228</sup> The attempt of self-immolation of Miroslav Malinka is also aired. The connection to Palach was denied and as a motive a fear of criminal proceeding was given.<sup>229</sup> A space is also given to a statement from Italian Communists who said that although they understand Palach's desires, his form is not a form of political fight as communists understand it. They also agreed to the speech that was given by the president.<sup>230</sup>

On the News at 22:00, further reactions to the speech of president were given. It was said that they all expressed "the faith in the leaders, which is working in such a difficult conditions (...)"<sup>231</sup> Another attempt of a self-immolation is reported, this time of František Bogyi, who was at that time imprisoned. It is said that he tried to commit a

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<sup>225</sup> "Proslov Václava Havla (The Speech of Václav Havel)" (Československá televize, January 21, 1969), <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/vse-o-ct/historie/ceskoslovenska-televize/1968-1969/1969/ceskoslovenska-televize-v-lednu/>.

<sup>226</sup> srov. Milan Šmid, "Palach - Vzpomínky staré 40 let (Palach - 40 Year Old Memories)," *Louč*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.louc.cz/09/2040122.html>.

<sup>227</sup> "Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 22. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 22. 1. 1969)," January 22, 1969, 7, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-22-1.pdf>.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.



suicide already six times and that during this attempt, he did not induce serious injuries to himself.<sup>232</sup>

The News on January 23 informed about the preparation for Palach's funeral and presented also other information from the government

The government stated that it is not possible to exclude attempts to misuse this reverent act by irresponsible elements to cause disorders, disturb public order and other inappropriate acts, which could put in its consequences the people's life or health in danger.

The high number of suicides in a recent times is discussed with the conclusion that media have to be responsible in what information they are giving to public as lives are at stake.<sup>233</sup> The meeting of ROH is mentioned where Dýmáček, president of the University Students Organization talked and emphasized the appreciation from students towards the government and thanked them for sharing with them valid information about the current situation.<sup>234</sup> Students from the Technical University in Gottwaldov<sup>235</sup> send the president their reassurance of their support. They refuse ultimate and instead support active work.<sup>236</sup>

On January 24, the government puts out a statement, where it is written among other things that the Committee for Press and Information should ensure that the state politics will be presented through the Czechoslovak Television, Radio and the Czech News agency in conformity with the efforts of the government. They also warn that in the current situation, antisocialist elements can take advantage of students.<sup>237</sup> Further statements of support of the government and president are broadcasted.<sup>238</sup> The television also shows people going to the University and paying tribute to Palach, there are also mentioned names of several political leaders who went there.<sup>239</sup> The British Communist Party put out a statement in which they say that the act of Palach was motivated by a

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>233</sup> "Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 23. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 23. 1. 1969)" (Československá televize, January 23, 1969), 20, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-23-1.pdf>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>235</sup> Gottwaldov was renamed and it is the current Zlín.

<sup>236</sup> "Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 23. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 23. 1. 1969)," 25.

<sup>237</sup> "Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 24. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 24. 1. 1969)" (Československá televize, January 24, 1969), 7–8, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-24-1.pdf>.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 8, 11–12, 15–16.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 13.

true love for the country but that in order to achieve the goals of January 68, it is necessary for the government to work without pressure.<sup>240</sup>

January 25 is in the name of Jan Palach's funeral. It is also the very first news that is broadcasted on the main News at 19.00 and at 22:00. It is emphasized that the atmosphere was calm and no disturbances were reported.<sup>241</sup> Further letters or telegrams in support of the political leaders are mentioned.<sup>242</sup> There are no more news which would concern Palach or the situation broadcasted.

The only news that January 26 brings about Palach and related topics are further supports and assurance of faith and trust for the political leaders.<sup>243</sup>

#### 4.1.5.1 Results from the Analysis of the Czechoslovak Television

The missing reports from 17. 1. – 19. 1. 1969 may of course distort the final picture which we may have if we would could go also through that. However, the material which we have can give us a clear picture on how the Czechoslovak Television was presenting the act of Palach and the follow-up situation.

Television is a different medium than newspapers and therefore we cannot really compare television and the newspapers. However, we notice several frames that were used. The news broadcasted can be divided into three main groups. First group would be a general information – about his self-immolation, funeral, about other self-immolations etc. Second group would be news belonging to the “let us prevent another self-immolation”. Not only people on the News but also special guests from the political, cultural and sports life were invited (some even by the president alone) and were trying to show the potential followers of Palach (especially the members of his group) that as alive they can do more than if they would self-immolate themselves. Third group would be the “support for the government”. The Czechoslovak television was daily showing the large support from all society groups (academics, politics, workers...) to the political leaders, especially to the government and the president.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>241</sup> “Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 25. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 25. 1. 1969)” (Československá televize, January 25, 1969), 5–8, 28, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-25-1.pdf>.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>243</sup> “Zpráva o vysílání televizních novin 26. 1. 1969 (The Record of the Broadcasting of TV News on 26. 1. 1969)” (Československá televize, January 26, 1969), 3–4, 15–16, <http://img.ceskatelevize.cz/boss/image/contents/historie/janpalach/pdf/tn-26-1.pdf>.

It was also mentioned that the broadcasting of the television has to be with agreement with the course of the state and the government.

The Czechoslovak television was not informing about demonstrations or manifestation for the support of Palach's demands. The further self-immolations were mentioned only briefly.

## 5. Findings

The analysis of media from the 17<sup>th</sup> of January until the end of the month showed several interesting things. Firstly, we can see that each of the media took a different point of view on Palach's event and the situation that followed, and all of them stressed different elements of it. Secondly, it is interesting to see that although some people may have expressed an opinion that Palach's act was an act of youth and that there are better ways to fight, there was not a single reference that would question his mental health or other characteristics of Palach. On the other hand, by both authorities and common people, his pure character, love for country and belief of democratic principles were emphasized. Thirdly, the opinion that people could not get the information what was in the letter of Palach and therefore could not go into a general strike because of the media not publishing the letter<sup>244</sup>, proved to be untrue as Svobodné Slovo published the whole letter without a change on the title page of January 18.

As already mentioned, each medium took a different point of view on the analysed event. *Práce* was focusing on preventing people to follow Palach rather than informing about the current situation – demonstrations, hunger strikes and other events in support of Palach. His act was put as if in isolation – it was described – even mentioned that some people may follow, his demands were mentioned (apart from the general strike) but no follow-up events or support was showed. Although Palach's act was mentioned, it was more as if an act by an impatience young person who – as young people are – wants fast results.

*Práce* was the only newspaper who talked in a more detail about self-immolations in Vietnam, putting Palach's act into perspective.

*Rudé Právo* as an official newspaper of the Communist Party focused most on handling the situation and therefore focused on the political leaders, their speeches and as a proof of how everything is working out, they also published extensively letters which showed large support from the public to those leaders. *Rudé Právo* did not publish Palach's letter nor did it specialize what exactly his demands are. There were several brief information about Palach's parents and his previous studies mentioned, otherwise, Palach was not introduced as a person of interest or someone that people could identify themselves with. This of course has its reasons as the least think the

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<sup>244</sup> Procházková, "Moje celoživotní téma - Jan Palach (My Lifelong Topic - Jan Palach)."

Communist Party wanted was that people would identify themselves with Palach and support him. Palach's event was also used to promote the good work of the government as well as their cooperation with people. The vast support of common people was showed through number of letters published which showed trust and faith with the political leaders. In more than 50% of the analysed articles, it was mentioned that people should trust and support the government and work together with it on solving this situation in order to have a better future for the whole society. Rudé Právo also published a statement from the government in which it is mentioned that the censorship is long abolished and Zprávy not allowed – so people who knew Palach's demand would see that he actually died in vain as everything he died for is already done. Rudé Právo did not publish all the events in support of Palach but mentioned at least briefly some of them as well as few of the other self-immolations.

The analysis of Mladá Fronta showed that they had the most leaning towards a yellow journalism. Their headlines were mostly composed to attract attention, they included also articles that did not necessarily covered the situation but also focused on Jan Palach as a human being, interviewing his friends, schoolmates and teachers. Mladá Fronta also published a statement from Mladý Svět which showed that Palach is not the only person who thought of self-immolating himself but that there are more people. Palach's act is also mostly covered on the title page, presenting it as a main story. Mladá Fronta did not publish Palach's letter, they interpreted his demands and possible followers, however forgetting to mention the most important demand – the general strike. The information about events in support of Palach was only brief.

Lidová Demokracie brought another point of view on Palach – and that was the Christian one – not only from the Christians in Czechoslovakia but also Pope's view was interpreted. The suicide of Palach was not visibly refused but it was said that the God will judge his act. Together with the three newspapers above, Lidová Demokracie does not mention whole Palach's letter, only his demands of censorship and abolishment of Zprávy. Lidová Demokracie does not put more stress on only one part of Palach's act and pays attention to more aspects equally. Therefore there are evenly articles from Palach (his act, funeral), the government, other self-immolations and events done in support of Palach's demands.

Svobodné Slovo portrays Palach's act most openly, starting with his full letter on the title page. People had therefore access to all the information they needed – in terms of Palach's demands. Svobodné Slovo encourages people to ask for more

democratic approach and possibility to be part of making decisions. Svobodné Slovo also withdrew the information of the so called Palach's last message which was saying that his followers should not continue. Svobodné Slovo is the only newspaper in which a psychiatrist describes people who decide for suicide. There is also a clear distinction between Palach and other people who followed. In Svobodné Slovo we can also visibly see the censorship and the act of the Committee for Press and Information. This is mainly because of the openness with which they wrote after Palach's self-immolation, then the contrast was more visible than with other newspapers.

In the Czechoslovak Television was probably the censorship most visible. Most of the broadcasting was first focused on stopping possible followers and later in showing people's support for the political leaders. During the few days, several significant people from cultural, sports or intellectual life tried to talk out people from following Palach's example. From January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the broadcasting is focused almost exclusively on the work of government and the wide support that it has from people.

All the analysed media did cover more or less widely Palach's act as well as the situation after it. Many information were hidden from the public, especially the event that followed Palach's act, so a person, who would not live in a larger city where something was happening, would think of Palach's act as more an individual effort which would not be supported largely.

Palach was in all analysed media portrayed a person who fought for his country and its freedoms. He may have not been understood by everyone but apart from some of the foreign newspapers, no one was attacking the credibility of Palach's act or suggesting a psychological instability or anything else. His act was described mostly as tragic but also heroic, desperate, political, pure or astonishing.

Through the analysis of the media, we can see that the Communist Party handled this difficult situation very well. They focused on emphasizing the work of the government and showed a wide support for their work. With the help of censorship, they eliminated the amount of potentially dangerous information. Although the copy of letter of Palach was published, it did not have almost any effect on later events – mostly because of the work done in other media but also of the State Security and other political bodies.

## 6. Conclusion

Jan Palach self-immolated himself in Czechoslovakia during a communist regime. Jan Palach died 45 years ago. There is no Czechoslovakia anymore. The communist regime fell apart in 1989. Why should we learn about Palach today? Why it is important what was in media in January 1969? Palach's act was so shocking and disturbing that even nowadays it is a topic of discussion among people. The subject of Palach's act was presented in the media during January 1969, February 1969 brought defamation from Vilém Nový and after that there was almost no information until the regime fell apart. The opening of archives together with a freedom of press brought Palach again into the foreground. The work of historians is very visible – a multimedia project was launched, a large collection of texts, reflection essays and documents about Palach was published, an exhibition and public, television or radio discussions followed. On the occasions of anniversary, a wide coverage and interviews with historians are usually presented to the public. On the other hand, due to internet, where everyone can publish their opinions, Palach's act could be discussed largely by people who do not have all the information. This brings controversies into the subject more than ever before. In order to fight the spreading of disinformation, it is important that more and more works about Palach, that would bring him and the time in which he lived closer to people, are written. With this thesis, I have tried to contribute to that. I have brought the legacy of media from January 1969 and I have tried to analyse it.

My analysis revealed the different focus and the relatively diverse way of presenting the topic through the media. I have also shown how Palach – as a person – was portrayed in the media and how the media looked at his act. Throughout my work, I have found some untruthful information that were online – even from people who specialized on Palach. With my work, I can prove that the people had access to Palach's letter – at least the readers of Svobodné Slovo and they knew what exactly his demands were and what Palach wanted. Svobodné Slovo also was the only newspaper which actively tried to encourage people in following Palach's demands and enforcing them. From a superficial point of view it may seem that the reaction of people in general were the reason why Palach's demands were not met. However, the situation is – as it usually is – more complicated and it is too hard to judge from a distance of 45 years. After the shocking act of Jan Palach, people were more focused on the possibility of a further

young person doing the same than on Palach's demands. We can see that also from the television and all the analysed newspapers very well. Different personalities as well as ordinary people were trying to talk to the possible followers through media in order to talk them out of their intentions. Palach hoped that the fear of the young people's life will bring people into action. People sometimes blame Palach for dying and not staying alive and fighting. Palach however tried before. He was active during the months after August 1968 and only ten days before his self-immolation, he sends a letter to a student leader with the suggestion to occupy the building of a Czechoslovak Radio. This action was however refused. Palach saw that people are more and more accustomed to the new situation and that they no longer want to fight (with small exceptions) for the ideas of Prague Spring. Therefore he decided for a very untraditional way of activating people – through self-immolation. If that would not be enough, he added the threat of more people following if his demands were not met. He put an ultimatum to the political leaders (abolishment of censorship and of Zprávy) and to the people – general strike. Unfortunately, he made an error in judgement. People indeed were shocked and wanted to prevent a possible repetition – instead of choosing to fight the way Palach proposed, they concentrated more on finding the person and talk him out of it. The analysis of the media also showed the reaction of the Communist Party and of political leaders. Apart from talking out potential followers, the main concentration was on consolidation of the Communist Party and the trust in the political leaders.

The limited space of a master thesis allowed me to focus only on media response in January 1969. There is however still unexplored territory of later media coverage of Palach's event or related topics. Further analysis may be also done in the direction of general responses and people's opinions. Either through an analysis of social media, blogs, discussion under articles or through interviews and questionnaires. The act of Palach is at this moment well analysed but his legacy is formed by too many factors and unfortunately the opinions of experts covers only small percentage.



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