[CZ] Journalist Acquitted

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The first Prague District Court has acquitted a former TV reporter after a case lasting 18 months. The public prosecutor's office had taken proceedings against him for revealing state secrets, an offence punishable under criminal law by a prison sentence of two to eight years. The journalist was accused two years ago of showing viewers a secret document, thus threatening the national interest and endangering an official's life by possibly revealing his identity. The secret document also contained details of an attempt by the current head of the security service to protect an official who had apparently been drink-driving. During the proceedings, however, it emerged that certain identifying features of the official had been changed in the document concerned, so that even witnesses could not identify him with any degree of certainty.

The case was heard in camera, with only two representatives of the accused and one member of the public present. The summing-up and judgment were made public. The defence lawyer argued that the case should never have been brought before the court because the freedom of journalists to reveal information embarrassing to the State authorities was being challenged as became clear in the final judgment.

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