

# History on television in seven East Europe countries

Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia,  
Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Finland

Edited by  
Luisa Cigognetti, Lorenza Servetti, Pierre Sorlin





# PROMOTERS

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## ISTITUTO STORICO PARRI EMILIA-ROMAGNA

The Istituto Storico Parri Emilia-Romagna was established in 1963. Its mission is to promote retrieval and knowledge of contemporary history's sources. The main objective of the Institute is the study and research of the history of the 20th century, in particular as concerns:

1. the relationship between history and memory, history and media, research and fruition of history, teaching and education;
2. the relationship between contemporary history and contemporary age: the present as history.

From several years the Institute's Audiovisual Department has been dealing with Cinema and Television as sources of history, of which it has been analyzing various aspects. In particular, it has been focused on the relationship between television and history in a series of analyses of the different expressive forms of the historical narrative television: from the use of archive material to video interviews and life stories as a means to popularise history made through modern medias. These works are published in the series "Ricerche" by Marsilio Editore.

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## VIDEOTECA REGIONALE

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The archive of the Video Library contains:

- documentaries concerning regional art, history and culture;
- documentaries produced by authors and producers of the Region;
- journalistic reports finalists of the "Ilaria Alpi" Award.

The bibliographic catalogue contains about 4,000 videos, all available for lending.

Since 2004 it has been put into action the “Videoteca in rete” project, consisting in online viewing of many documentaries aimed at schools, Libraries and video Libraries of the Region.

Furthermore, the Video Library promotes cultural projects and initiatives for schools in collaboration with regional Institutions and associations.

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The Europe Direct network is the main instrument used by the European institutions to encourage contacts with regional territories and citizens. This network is sponsored and coordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission and consists of about 50 Centres in Italy and nearly 500 Centres within the European Union. It acts as intermediary between the EU and citizens at local level:

- it allows citizens to have information, advice, assistance and answers on EU policies and funding, and an opportunity to communicate with European institutions as well;
- it actively promotes public debates and attracts the interest of medias at local and regional level;
- it collaborates with schools and civil society;
- it enables the European institutions to improve the dissemination of available data and information adapted to local and regional need.

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# PRESENTATION

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*Stefania Fenati*

Responsabile Centro Europe Direct Emilia Romagna

The book series “Il filo d’Europa” is a collection of documents, contributions and research coordinated by the European Direct Centre in its mission to offer citizens documents, analysis, reports and anything regarding European issues.

This book (the fifth of the series) is dedicated to the 2nd research report of the project “Media and community culture. A European history through TV”.

While the 1st study focused on how broadcast systems of seven western Europe countries (Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Italy) represent history, this 2nd one analyses in depth the historical programme of broadcast systems in seven eastern Europe countries (Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Finland).

On this project, European Direct Centre, Regional Video-Library and Istituto Storico Parri Emilia-Romagna continue to concentrate their energy on understanding how European broadcast systems can show history in order to imagine a possible common European history through television.



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# PREFACE

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*Luigi Benedetti*

General Manager Assemblée legislativa

The project “Media and community culture. A European history through TV” was born some years ago thanks to a proposal made by Mr. Pierre Sorlin, Emeritus Professor of University of Paris-Sorbonne Nouvelle, to the Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna Region. The premise was to conceive a research project in order to assess, through a methodological analysis work, how history programs are represented by European broadcast systems and if they also include European issues.

The European Direct Centre and the Video-Library of the Legislative Assembly together with Istituto Storico Parri of Emilia-Romagna, our main partner in this project, have worked very hard spending a lot of energy and involving researchers from 14 European Universities whose studies have traced a knowledge framework not yet realised at European level.

After a three year research, we can affirm we hit the mark: the different vision of history coming out from national broadcasting system; the successful effort to outline the most important differences between eastern and western European countries; the in-depth identification of the historical crux, of the facts stressed or obscured by the national broadcasting systems are telling us a lot about a diversified European history which is not yet a common element for European citizens.

The gap between European institutions and European citizens, who are nowadays almost 500 millions, is one of the current topic, whereas the European identity should be con-

sidered one of values to join together the Europeans. “United in diversity” is the motto of the European Union.

But the education of nowadays politicians and policy makers was based on books still full of “national” prejudices and on historical narrations characterised by national divisions and selections and not on common elements.

History with the power of the truth, and not its artificial reconstruction, could be the “breeding ground” where a new common identity could arise?

Television could be for these generations the ideal instrument to develop adequate instruments for a new vision of the European history?

This project was born thanks to an ambitious idea and a strong thirst of knowledge. Now the first step is made and we would like to spread the results of this project and in particular to draw the attention of the European Institutions on it, hoping that it could be an useful tool to strengthen the sense of belonging to the European community.

# INTRODUCTION

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*Luisa Cigognetti, Lorenza Servetti, Pierre Sorlin*  
*(Istituto storico Parri Emilia-Romagna)*

The initial phase of the investigation, which dealt with the television history programmes of seven Western European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, Spain) came to an end in April 2009 with the publication of a first report detailing the main broadcasts and confronting the conception of history developed in the countries taken into account.

The second phase, which began in the spring of 2009, is dedicated to East European countries. A questionnaire has been sent to researchers selected in seven countries; all have answered the queries and drawn a panorama of television in their country, with special reference to the representation of history. They have received complementary questions, and their final report - that we are presenting in this book - delivered at the end of 2009, was cross-examined in a seminar in Bologna in February 2010.

The vision of history spread in Eastern nations is rather different from the one generally accepted in the West, these countries had a difficult, chaotic past; as nations they were birth relatively late, mostly during the 20th century, and they were affected by the World Wars as well as by the cold War so that the medieval and modern times, of paramount importance in the West, are seldom if ever evoked - with the exception of Rumania that boasts roman origins.

Interestingly, little value was attached to history during the period of Soviet domination, it was mostly conceived as a critic of the Western policy and an apology of communism. But history was also used to affirm “national” values, in contrast with the Soviet influence, especially in Ceaucescu’s Rumania.



# History on Hungarian Television: an introduction

*Teréz Vincze (Budapest University)*

## 1. The evolution of TV broadcasting in Hungary

<b>1954</b>	Broadcast of test-programmes started.
<b>1957</b>	Regular broadcast (2 days a week) was introduced The channel was called <i>Magyar Televízió</i> (MTV).
<b>1960</b>	Frequency of broadcasting: 5 days a week. Number of subscribers: 80 000.
<b>1967</b>	Number of television subscribers reached 1 million.
<b>1968</b>	6 days per week broadcast schedule was introduced.
<b>1969</b>	The first broadcast in colour.
<b>1972</b>	Regular broadcast (4 days a week) on the second channel (MTV2) started.
<b>1976</b>	Regional studios in two major cities outside Budapest were established.
<b>1985</b>	90 percent of all programmes were broadcasted in colour.
<b>1989</b>	7 days per week broadcast schedule has been introduced.
<b>1989</b>	As part of a political demonstration reform organizations symbolically “confiscated” the state television “in the name of the Hungarian nation”.
<b>1992</b>	Duna TV started to broadcast as a non-state channel operated by a public foundation.
<b>1994</b>	Numerous new cable channels could have been received by subscribers.
<b>1995</b>	The new (democratic) media law has been ratified by the Hungarian parliament. The new system of public and commercial radio and television channels has been introduced. MTV, formerly state television and Duna TV have been declared public televisions by the new media law.
<b>1997</b>	Two nationwide commercial TV channels (RTL Klub, TV2) started to broadcast.
<b>2006</b>	Preparations for switching over to digital transmission have been started.

## 2. Hungarian TV networks

### *Public networks*

- **mtv1** (1957-)
- **mtv2** (1972-)
- **Duna TV** (1992-)

**MTV1's main profile** actual information, news programmes, discussion programmes with public and political interest, cultural magazines + fiction films and series.

**MTV2** its cultural and educational function is important, among the five main channels it has the strongest interest in educational and documentary programming.

Unfortunately MTV enjoys very low audience ratings. The two channels have an approximate 10-15 percent share of the Hungarian television market. It seems that public television in Hungary has lost the combat against commercial channels.

**Duna TV** called the "Nation's Television". Its mission is to serve Hungarian audiences inside and outside Hungary. In 1999 Duna TV has been awarded "Best Cultural Television of the World" by UNESCO. It has a strong cultural mission: produces and broadcasts considerable amount of documentary films on Hungarian and European history as well. Fiction films with historical interest also frequent.

Concerning cultural and educational content Duna TV seems to fulfil most successfully the function of a public television in Hungary.

### *Commercial networks*

- **TV2** (1997-)
- **RTL Klub** (1997-)

These two nationwide commercial channels have very similar profile and programme structure. They provide general entertainment: 75 percent of

their programmes are entertainment programmes: reality shows, talk shows, game shows, fiction films and series. They broadcast one or two programmes per week that could be considered as “infotainment” with historical interest. Topics are chosen from the not-too-far past and usually presented as being in connection with some mysteries or legends of history.

It can be said that history (as things that had happened before the members of the audience were born) doesn't exist according to these channels.

### *Hungarian cable networks with historical interest*

**HírTV** (News TV) Concentrates on actual news and information, but broadcasts Hungarian documentary films on a regular basis

**Spektrum** Channel for culture, education and science, broadcasts educational and documentary films 24 hours a day. Approximately 15 percent of its programmes are history related. (Hungarian and world history is treated equally.)

**Duna II. Autonomia** Member of the Duna TV network. Broadcasts news and information programmes and focuses on Hungarian history. Screens documentaries and historical programmes produced in Hungary.

### *International networks in Hungarian*

- **Viasat History**
- **Discovery Channel**
- **Discovery World**

These channels broadcast international productions dubbed into Hungarian.

### *Statistic data on the programme structure of the five main channels <sup>(1)</sup>*

(1) Based on the survey made by MTA-ELTE Communication Theory Research Group for ORTT (National Radio and Television Commission, [www.ortt.hu](http://www.ortt.hu)). The full survey can be read in Hungarian at: <http://www.ortt.hu/elemzesek/20/25/1234202108musorstrukt>

<b>Programmes broadcasted on the five main channels in 2008 (number of titles)</b>	
educational	5,0%
documentaries	1,3%
fiction (films + series)	20,0%
<b>Programmes broadcasted on the five main channels in March 2008 (broadcast time)</b>	
<b>Cultural, educational/documentary</b>	
MTV1	5,0%
MTV2	18,0%
Duna TV	14,0%
TV2	1,3%
RTL Klub	1,0%
<b>Programmes in comparison with the total amount of broadcast time in March 2008</b>	
<b>Documentaries</b>	
MTV1	1,0%
MTV2	3,2%
Duna	4,2%
TV2	0,0%
RTL Klub	0,2%
<b>Educational</b>	
MTV1	1,6%
MTV2	10,5%
Duna	8,3%
TV2	1,1%
RTL Klub	0,8%
<b>Historical fictions in comparison with the total amount of fiction films broadcasted in March 2008</b>	
MTV1	4,5%
MTV2	0,4%
Duna TV	2,5%
TV2	0,0%
RTL Klub	0,0%
<b>Documentaries broadcasted in March 2008 in comparison with the total amount of films (fiction+documentary) broadcasted</b>	
MTV1	3,7%

MTV2	14,3%
Duna TV	15,8%
TV2	0,7%
RTL Klub	1,6%

### *Audience share of channels*

According to AGB Nielsen, the company that conducts television audience surveys in Hungary, between January 2009 and September 2009 the two main commercial channels (RTL Klub and TV2) together had the 43% share of all audiences, meanwhile the public channels had 14%. Although, the measurement of Duna TV's audience is surrounded by considerable controversy. According to AGB Nielsen Duna TV's share at the Hungarian national market is about 3-4%. The problem is that AGB Nielsen considers only viewers living in Hungary, meanwhile considerable portion of the target audience of Duna TV lives outside national borders (several hundred-thousands of Hungarians in Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine and Serbia), and no official survey exists about the number of these viewers. However, according to a non-official survey conducted in 2007, 50% of Hungarians living in Transylvania choose Duna TV from Hungarian channels available to them.

### **3. Representation of history on Hungarian television before 1989**

Under the socialist system MTV1 and MTV2 as state television channels invested considerable amount of money in producing their own historical programmes. It was evident that this is the most efficient way to spread the official view on national and international history formulated by the Communist Party. It was in 1961, only four years after the regular broadcast had been started in Hungary, when the first history programme appeared on television.

This pioneering 8 part series was called *Panoptikum* [Wax museum] and, as most of early history series on Hungarian television, was engaged in the events of the 20th century. Apparently it was the most important period for the Party to tell its version of. *Panoptikum* dealt with the Hungarian history of the 1930s and 1940s. It presented portraits of leading political figures (prime ministers and party leaders) of the period called the „Horthy era”, named after Miklós Horthy the Regent of the Kingdom

(Regency) of Hungary between 1920 and 1944, and painted extremely disapproving picture of these mainly right wing politicians.

The series was based on original documents accompanied by voice over narration, presented archive footage originated from the period, and contained interviews with witnesses. Unfortunately the episodes of this series have been lost, only descriptions of them exist today.

Another significant project was the documentary film *Memento* about the second world war broadcasted in 1968. The production process lasted for four years and the recordings that of the film was put together had been selected from 1 million meters of archive material.

One of the most outstanding historical programme that have ever been produced by a Hungarian television is the 50-part series called *Századunk* [Our Century]. The producers' aim was to connect educational and entertaining functions. The episodes were based on exhaustive research, however, the presentation was easily comprehensible to the average viewer. The episodes consists of historical events enacted by actors, archive material accompanied by voice over narration, and interviews with witnesses of the historical events.

Thanks to its popularity, and because of the extensive research the episodes were based on, *Our Century* staid on Hungarian television screens for decades. The broadcast of the series started in 1965 and the last episode was aired in February, 1988 <sup>(2)</sup>.

According to the director of the series, Péter Bokor, during these years neither the leaders of the television, nor political functionaries wanted to give him instructions about what kind of events or which historical persons should be presented in the programme. It can be said that as a result of János Kádár, the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party, being not too

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(2) Episodes of *Our Century* include: Episodes 1-11: From the birth of the movies until the workers' revolution in Hungary in 1919 (aired in 1965-66). Episodes 12-16: The „Bankgasse affair” in 1919 (aired in 1969). Episodes 17-20: Money forgery and international conspiracy in the 1920s (aired in 1971). Episodes 21-25: The Relationship between Hungary and the Third Reich (aired in 1976). Episodes 26-45: History of the year 1944: From the occupation of Hungary by the German Army to the occupation by the Soviet Army. (Episodes 26-29 aired in 1981, Episodes 30-37 aired in 1986, Episodes 38-45 aired in 1988.) Another 5 films with content that didn't fit into the episodes had been produced and aired at various times under the series title.

fond of television the party didn't keep it under strict control. Thanks to this „negligence” most of the historical programmes produced during the 1970s and 1980s are of high standard.

During the '80s significant history programmes have been created. In 1982 a decree on improvement of popular educational programmes in mass media was accepted by the Communist Party, and consequently new projects were started in the studios of MTV.

At the same time confrontation with the history of recent Hungarian past - especially 1956 - couldn't have been postponed anymore and became an issue in political and public discussions as well.

In 1984 the broadcast of a 50 part series with the title *Magyar évszázadok* [Hungarian Centuries] was started. The episodes told the history of the country from the foundation of the new Christian state by Szent István (Saint Stephen), the first king of Hungary until the socialization of the economy and culture by the Communist Party in 1949. At the same time world history was being told by another series called *Tévéegyetem* [Tele-University]. The episodes covered the history of the Antiquity<sup>(3)</sup>.

As part of confrontation with the recent Hungarian past the history of the last forty years was told by a series called *A velünk élő történelem* [History that lives with us] in 1985 (11 episodes), and a second season (6 episodes) of this programme in 1986 was devoted to tell the story of the 1956 revolution.

In general it can be said that no considerable effort was made to produce programmes on international history before 1989. All of the significant productions focused on Hungarian history. At the same time it seems evident that these programmes were preoccupied by the history of the 20th century. The number of series produced in connection with this century equals the number of series dealt with all the preceding ages.

Another important issue of representing history on Hungarian television is the question of historical fiction produced by MTV. During the 1960s and 1970s quite a few popular historical adventure series were produced. Most of them take place in the first part of the 20th century and had

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(3) Antiquity in the East (16 episodes), Antique Greece (8 episodes), The Roman Empire (8 episodes).

contributed to create the popular myth of the Communist Party<sup>(4)</sup>. Several of them are still part of public memory today and thanks to their nostalgic value they can be (and are) shown on television and sold on DVDs.

### *The evolution of historiography and TV history*

The period between the end of second world war and the 1970s could be called the heyday of Hungarian historiography. The boom can be associated with efforts to revision the works of Hungarian historians of the so called „Horthy era”. Their views were considered as fascist and imperialist, and historians of the early communist period strived to condemn these works and use this opportunity to legitimate the communist rule. The above mentioned programme, *Panoptikum* is an adequate parallel example of this intention.

In 1945 the Hungarian Academy of Sciences established its History Institute of which the main aim was the „Stalinization of the study of history”, but at the same time the institute had positive effects on the study of history as well. Historical resources has been published, historical journals were established and new trends in historic studies have also emerged. History of economy, social history and several of the history-associated studies (as Turkology and ethnography) were among the most important new trends.

The communist ideology’s pressure on historians was eased from the late 1960s and lots of important and professionally high standard research have been published. The most significant historians of each historic period acted in an advisory capacity on the television’s history programmes of these decades. This is why it can be said that the most significant history series produced by Hungarian television during the 1970s and 1980s (for example the two 50-part series *Századunk* [Our Century] and *Magyar évszázadok* [Hungarian Centuries]) can be considered academically high standard even today.

## **4. History on Hungarian television after the fall of communism**

In Hungary documentary films played the role of catalyst for political change at the end of the 1980s. Around 1988 significant full length documentaries were made about topics that couldn’t had been mentioned before in public. These films were screened in front of packed movie

theatres, although broadcasting them on the state television was impossible at the time. Several years after the political change these “system shifting” films were shown on television but had been lost their appeal to audiences. During the 1990s (Hungarian) documentary films were gradually disappearing from television screens and/or were moved to unpopular time slots, however, after 1989 the number of foreign (especially British and American) documentary and educational series arose considerably.

Soon after the political change the Hungarian television found itself in the midst of political debates. All the political parties required greater say in the future of the state television, meanwhile programming concentrated more and more on current affairs.

In the meantime, public television in Hungary had lost the battle for television audiences in a few years after the birth of commercial channels. By 2002 MTV's share of audiences had been shrunk to 15%. At the beginning of the 2000s, as a result of deepening financial problems, MTV practically ceased producing pre-recorded programmes. Televised items were either news, interviews and talk shows broadcasted from television studios or fiction films and series. This tendency had taken heavy toll on history programmes as well. Historical series have been supplanted by experts sitting around tables and discussing history.

### *History programmes and public debate*

As a result of the production of history programmes by television channels is moderate, debates couldn't really be provoked by them.

In Hungary the typical form of the representation of history is full length documentary film, approx. 100-150 have been being produced every year, 10-15% of which are history related. Production of these films are financed by state cultural foundations and they are screened at film festivals, sometimes on public and cable channels (HírTV) as well. Among these documentary films, from time to time, can be found one or two that are able to provoke public debate. These films usually deal with Hungarian history in the 20th century. Hot themes are the Trianon Peace Treaty, the period between 1919 and 1944, and the relationship between

Hungary and Transylvania - all of these questions are closely connected to Hungary's transition from a middle sized European empire to a small sized East-European country. Films treating such topics easily stimulate debate between nationalist and liberal groups. Strangely enough, television channels usually don't screen the films in question, however, when the debate springs studio discussions on the topic is organized.

All in all, twenty years after the political change and the heyday of historical documentary, these films are attracting practically no audience, and so they are unable to provoke considerable public debate.

At the same time, there are two phenomena worth to mention here. The first is the success of two documentaries that were produced independently from television channels but were considerably well received by audiences in movie theatres and on television as well (*Budapest retro*, 2002; *Budapest retro II.*, 2003 - both directed by Gábor Zsigmond Papp). These films present the everyday life of Hungarians during the socialist era by using archive footage from the '60s and '70s. It seems that audiences prefer the history of everyday to the traumas of History.

The other project that is worth to mention here uses archive footage as well. The internationally acknowledged Hungarian director, Péter Forgács have been producing a series since 1988 called *Privát Magyarország* [Private Hungary] using archive home-movie footage. The material have been shot by common people during the first half of the 20th century and that is collected and re-edited by the director. He creates historical representation from a private point of view by using home movies. The audience can experience, for example, the second world war or the time of anti-Jewish pogroms from a unique and unsettling angle, while the events themselves directly are not present in the pictures. These films have achieved serious critical acclaim and were received considerably well by audiences. Parts of the series can be seen, from time to time, on the public channels.

## **5. Contemporary tendencies of historical representation on Hungarian TV**

Hungarian television channels recently were preoccupied with programmes devoted to remembering the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of political change.

For example there were regular week-by-week reprises of 20 years old newsreels, interviews with important personalities who have taken part in the events of 1989, and several of the so called “system shifting” documentaries were screened on public channels.

Apart from these, typical history related programmes are the following:

*Magazine*

Presentation of a phenomenon by a presenter who introduce the topic then comments archive footage and photos. Sometimes an interview with an expert or a witness also part of presenting the topic.

This format is present on commercial and public channels as well. Usually the historical problem treated in these programmes have some kind of connection with current social or political problems. Therefore most of the topics are in connection with recent Hungarian history.

*Discussion in the studio*

This format is frequently used by public channels. Two or more expert are invited in the studio and they discuss a certain historical problem. (Usually these programmes are the most informative and the least popular ones.)

*The educational format*

Public channels are experimenting with formats in order to attract younger audiences, especially secondary school students.

At spring, during the final exams' season of secondary education, MTV broadcasts history lessons for students preparing for their exams. A presenter - a teacher - introduce the topic then explain, for example, how a historical document can be analysed and used in scientific argumentation, or how can one get historical data by analysing a picture or a sculpture in a

museum. In accordance with the material secondary school exams consist of, these programmes cover all periods of world history.

A few years ago MTV have introduced a format that could be called “school room debate”. The basic idea was to bring together one or two historians and a group of secondary school students in the studio where they would discuss a certain historical problem. The students were asking questions and the historians had to explain difficult problems in a way that was understandable to youngsters. The students were asking questions and the historians had to explain difficult problems in a way that was understandable to youngsters. The format itself was interesting but, being not entertaining enough, did not necessary reach its target audience.

*Historical television series* Not too many of them have been produced recently, although in 2009 MTV has introduced a 46 part (25 minutes each) series with the - not very thought-provoking but clear - title: *Magyarország története* [History of Hungary]. The project seems to be ambitious for several reasons. The producers have left the studio, episodes had been recorded at historical places, during the presentation the presenter actually touches the several hundred year old objects (books, swords etc.) that played crucial part in history. Although the project is rather innovative, its visual aspect is still characterised by static illustrations such as paintings, sculptures, heraldic symbols. (Based upon the responses to this programme at internet forums, the audience appreciates this non-studio-based presentation of history.)

*What do we know about the audience of contemporary history programmes?*

It can be said that there are not too many academic studies covering the

questions related to television audiences. National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT, [www.ortt.hu](http://www.ortt.hu)) is an independent organization supervising media activity in Hungary. Surveys concerning media content and audience responses are usually commissioned by ORTT, however, no survey related to historical programmes have been conducted so far.

The aim of these studies usually to investigate whether Hungarian media operate in accordance with democratic standards. Most of the surveys cover the representation of political parties and government executives. Another topic, that considerable studies can be found about, is the representation of violence and its effects on young people.

ORTT have commissioned so far three surveys covering questions related to audiences. The first were about the effectiveness of the new age limit system introduced at Hungarian television several years ago. The second tried to shed light on the opinions of children and young adults on reality programmes, and the third one has examined the representation of violence from the point of view of the audience.

Similarly, no studies or surveys conducted by universities or research institutes on the audience response to history programmes can be found in Hungary today.

## **6. Final remarks**

The continuity of “national history”, in a certain respect, had been broken before the first Hungarian television channel started to broadcast. After WWII under the Soviet rule Hungary wasn't an independent state, it was first of all a Socialist country, member of the friendship of socialist countries economically and ideologically controlled by the Soviet Union. The failed national uprising of 1956 was the single most important attempt to gain back Hungary's national independence - and together with that the continuity of its national history - after WWII. The uprising were repressed and the socialist system together with the Soviet control had been re-stabilized just before the first history programme would appear on Hungarian television in 1961.

As part of the new ideology there were periods in national history that

more attention were paid to. Especially to those that could be, one way or another, presented as forerunners of socialist ideas and values. The new political system did not want to change or hide the facts of pre-20<sup>th</sup> century history, rather it was suggested that there are important and less important periods in history, hence not all of them are worth to speak or make a TV program about.

Naturally, from the point of view of the new ideology the most important historical period to deal with was the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Being the foundation of this new, socialist historical continuity the Soviet revolution in 1917, in each “satellite” country the commemoration of the “Great Bolshevik Revolution of October” become one of the most important “national” holydays, and this revolution itself was to symbolize history and social evolution to the masses celebrating the anniversary each year by marching on the streets of capital cities all over the Socialist block. Other important “national” holydays and commemorations were held in connection with WWII, with special reference to the Soviet Red Army and its decisive role in the liberation of Europe, and especially of the Eastern block.

In 1989, with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, a new period in Hungarian national history has started. The new beginning was marked by significant full length documentary films about the hidden and suppressed crimes committed by Hungarian communist and socialist establishments during the preceding 40 years. However, the immense political and cultural transformation that were under way at the beginning of the 1990s has soon distracted public attention from historical problems of the past. The television channels and viewers agreed on that that history is what happening right there around them, and the representation of the “constant present” on most of the television channels has commenced.

Since the mid-1990s the most interesting and innovative moving pictures dealing with historical problems - none of them produced by television channels - have been those that are experiment with the innovative use of different kind of historical documents, and consider representation of history as a process of re-organization and re-creation, the continuous reinterpretation of events and materials: Péter Forgács's re-workings of archive home movies, Gábor Zsigmond Papp's use of archive footage in

*Budapest retro*, and political educational films of the socialist period in his successful semi-documentary titled *The Life of an Agent*, 2004).

Concerning the possibility of representing history these artist seems to maintain that no objective account of the past is ever possible. Hungarian history of the post-WWII period and the use of the representation of history during that period is a clear example that can support such an observation. Although, in general a more conservative standpoint is taken by television channels in connection with representing history, attempts for questioning the possibility of objective representation are palpable as well. While the 46 part series of the Hungarian television on Hungarian history (*History of Hungary*) emphasizes and presents the objective facts of history (historic places and objects), the commentary stresses the divergent interpretations that can be drawn from those seemingly objective remains of history.

# History on Lithuanian Television

*Karolis Klimka (Vilnius University)*

Before I start my presentation I can't help but mention that my own personal life history is intimately connected to television and radio: my mum worked for the public broadcaster for more than thirty years. I was literally brought up within the walls of radio and TV studios and spent many hours of my childhood observing behind-the-screen work of studio personnel, hypnotised by the magic of screens, sounds and lights.

As you might know, the most dramatic events before the final collapse of Kremlin's rule in Lithuania revolved, incidentally, around the Public Broadcaster and related institutions such as the Tele-Centre - the TV tower - in Vilnius<sup>(1)</sup>. In their last-ditch attempt to regain control over situation the Soviets resorted to the old teaching by Lenin about the strategic importance of taking control of telecommunications. So they sent tanks and Special Forces to re-claim the once official TV channel. Many hundreds of people met the tanks, determined to resist the occupation. Fourteen people were killed by soviet troopers that night. Eventually, the building of Public Broadcaster fell into the hands of Special Forces and they retained it for two years, but the Soviets never regained power.

I was there that night, in the building, but fortunately I left, together with my mum, several hours before the Soviet Special Forces started their special - and especially bloody - operation. Just to give you an idea of what I unknowingly escaped that night, here is a YouTube clip about how the events unfolded at the television building and elsewhere that night<sup>(2)</sup>. Ironically, the liberation of the occupied building of Public Television two years later coincided with the start of steady fall of the significance and popularity of the public channel. Still, at least as far as historically-themed programmes are concerned, the two channels of the National Broadcaster have been the main suppliers of such programmes up to now.

I have chosen two films and three excerpts to serve as an introduction to my account of the portrayal of history on Lithuanian television channels.

(1) See "January Events (Lithuania)", [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January\\_Events\\_\(Lithuania\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_Events_(Lithuania))

(2) "[part 3] January Events (Lithuania) 1991 January 11", <http://youtu.be/vO-RlyHlwv8>

The first clip represents the early stages of post-soviet documentary film-making dedicated to historical topics. It is an excerpt from *A Ballad about Daumantas* (Baladė apie Daumantą) (Dir. V. V. Landsbergis, BTV, 1995), a film produced by one of the privately-owned TV channels, BTV. The director of this film happens to be a son of one of the leaders of the Lithuanian version of Velvet Revolution, Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis.

The clip illustrates a then prevalent tactic, practised by many, of juxtaposing the false narratives of soviet propaganda with the then newly de-classified images witnessing bloody repressions of the Soviet occupational regime. Typically, the director lets the images “speak for themselves”, relying on their supposed capacity for evidence as well as the rhetorical power of his juxtaposition method. Curiously, similar images of a fierce conductor presiding over the passive and massive choir at the national song festival, which in this clip conveys, of course, the sense of Stalinist manipulation and exploitation of repressed masses of people, has been recurrent in the representations of Baltic velvet revolutions as well, which are also known as “singing revolutions” because the people of Baltic countries expressed their will for sovereignty by singing a lot<sup>(3)</sup>.

So my point is that in the actual fact the images do not speak for themselves, or if they do, they say (or sing) many contradictory things at once: thus, the image of a choir conductor may simultaneously signify both: Stalin(ism) and the people’s sovereign will. I even would go so far as to suggest that it can be read, “anachronistically”, as a nice allegory of the manipulations of democracy that post-soviet countries were going to face.

The second clip is from the same film. Here, contrasting is also used as a means to reveal a personal story behind the impersonal history. A woman, speaking from her home in France, tells the tragic story of her marriage to an anti-Soviet resistance fighter who loved his country as much as, or more than, his wife. The charming photos of a young lady are contrasted with the images of elderly women in a small town, to emphasize the personal sacrifice and patriotic dedication of the film’s main protagonist, the heroic resistance fighter who had to leave his wife immediately after their marriage and was killed on the mission. Again, as in the previous exam-

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(3) See, e.g.: “The Singing Revolution”, <http://youtu.be/CVYqFPq88VU>

ple, this fable of the past can be related to the present and the (then) future as an allegorical comment on the sacrificial ideology of nationalism (or perhaps even on the ascetic discipline of capitalist “growth”).

The third clip represents more recent trends in the audiovisual non-fictional representation of history. It is an excerpt from a film (*The Soviet Hit Men*, Dir. J.Öhman, Lithuania/Sweden, 2008, aired on LTV1 in 2008 and 2009) dealing with the same topic: the armed anti-Soviet resistance; however, this time, and for the first time, an attempt was made to complicate the usual black-and-white portrayal of the historical period at issue. The author of the film is a Swede, not Lithuanian, so he “could afford it”, I mean, he could afford to deal with this topic more freely. He chose to interview witnesses on how the Soviets managed to suppress the armed resistance movement. They did that, it appears, by infiltrating it with their own double agents. The author of the film has been accused of defiling the memory of resistance fighters, who are usually portrayed as spotless heroes, and of giving the floor to criminals, i.e. former special agents.

Interestingly, professional historians soon followed the suit and started to question the idealised image of post-war guerrilla fighters<sup>(4)</sup>. This was a rare case when historical film-making outdid professional historiography in “courage”. Besides, what this example reveals is what I would term structural reasons that compel the public and experts alike to keep returning to this period in country’s history, including the phenomenon of armed anti-Soviet resistance. Infiltration, doubling (of agents), and betrayals, even staging of killings, as practised by Soviet special agencies (and documented in Öhman’s film) - all of this makes the very ground upon which the discourse of political and national “identity” hopes to base itself very shaky indeed.

## History of Television in Lithuania

Television in Lithuania was introduced in 1957<sup>(5)</sup>. The country was then

(4) See in particular: Mindaugas Pocius, *Kita mėnulio pusė: Lietuvos partizanų kova su kolaboravimu 1944-1953 metais* [The other side of the moon: Anti-Soviet resistance fighters’ fight against collaboration, 1944-53], Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas [The Institute of Lithuania’s History], 2009.

(5) Žyngintas Pečiulis, *Televizija: istorija, teorija, technologija, žurnalistika* [Television: History, theory, technology, journalism], Vilnius: LRT Leidybos centras, 1997, p. 45.

a Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the fifteen subordinate republics of the Soviet Union. Television was a Soviet State monopoly, and the local television “committees” of individual republics were subordinated to the central broadcasting authority in Moscow, itself in charge of the Central Television Channel broadcasting to all fifteen republics<sup>(6)</sup>.

The daily broadcast time of the television channel of Soviet Lithuania was much shorter, and its programme less popular, than that of the Central Channel of Soviet Television.

The Lithuanian programme included a large portion of TV production and films in Russian language, with the remainder consisting of locally produced programmes in Lithuanian language, including, for instance, Russian animation for children dubbed into Lithuanian<sup>(7)</sup>.

After Lithuania regained independence in 1990, it took quite a while before the first privately-owned television channel, TV 3, came into existence (1993). BTV was launched in 1993, with LNK following the suit in 1995.

### **The market today**

Today the Lithuanian television sector is divided up among the channels operated by the state-owned public broadcaster LRT (operating two national public television channels, LTV1 and LTV2) and several private groups<sup>(8)</sup>. The two leading commercial channels are TV3 and LNK. TV3 along with its satellite channels is owned by the Swedish Modern Times Group. LNK and BTV are owned by local business conglomerates.

TV3 has retained the market leader positions for a long time. The state-owned channels’ market share has been steadily shrinking. A number of new channels were launched in 2007. In 2008, the old-timer BTV acquired a strong competitor in the guise of a newcomer, “Lietuvos rytas.TV”, a new project of one of Lithuania’s leading news media publishers, “Lietuvos rytas”.

(6) Cf. Sergei A. Muratov, “Soviet Television and the Structure of Broadcasting Authority”, *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 41, Issue 2, 1991, pp. 172-84.

(7) On the situation of national languages in the Soviet system of broadcasting, see, e.g.: Henry Norr, “National languages and Soviet television: A statistical report”, *Nationalities Papers*, Volume 13, Issue 1 Spring 1985, pp. 84-105.

(8) For a more detailed account, see: “TV market in Lithuania” (MAVISE, Database of TV companies and TV channels in the European Union and candidate countries), <http://mavise.obs.coe.int/country?id=19>

Viasat (Modern Times Group) operates the only satellite platform available in Lithuania. Lithuania's first nationwide commercial digital terrestrial television package has been offered by the Swedish-Finnish TEO LT (Telia-Sonera). TeliaSonera dominates the IPTV market.

The switchover to all-digital is supposed to begin in Lithuania in 2012.

## History on television

The high time of historical programming is obviously over on Lithuanian TV channels, considering the fact that presently none of them has special programmes on history. This was not the case during the period from 1990 to 1995 which saw hundreds of films and programmes dealing with history.

For the past 18 years, the national public broadcaster, LRT, has retained the monopoly of producer of historical programmes on the Lithuanian air, whereas the three major commercial channels, LNK, TV3 and BTV, have taken the risk of including historically-themed programmes only occasionally. Still, one of the most ambitious recent audiovisual projects on history was undertaken by the private LNK channel (more on this below)<sup>(9)</sup>.

During soviet times the only "national" TV channel in Lithuania was a state-controlled television channel that broadcast an assigned portion of programmes in Lithuanian and Russian languages. It enjoyed less popularity than the Central Soviet Television Channel (broadcasting in Russian).

Historical programmes and films during soviet times were supposed to serve propagandist interests of the central authorities in Moscow. The representation of history, especially the events of WWII and subsequent geopolitical divisions, was exploited by soviet propaganda as a means of supporting the legitimising myths and narratives of the Soviet rule. This is one of the reasons why there were so many historical films

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(9) On the economical peculiarities of media industry in small countries, and in Lithuania in particular, see: Aukse Balčytienė; Kristina Juraitė, "Impact of Economic and Cultural Factors on Television Production in Small Nations", *Medij. istraž.* (god. 15, br. 2) 2009. (33-47), [http://74.125.155.132/scholar?q=cache:YNTcnFJoSFcJ:scholar.google.com/+Impact+of+Economic+and+CulturalFactors+on+Television+Production+inSmall+Nations&hl=en&as\\_sdt=2000](http://74.125.155.132/scholar?q=cache:YNTcnFJoSFcJ:scholar.google.com/+Impact+of+Economic+and+CulturalFactors+on+Television+Production+inSmall+Nations&hl=en&as_sdt=2000)

and programmes on Soviet TV, including local TV channels of individual Soviet republics. Despite their ideological “assignments”, many of the films made during soviet times have retained some documentary and artistic value<sup>(10)</sup>.

Naturally, after Lithuania regained independence in 1990, filmmakers and TV producers rushed to denounce soviet propaganda myths in their productions<sup>(11)</sup>. They considered their task to consist in reconstructing the history of the nation distorted by the propaganda. Documentary productions of last 18 years or so focused mainly on interwar and post-war periods in the history of the country.

Subjects given a great deal of attention have included the Stalinist deportations of Lithuanian people to Siberia as well as other repressive measures of Soviet government, the fates of deported people, armed resistance against the Soviet occupation, the cultural and political life of pre-war Lithuania, as well as histories of landed property objects once owned by famous landowners. As the most sensitive topics touched upon in these programmes and films one can list Lithuanian-Polish and Lithuanian-Russian relations. The tragedy of Lithuanian Jews has always been something of a taboo, despite the heroic attempts by several filmmakers and TV producers to approach it in audiovisual terms<sup>(12)</sup>.

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(10) Skirmantas Valiulis, “Kinas, istorija ir ideologiniai kontekstai” [Cinema, history and ideological contexts], *Lietuvos sovietinė istoriografija: teoriniai ir ideologiniai kontekstai* [Lithuanian soviet historiography: theoretical and ideological contexts], eds. A. Bumblauskas, N. Šepetys, Vilnius: Aidai, 1999, pp. 255-71. See also: Roma Pauraitė-Puplauskienė, *LTV filmai ir jų kūrėjai* [Lithuanian Public TV's films and their authors], Vilnius: Algimantas, 2009.

(11) On the impact of television (and of the stereotyped historical narratives in particular) on the popular constructions of “national identity”, see, e.g.: Vilma Cingiene; Skaiste Laskiene, “A Revitalized Dream: Basketball and National Identity in Lithuania”, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, Volume 21, Issue 5, November 2004, pp. 762-779.

(12) A particularly notable contribution to the documentation of the tragedy of Lithuanian Jews has been made by documentarist Saulius Beržinis; see Benjamin Smith, “Getting the Killers’ and Collaborators’ Faces on Film: Lithuanian filmmaker Saulius Berzins Records Not the Victims for Posterity, but the Ones Who Pulled the Triggers”, *Forward*, July 20, 2001, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-79269960.html>. On the problems of Holocaust “remembering” see e.g.: Solomonas Atamukas, “The hard long road toward the truth: On the sixtieth anniversary of the Holocaust in Lithuania”, *LITUANUS*, Volume 47, No. 4 - Winter 2001, [http://www.lituanus.org/2001/01\\_4\\_03.htm](http://www.lituanus.org/2001/01_4_03.htm), and: Dovid Katz, “On Three Definitions: Genocide; Holocaust Denial; Holocaust Obfuscation”, [www.holocaustinthebaltics.com/2009SeptDovidKatz3Definitions.pdf](http://www.holocaustinthebaltics.com/2009SeptDovidKatz3Definitions.pdf)

Very often filmmakers and especially TV producers have resorted to forms of biographical narrative, presumably not for the love of it, but because of the cost-effectiveness of this way of presenting historical materials<sup>(13)</sup>.

One historical TV programme in particular, hosted by the channel 1 (LTV1) of the public broadcaster, has enjoyed an exceptional popularity amongst all kinds of audiences, despite criticisms raised by professional historians. It was entitled “Būtovės slėpiniai” (1993-2004), a title difficult to translate because of its use of archaisms; roughly, it means “The hidden record of the past”.

The programme employed two leading academic historians, one supposedly representing the “old school” of historical studies and the older generation of academics, and the other standing for the younger generation of history scholars<sup>(14)</sup>. The whole programme was staged as a dialogue between the two historians. It was devoted almost exclusively to the Middle Ages period of Lithuanian history. Although dominated by “talking heads”, the programme occasionally included visual illustrations or reports about the historians’ visits to the memorial places related to the topics under discussion.

The authors of the programme declared at the outset their intention to debunk the “romantic imagery” of the past, especially myths about the Pagan Lithuania (or the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that used to be the largest country in Europe)<sup>(15)</sup>. Despite the programme’s success, it was criticised for its narrow range of views and topics presented. Attempts were made to broaden the discussion by involving a bigger number of interlocutors. Eventually, the programmes of this type (and the authors

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(13) Rūta Šermukšnytė, “Lietuvos istorija dokumentiniame kine ir televizijoje. Diskurso konstravimo ypatybės” [History of Lithuania in cinema and television: Peculiarities of discourse construction], *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, Vol. 14 (2005), p. 120.

(14) For the views of the younger presenter on the problems of audiovisual presentation of history, see: Alfredas Bumblauskas, “Vizualinė istorija: koncepcijos paieškos atnaujintos istorikos ir dramaturgijos kontekstuose” [Visual history: in search for a conception in the contexts of renewed history-writing and dramaturgy], *Istoriografija ir atvira visuomenė* [Historiography and Open Society], Vilnius, 1998, pp. 312-316.

(15) On the cultural significance of this programme, see: Rūta Šermukšnytė, “Audiovizualinės istoriografijos atvejis Lietuvoje: televizijos laida „Būtovės slėpiniai“ [A case study of audiovisual historiography in Lithuania: Television programme “Būtovės slėpiniai”], *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, vol. 20 (2007), pp. 8499.

of “Būtovės Slėpiniai” in particular) were relegated to the channel 2 of LRT (LTV2), which specialises in “cultural” programmes (very narrowly defined) and enjoys very low audience ratings, before disappearing from the air altogether.

A more complicated narrative frame is exemplified by such films as the one telling the story of the “amber route” (*Gintaro kelias* [Amber Road], Dir. A. Barysas, 2005). The film traces the movement of amber and its products from the then-territory of Lithuania to the cities of Ancient Rome. It departs from the historical tale about the emperor Nero-led expedition to the Baltic Sea region in a search for amber in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AC. The authors of the film attempted an ambitious research comprising several countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Austria, Italy and Russia. The director of the film explained he was intrigued by the historical tales about Romans’ encounter with “barbarians” (i.e. peoples of the Baltic region)<sup>(16)</sup>. Such method of presenting historical data, however, is an exception rather than a trend in the landscape of Lithuanian television and documentary filmmaking.

Speaking of public responses, worth mentioning is the case of a film on the inter-war and post-war armed resistance against the Soviet occupation of Lithuania and the suppression of the resistance movement by Soviet Special Forces, entitled *The Soviet Hit Men* (2008), by a Swedish author, Jonas Öhman. The film stood out from the mass of the production concerning this period of recent history, in that it presented an interpretation of the events by a “foreigner”, who attempted an exploration of the situation of Lithuanian partisans who were caught by the Soviet Special Troops (“hit men”) and forced to collaborate with the Soviet side in chasing the remainder of resistance fighters. This film provoked angry reactions by some viewers and public commentators for its alleged “defiling” of the memory of partisan fighters<sup>(17)</sup>.

The very fact that even a modest attempt to complicate or nuance the standardised historical narrative can provoke such negative reactions says a lot not just about the relative poverty of the local scene of his-

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(16) “*Gintaro kelias*”, <http://arvydasbarysas.wordpress.com/gintaro-kelias/>

(17) See an interview by the historic adviser of the film: “Rytas Narvydas. Kita „Smogikų” interpretacija” [R. Narvydas: A different interpretation of the hit men], <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2009-05-28-rytas-narvydas-kita-smogiku-interpretacija/3113>

tory representation, but also about the relationship and expectations of at least some segment of viewers towards historical audiovisual production. In this particular case, it appears that the interpretation by a “foreign” author is perceived as disturbance of the still waters of the national canon.

Although the absolute majority of historical programmes on Lithuanian TV channels are characterised by a degree of nostalgic tone<sup>(18)</sup>, a distinct genre of “nostalgist” audiovisual narrative can be identified. It appears to have a firm and loyal constituency amongst audiences because it has retained its positions on the air for a long time and in spite of all the turmoil around. Examples of this genre include a programme on Lithuania’s small towns (*Mūsų miesteliai*, LTV1, since 1989<sup>(19)</sup>), where the team of authors visit the places they are talking about and interview local inhabitants. Typically, the history told ends with the last partisan fighter killed by the Soviet Special Troops. The more recent soviet past of a particular town is rarely considered part of the history worth telling.

Another example of “nostalgist” history telling is the programme entitled “Signs of time” (“Laiko ženklai”, since 1999, previously hosted by LTV1, now on BTV), presented in a mournful tone by a woman in black<sup>(20)</sup>. Typically, the presenter is shown standing or walking against the background of a landscape when evening is coming or, alternatively, sitting in a library with a manuscript in her hand. The programme’s interlocutors very often include right-wing politicians, and the range of topics touched upon rarely oversteps the inter-war period.

Arguably the most ambitious TV project on history in the last 18 years was a fifteen part documentary series entitled *The Secret Archives of 20th Century* (XX amžiaus slaptieji archyvai, LNK, 2004-7), aired on the second most popular private television channel LNK. The series was ad-

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(18) Rasa Čepaitienė, “Sovietmečio atmintis - tarp atmetimo ir nostalgijos” [Remembering the soviet past: Between rejection and nostalgia], *Lituanistica*, vol. 53 (2007). N 4(72), pp. 36-50.

(19) See a characteristic interview by the author of the programme: “Nijolė Baužytė: Lietuvos miesteliuose nebėra kam gyventi” [N. Baužytė: “There is no one to live in Lithuania’s townships any more”], <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2010-02-22-nijole-bauzyte-lietuvos-miesteliuose-nebera-kam-gyventi/40833>

(20) The author of this programme explained her ideas in this interview: “Ne tik laiko ženklai” [Not only the signs of time], *Atgimimas*, November 3-9, 2006, N 41 (914), <http://www.atgimimas.lt/articles.php?id=1162483555>

vertised as the first documentary TV series about the modern history of Lithuania<sup>(21)</sup>. It was simultaneously aired on two smaller channels (TV1 and INFO TV). The series were subsequently released in DVD format, in two sets (amounting to 16 hours). Encouraged by the success of the project, the authors later published a book based on the materials of the TV series<sup>(22)</sup>.

The series resulted from collaboration between a TV journalist, G. Sviderskytė, and an academic historian, A. Anušauskas, who in the meantime has established himself as a prominent representative of Lithuanian Conservative Party and was appointed as the Head of Parliamentary Committee for State Security. No wonder that the public presentation of the DVD set of TV series was hosted by the Ministry of National Defence (sic!).

“The Secret Archives of 20th Century” has been praised for its “creative” approach to the subject matter. The authors described their work as a “collection of detective stories”<sup>(23)</sup>. The series employed all the mandatory means of “modern” audiovisual history treatment, including (besides the sensationalist tone) re-enactments of significant historical episodes by actors (including half a hundred real troopers). Filming took place, besides Lithuania, in eight countries, including Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Russia, Germany, Britain, United States and Israel.

With a view to becoming a national best-seller, the authors chose to deal with the “most dramatic” moments of the country’s history in 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as “the last hours of the Cabinet”, i.e. events leading to the subversion of Lithuanian government and annexation of Lithuania by the Soviets. Many episodes of the series were based on research conducted specially for this project. Newly excavated materials allowed the authors to exploit the obscurities of the past for the sake of “detection” effect.

Despite its ambitions, *The Secret Archives of 20th Century*, although

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(21) See a trailer of the series: <http://youtu.be/P2nbYCBeyig>

(22) “XX amžiaus slaptųjų archyvų komanda švenčia pabaigtuves” [The team of the *Secret Archives of 20th Century* is celebrating a merry-making], <http://www.vtv.lt/naujienos/filmai/xx-amziaus-slaptuju-archyvu-komanda-svencia-pabaigtuves-v-3.html>

(23) “Per LNK - naujos „XX amžiaus slaptųjų archyvų“ dalys” [LNK presents new parts of the *Secret Archives of 20th Century*], <http://www.lnk.lt/index;news;show,id.3,item.212>

indisputably setting a new standard for Lithuanian audiovisual history-telling, has not achieved much in terms of problem-raising approach that would complicate the very frame of historical narrative. In this respect it did not manage to surpass some more modest previous projects, such as *The Soviet Hit Men* mentioned above. As confirmed by the authors themselves, *The Secret Archives of 20th Century* was to confirm “the patriotic values”, instead of problematising the discourse on which those values depend for their reproduction.

By way of a summary one can say that during the years of regained independence Lithuanian TV producers and filmmakers have tended to avoid potentially controversial topics in (or approaches to) history<sup>(24)</sup>. Even “sensationalist” ways of presenting historical materials have just recently found their way on the Lithuanian air. Authors of TV programmes as well as filmmakers prefer “safe” topics such as biographies or histories of famous families and their “great services to the country”. A natural consequence of such preferences is too personalised a way of presenting historical events, neglecting more complicated socio-political determinations.

Off-screen voice-over is still omnipresent, and rare attempts to introduce a more poly-vocal approach to the national history canon have been met with hostility by the public and “experts” alike. The visual aspect of history programmes is characterised by static illustrations such as portraits, heraldic symbols etc. The most common method of “historical research” remains interview or visiting places under discussion.

As has been argued by those academic historians who have taken interest in audiovisual representation of history by Lithuanian authors, insofar as most films and TV programmes made since the declaration of country’s independence were concerned with promoting and re-affirming the nationalist narrative centred around The Nation as its main protagonist, and around The State as the essential form of the Nation’s self-express-

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(24) Rūta Šermukšnytė, “Nuo reprodukcijos prie revizijos: tautos atminties kūrimo dinamika 1988-2005 metais Lietuvos dokumentiniame kine ir televizijoje” [From reproduction to revision: the dynamics of the production of the nation’s memory in Lithuanian documentary cinema and TV production (1988-2005)], *Nacionalinio tapatumo tęstinumas ir savikūra eurointegracijos sąlygomis* [The continuity of national identity and self-construction in the process of Euro-integration], eds. A. Andrijauskas et al., Vilnius: Kronta, 2008, pp. 258-275.

sion, natural subjects of the focus of such productions have been the historical origins of national self-consciousness, the formation of the State, the loss of sovereignty, and the many Golgothas before the restoration of the independence<sup>(25)</sup>. More problematically, these tales have been told in a linear fashion, supported by a mono-logic voice-over, such that no alternative perspectives and no questioning of the “origins” of the very truth transmitted this way is allowed.

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(25) Rūta Šermukšnytė, “Tautos atminties vaizdai: vizualinis XX amžiaus Lietuvos istorijos stereotipizavimas Lietuvos dokumentikoje” [Views of the nation’s memories: a stereotyped vision of the Lithuanian history of the 20th century in Lithuanian documentary films], *Lietuvos istorijos studijos*, Vol.15 (2005), p. 84.

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# Presenting history on Slovak television

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## Introduction

Mass media reflect and at the same time form the historical consciousness of a society. They have an indisputable impact on how a nation perceives its own history. Studying television broadcasting of a country with a totalitarian history can provide an inspiring discovery of how the country's ideology formed its nation's collective memory, what part of this memory persists until the present day, or how it eventually changed throughout the years of transition to democracy.

In this context, Slovakia is quite unique, since as an independent state it had existed only for a short period during World War II (March 14, 1939 - May 8, 1945), and later only from January 1, 1993, this time already with a democratic system of law. Prior to World War I, Slovakia belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire; after the war, it joined the first Czechoslovak Republic. Following the end of World War II, Slovakia again became a part of Czechoslovakia. If we look even further back to the history, from the era of Great Moravia (9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> century) - a Slavic state located 'in between the Vistula and Dnieper rivers' - through the times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire all the way to the joint republic of Czechs and Slovaks, the Slovak nation was always a part of some larger entity. This factor inevitably influenced the collective consciousness of Slovaks regarding their history. Television did not always reflect this collective memory in the same way, not even during the totalitarian era. Nevertheless, in order to be able to say anything relevant regarding the various forms of presenting history by television - first the state-owned, later the public one, and ultimately also by the private channels - we first need to briefly describe the development of TV broadcasting in Slovakia. Consequently, by analysing the most commonly covered topics and the typical features of Slovak historical programmes, we will attempt to describe how media changed their attitude to history - both the general as well as the Slovak one in particular.

## A brief history of TV broadcasting in Slovakia

Regular TV broadcasting on the Slovak territory started on November 3, 1956. At that time, the state-owned Czechoslovak Television had been already broadcasting for several years on the Czech territory. During the first year, the Slovak television studio broadcasted only twice a week and the programme was practically the same as on the Czech television. By November 1957, the television broadcasted every day except Mondays. Regular daily broadcasting started in 1959, with common programmes for the entire Czechoslovakia and with several Slovak programmes. At that time, there were only 794 Slovak television concessionaires. It is not really possible to speak of any relation to history or style of its presentation by television during this period: television was focused on the here and now, being dominated by live broadcasts from sport events, drama performances or concerts. Broadcasting also included children's and youth programs, non-fiction popular nature or travel programmes. History was covered only occasionally, namely in TV news when Czechoslovakia was commemorating some anniversary.

During the 1950s and the early 1960s, the program structure was set, although with still too many irregularities. Documentary series were often broadcasted one episode per month, or they just vanished after the first episode, only to reappear several months later. Yet, the daily TV news, magazines for children, students and schoolchildren, for communist party liners, women or agriculturists were strictly present and broadcasted at a fixed hour and/or day. During this period, television from time to time offered Western-European movies, especially French, set in the World War II era, or other historic periods. In 1959, Bresson's film *A Man Escaped* (1956) was aired, as well as Carné's *Children Of Paradise* (1945). However, historical films of Eastern European production dominated, namely from Russia, Hungary and Poland, but also Czechoslovakia. Practically all broadcasted Eastern-block films were about WWII - about the struggle against fascism or the liberation by the Red Army.

Historical documentaries and other non-fiction programmes about history were broadcasted mainly on occasions of important anniversaries (the 'Victorious February' [1948], the end of WWII, The Great October Socialist Revolution [1917]). Television program regularly featured series like *The History Of The Communist Party Of Czechoslovakia* (e.g. within the

*People's University* cycle, premiere March 1961), popular-educational series for students, for the Young Pioneers, or teachers. In prime-time, documentaries were usually aired on Thursdays, in case of ideological anniversaries in morning times and then also prior to the main evening program that usually consisted of a feature movie related to the anniversary. Already since the late 1950s, television offered quiz shows and contests focused on knowledge of recent or more distant past of Czechoslovakia or USSR (*What You Know About Your Country*, or *About USSR*, or *About The Slovak National Uprising*, etc.).

In 1968, under the influence and in correspondence with the social and political liberalisation, the Slovak television studios presented - along with certain Western-European features - also some recent films of the Czech and Slovak New Wave movement, and the new Slovak TV fiction production<sup>(1)</sup>. To a certain degree, these programmes included discussion about the then pressing issues, political and cultural events, or about the transformation of The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic into a federation of two separate countries.

Unlike in the 1950s and the first half of 1960s, when historical programmes were clearly dominated by topics of WWII and the liberation, new topics started to surface around 1968 - the anniversary of the establishment of the first joint state of Czechs and Slovaks (1918), but also themes of national revival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that led to the establishment of Czechoslovakia.

Following the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, the television program content became once again ideologically rigid, literally 'normalised'. Many of the 'Western' features were replaced; mostly by the Soviet, Polish, Hungarian or East German 'ideologically appropriate' films. Yet, some of the Western criminal series or entertainment fiction films were still aired. In the area of movie production for cinemas, the effect of normalisation was felt only after 1970. However, television has a significantly shorter reaction time: due to its production conditions and faster pace of production, it is able to respond to political changes much sooner than in the case of movie production for cinemas.

(1) Along with movies set in the present (*Intimate Lighting*, dir. I. Passer, *The Party And The Guests*, dir. J. Němec, *Tango For a Bear*, dir. S. Barabáš), television also broadcasted films about WWII: the relatively new *Closely Watched Trains*, dir. J. Menzel, but also older films by Polish directors: *The Passenger*, dir. A. Munk, or *Canal*, dir. A. Wajda.

This was demonstrated not only by the almost immediate inclusion of the ideologically appropriate features and series into the TV program, but also by the fact that during September 1968, all discussion programmes perished from the screen, and were replaced by ideologically correct and carefully prepared speeches or comments. Normalisation had an interesting impact on the entertainment formats. In the 1960s, the *You Pass The Verdict!* programme was broadcasted irregularly (which covered fairly insignificant cases of divorces, work-related incidents, etc.), in which spectators were allowed to pronounce the guilty/not guilty verdict on the participants by phone. After 1968, audience lost the chance to vote, all people could do was call the studio during the live broadcasting and place questions to the experts. Consensus and democratic discussions were replaced by the paternalistic approach of the communist functionaries.

In the 1970s, the number of the Slovak Television concessionaires was approximately 720,000. Starting from the 1970, the Czechoslovak Television was broadcasting on two channels (and also partly in colour from February 14, 1970). The second channel's offer consisted especially of reprises of old documentary or fiction films. The broadcasting structure was rather fixed, with fiction films being aired on Friday and Saturday evenings, and documentaries or journalistic programmes in the afternoons. Broadcasting for children and the Young Pioneers was scheduled for mornings or early afternoons. This structure persisted until the end of the 1980s.

In the 1980s, it is the programmes' content that is changing rather than the structure: many titles are 'closer' to the audience than in the previous decade. The number of entertainment programmes, series and features is increasing; the number of cartoons and films for children and the youth has also risen significantly.

November 1989 and the social, political and economical changes that followed the Velvet Revolution represent a major influence and determining factor in the TV broadcasting transformation. Since November 1989, the state Czechoslovak Television broadcasted live from public demonstrations in Prague and later in Bratislava, and TV news could finally be broadcasted without censorship. The ideologically significant broadcasts (the Army, Police, and Border Guard magazines) started to disappear or mutated into specialised magazines.

In early 1990s, the broadcasting structure of the Czechoslovak television underwent an important transformation. The Soviet and the East European features and documentaries have been in part replaced by the West European (French, British or German) or USA features and series, and the amount of the entertaining talk shows, music shows and political satire have grown considerably. During the first 6 months of the year 1990, the Slovak studios broadcasted many of the old fiction and documentary films that were banned after August 1968.

In the 1990s, the 1<sup>st</sup> channel of the Czechoslovak Television became more or less federal, with common broadcasting for both the Czech and Slovak territories; the 2<sup>nd</sup> channel was progressively turned into the channel with two separate nationalised transmissions. This has been fully applied since September 4, 1990. In 1991, the new law on the Slovak Television was passed in the Slovak Parliament (Act no. 254/1991 Coll.) and the former state-owned television became a public service television.

From September 1990 to December 1992, the 1<sup>st</sup> channel of the Czechoslovak TV was called the F1 (Federal channel), and the 2<sup>nd</sup> channel was named the Slovak Television (S1, then STV). The Czech equivalent of S1 was the Czech Television (CT/CTV). Since September 1990, a third Czechoslovak Television channel entitled OK 3 (on the frequency of which the Soviet Television was broadcasting until the 1989) started to offer a selection of foreign TV programmes (CNN News, French TV5 News, videos from the French musical channel MCM, Screensport News, various fictions and series). Starting from June 6, 1991, OK 3 broadcasted only for the Czech territory and the TA 3 channel was set as the Slovak equivalent of OK 3.

The independent public service STV with its two channels (STV1 and STV2) was “born” on January 1, 1993, the day when Czechoslovakia split into two independent states. The Czechoslovak Television ceased to exist on December 2, 1992 by decree of the Act no. 597/1992 Coll.

Before 1991, the Slovak studios were producing only 30% of all the TV programmes; logically, the amount had to increase in 1991 and 1992 (but initially the STV1 broadcasted only few hours a day, a practice that was employed in the beginning of the Czechoslovak broadcasting in the 1950s).

By 1993, the STV encountered numerous problems with adapting its pro-

gram structure, production and financing to the new conditions (this included the necessity to increase production, as well as to procure modern technologies and, later in the 1990s, to raise the capacity to win back audiences taken away by the private or foreign TVs).

The first full-scale [national coverage] private channel VTV appeared in the 1995, and was soon followed by TV Markíza, which started broadcasting in 1996, and later by several other private TV channels<sup>(2)</sup>.

Moreover, the difficulties that the public service STV was struggling with were combined with a complicated political situation. One after another, political parties currently in power tried to “format” STV, to make the financing transparent or even to use it for their political goals. Between 1993 and 2004, STV had 13 different managements.

In 2004, STV announced a “new start”. Its new director, with experience from private, audience-focused televisions, has reshaped the broadcasting structure - it started to resemble private channels broadcasting (it included talk shows, quizzes, series, and blockbuster fiction features). Nevertheless, this commercial transformation concerned only the 1<sup>st</sup> STV channel. The 2<sup>nd</sup> channel was designed for a rather demanding audience, with its program including quality art movies, archive films, documentaries, culture and art magazines, intellectual evening discussions, etc. However, criticism of the management appeared soon, complaining about the lack of original Slovak production, both fiction and documentary. The non-fiction programmes rarely ventured beyond the scope of mere TV journalism.

During the 1990s, the cable television network covered the larger Slovak cities; the rest of the concessionaires could take advantage of the satellite broadcasting, later of the IPTV. The digitalisation of TV broadcasting is still in progress.

- (2) In chronologic order of broadcasting start date (the list comprises only major channels with full national coverage - signal available on entire Slovak territory):
- 1993: Slovak Television (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> channel, 3<sup>rd</sup> channel since 2008; the 1<sup>st</sup> channel is the third most watched of all Slovak TVs)
  - 1995-1999: VTV (Vaša televízia [Your TV])
  - 1996: TV Markíza (from 2009 broadcasting on two channels - Markíza and TV Doma), the leader on the Slovak media market
  - 1999-2001 TV Luna
  - 2001: TA3, the only news channel in Slovakia
  - 2002: TV JOJ, the number two on the Slovak media market (from 2008 broadcasting on two channels: JOJ and JOJ Plus)
  - 2008: TV Lux (Christian Television)

## Presenting history on television

According to the communist ideology and in line with the pro-Soviet orientation, the Czechoslovak Television had, since its beginnings in the 1950s, significantly preferred topics related to WWII, especially the anti-Nazi resistance (e.g., the Slovak National Uprising in 1944 and the Prague Uprising of May 1945), and the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. In addition, history of the revolutionary movement (Soviet and Czechoslovak) and of the Communist Party was regularly presented - TV broadcasted educational documentaries, magazines for students and schoolchildren, teachers or party liners. The Russian October Revolution of 1917 was commemorated each November up to November 1989. Nevertheless, between 1956 and 1989, some history programmes about the ancient or modern history appeared occasionally - the focus was places on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or on the national revival movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (this was the case especially towards the end of the 1960s). The period of WWI is also covered only to a minimum extent, with focus still on WWII. In reality, historic periods other than WWII appear almost exclusively in historical movies or series about specific historic figures (Matej Bell, Ján Jessenius, Ľudovít Štúr). Surprisingly, programmes on rulers also appear rarely, if we do not take into consideration the infrequently aired 'costume features'.

However, within the framework of broadcasting for schoolchildren, high-school students or history teachers, there were certain specialised series (educational or methodical), covering larger periods of history. In general, however, presenting history on TV was - and to the present day remains - very selective. At any rate, while the previous regime strictly determined which periods were appropriate for presentation and commemoration, presenting history today is much more arbitrary.

What is interesting about the portrayal of WWII - the period most frequently covered during the totalitarian regime - is how its topics and motives were repeated, or how they gradually developed. Feature production about WWII from the 1950s was dominated by "front-line" action movies, and later complemented by somewhat more intimate uprising titles; in the 1960s the focus shifted to the perspective of a child protagonist<sup>(3)</sup>. The so-called

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(3) Typical examples of "action" movies include *Vlčie diery* and *Captain Dabač* by Palo Bielik, shot for cinema, but on anniversaries regularly aired on TV. The more intimate titles include

“concentration-camp” films and movies about the Jewish genocide appear only occasionally and mainly in features, not in TV production.<sup>(4)</sup> Despite the fact that many movies for cinemas were broadcasted also in TV usually three years after their premiere, movies about holocaust appeared rarely in TV. Unlike in the case of some historical features that were broadcasted with literally chronic regularity on the occasion of certain anniversaries<sup>(5)</sup>, holocaust movies never became the ‘inventory’ of a TV program.

The anniversaries were always the pretext and at the same time the reason for broadcasting historical fiction movies or documentaries.

Before 1989, history programmes appeared always in February (to celebrate the victory of the Communist Party in February 25, 1948), in April (Lenin’s birthday and the eventual liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army troops), in May (the end of WWII and the Victory of the Soviet Army over Nazism), in August (the Slovak National Uprising, August 29, 1944) and in November (the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917).

The anniversary of the end of WWII and liberation by the Soviet Army was usually celebrated with ‘foreign movies’ - from USSR, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, East Germany - be it movies for the cinema (*Ballad Of A Soldier*, *The Cranes Are Flying*), however, less known movies also appeared, about which we know only little without precise information from TV archives.

Apart from feature movies, anniversaries were commemorated also by

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e.g. *Zvony pre bosých* (S. Barabáš). Child protagonist is featured in *A Song About the Gray Pigeon* (S. Barabáš), and later in *If I Had A Gun* (Š. Uher).

- (4) Radok’s *Distant Journey* (1949) was the first Czech example of concentration and extermination camp movies, however, since it was banned, it did not appear in TV. In the first half of the 1960s, several movies about the holocaust were produced in Czechoslovakia (*The Boxer*, dir. Peter Solan, *The Shop On Main Street*, dir. J. Kadár, E. Klos), but their approval process was difficult. For example, in the case of *The Shop On Main Street*, it was argued that the Czechoslovak cinematography already had a movie about Jews - the Czech *Transport From Paradise*, dir. Zdeňek Brynych. See Macek, V. Ján Kadár. - Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 2008, p. 148. However, none of these films was broadcasted in TV prior to 1989.
- (5) On the occasion of the Slovak National Uprising, the most frequently aired movie was Bielik’s *Vlčie diery*, on the occasion of the ‘Victorious February’ - the 1948 communist coup d’état, the *Citizen Brych* by director Otakar Vávra is broadcasted, which was based on the eponymous novel by Jan Oščenašek (1958, 1960, 1973...). In 1962, it was replaced by TV adaptation of this novel entitled the *Spring Breeze* by director Ladislav Helge. On round anniversaries of the end of WWI, Bielik’s movie *44* was broadcasted, since it was one of the few movies that dealt with this historic period.

numerous live broadcasts from manifestations (from Moscow on the occasion of the end of WWII, from Prague and Bratislava on the occasion of the 'Victorious February,' from Banská Bystrica on the occasion of the anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising [SNP]), and also by national or foreign montage documentaries and series, or by national TV series based on veteran "witness" accounts (however, these appeared approximately in mid-1960s). In late 1950s and in the first half of 1960s, the non-fiction production covering recent history (i.e. WWII) begins to provide an outlook into the future - damages caused by the war are, in line with the socialist ideology, always presented with hope for better times. Later on, a more commemorative tone prevailed.

In 1970, the world commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWII, and the Eastern Block also the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lenin's birth. Television reflected on these anniversaries thoroughly. From January to May, it aired several documentaries, the so-called TV "inscenations" [TV stage-plays] and reprises of cinema movies (*Lenin's Legacy, On Lenin's Command, Returns To Lenin, Lenin's Youth*). Occasionally, Lenin-related programmes appeared throughout the year, so that in November 1970 on the occasion of the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution (GOSR), television had already aired all of the available titles, including the chronically repeated *Ten Days That Shook The World*, or other adaptations of John Reed's book about GOSR.

Likewise, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the WWII and liberation was commemorated already from January by the *Milestones* programme about the gradual liberation of Czechoslovak towns and villages - naturally with emphasis on the role of the Soviet Red Army. Practically the same broadcasting structure appeared 5 years later - with the only difference that the focus was placed on the anniversary of the end of the WWII, since it was 'more round', although the number of Lenin-related programmes was in fact the same. They were just moved from primetime to specialised programmes for teachers and schools. In its own turn, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SNP surprised with a richness of national TV production - especially documentaries and journalistic production. In 1974, the infinitely repeated cinema movies almost did not appear. All in all, it can be said that throughout the years, anniversaries have also obtained a regular structure: they focused on all age groups - from schoolchildren, through working adults, to the seniors.

The fall of the regime in November 1989 represented an especially significant milestone in Czechoslovakia's contemporary history. It brought not only the beginning of a transition to democracy, with its social and economic implications, but also a great revision of history.<sup>(6)</sup> After 1989, the liberalisation and the end of WWII remained in television's program agenda, but the point of view changed.<sup>(7)</sup> Lenin's birthday and GOSR were "erased" from the historical calendar; in August, not only the SNP but also the Occupation by the Warsaw Pact armies in 1968 was commemorated; and November was not the month of the Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship anymore, but the month of the fall of the totalitarian regime.<sup>(8)</sup> This new anniversary deserves some more information.

On November 17, 1999, the Slovak Television broadcasted the same program as it did in 1989 to emphasize the difference between the "then and now"). However, the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the totalitarian regime's fall was reflected differently in the media. In line with its philosophy of the 'new beginning', the public STV wanted to prove it was capable of producing original non-fiction programmes - thus on the occasion of the Velvet Revolution's anniversary, it prepared an entire succession of TV documentaries on the Velvet Revolution: one devoted to the key figures

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- (6) In professional historiography, historians that were banned from publishing started writing again; exiled historians and journalists do so as well. Ultimately, it can be said that once the revisionist emotions subsided, which oftentimes had a nationalistic or lustration background, professional historiography did not reject pre-November research and its outcomes. What did change was the school outlines for teaching history, as well as the collective perception of individual events from Czechoslovak history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Slovakia started studying its totalitarian past slightly later than the Czech Republic. The Nation's Memory Institute was established several years later than its Czech counterpart.
- (7) In 1990, at the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a traditional war film in prime time was replaced by a discussion with Czech historians revising the Prague uprising (*The Prague Uprising: Myths and History*, broadcasted on May 7, 1990), however, on May 9, *The Ordinary Fascism* by Mikhail Romm was the main programme of the evening). In 1991, TV offered a richer program: in May, it aired not only the Soviet movie *No Other Way*, but also Radok's *Distant Journey* (1949) or Truffaut's *The Last Metro*.
- (8) Thanks to the 'rediscovery' of certain historic events that all of a sudden became worth remembering or commemorating, it is possible to cover topics that had previously been a taboo, removed from the collective memory, or which so far did not belong to the scope of general knowledge. This way, the topic of liberation of Czech territory by US troops appeared, the 'Masaryk tradition' was revived, and Christian themes are covered as well. Historical programmes now feature the history of USA and the Western world, history of religions (*People And Gods*, broadcasted in January 1990), as well as numerous Western-European views of the period of totality in Czechoslovakia (British documentary *Absurdistan* aired on November 17, 1990); the number of movies on Shoah also increased significantly.

of the revolution, another about the student movement, etc. Five years later, the public STV did not take so much effort. It had combined the approach used in 1994 and 2004, broadcasting the same titles it had produced for the anniversary in 2004, even with the original 'packshot' divide - the large number 15, which was utterly absurd on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In between the documentaries, STV inserted programmes aired in 1989<sup>(9)</sup>.

For the young Slovak Republic, or at least for the nationalistic part of its political representation, March 14 became an important anniversary of the first autonomous Slovak State (1939-1945). Of course, this is no state holiday, nor a day of commemoration. Thus, in TV broadcasting, it appears only in TV news, usually reported on as a possible source of tension. For March 14, various nationalistic parties or civic groups (some being now banned), with covert or open adherence to fascist or neo-Nazi ideology, usually announce public marches or gatherings.

After 1989, Easter became an unusual type of 'anniversary'. Apart from numerous Passion features, or other movies about Jesus Christ (from the *Jesus Christ Superstar* musical, through TV movies like *The Life Of Christ* (TV) in early 1990s, to Scorsese's *Last Temptation Of Christ* or Gibson's the *Passion Of Christ* - after 2000 all the way to the present day), the Easter season became a pretext for broadcasting historical movies with ancient-Greek or ancient-Roman topics.

## Changes in presenting history on TV after 1989

The Velvet Revolution of November 1989 had a major impact both on the broadcasting structure and on the programme content. The first year after the revolution, banned films and documentaries reappeared, the official history was revised, or - especially in the mass media - a "thick black line"

(9) In 2009, the JOJ Plus channel made a serious effort to address the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of November 17. Even though it is an entertainment 'retro' channel, since 2008 it broadcasts the *Pod Lampou* [In The Lamplight] discussion programme, which was previously featured on the public Dvojka channel. On November 17, 2009, JOJ Plus aired a programme focused on the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, the content quality of which outperformed even the original documentary about the Velvet Revolution that was broadcasted on Jednotka, the 1<sup>st</sup> channel of the public STV. On the other hand, the commercially focused Markiza offered only a tabloid of about 20 minutes, *Nežná 1989*, a chronicle of some sort featuring events and issues from 1989 all the way to the present day, with large titles, impressive music and advert-like editing.

between the past and the present was supposed to be drawn, accompanied by the denunciation of the criminal political regime and by “lustration” of new regime’s politicians.

As a result of the previous, ideologically formatted historiography that had an impact namely on the contemporary history, during the transition period of the 1990-1993, the greatest number of programmes were representations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century history (not only of the WWII, but of the inter-war period as well, and - a new element - the revision of the period of the 1960s and the 1970s). However, the number of the original or foreign documentary series on the ancient history and ancient civilisations increased, too. All in all, an increasing diversity of historic programmes can be observed. At the same time, television’s strategy of that time can also be identified: to air reprises of ideologically acceptable films produced or purchased already prior to 1989, to broadcast new acquisitions with current topics, to offer a different view of own history, but also that of the WWII, or to produce own original movies, series or teleplays as soon as possible<sup>(10)</sup>.

During the so called Mečiar’s era, between 1994 and 1998, the public service STV served as the political propaganda channel once again. The program was full of political comments and “historizing” reportages (about then and now, stressing the benefic influence of HZDS, the governing party of the Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar and libeling the political opposition and their political decisions). These were not proper historical programmes but we need to precise that the rhetoric on TV during Mečiar’s government reminds strongly the totalitarian one.

(10) Only during the first months of 1991, the public TV gradually aired original three-part teleplay set in the times of the Great Moravia (Mojimír II), the *Two Women* based on Moravia’s novel, the *Christopher Columbus* TV series, Wajda’s *Ashes And Diamonds*, the *Story* (an Italian movie about a tragedy of a Jewish teacher and her sons during the WWII), original biography *Alfred The Great*, German feature documentary *Conference in Wannsee*, English TV play *Enemies of State* based on a biography of Z. Tomin, a view of the WWII through the eyes of a child in the film *Kindergarten* by Yevgeni Yevtushenko (all broadcasted in January); also the *Adolf Eichmann* ‘documentary’ play by R. Kipphardt, a Soviet documentary *Group of Comrades* about the elite persecuted by the communist regime, a two-part Soviet historical movie *The Agony - Rasputin’s End*, a Polish-Hungarian movie about WWI called *C.K. Deserters* (all in February 1991). In March, reprises or older or archive historical movies were offered as well - *Heaven’s Riders* (J. Polák, 1968) about the pilots of the exile Czechoslovak army during WWII, or many times aired ‘costume movie’ *6 Women Of Henry The VIII* by A. Korda, as well as original TV plays - *Dido*, a trilogy on the persecution of early Christians in the Roman Empire, and another trilogy *Bitter Chariot of Hope* based on the Old Testament stories.

As far as the audiovisual portrayal of the world history is concerned, in the late 1990s, the public STV gradually focused increasingly on the audience, reaching out for the offer of foreign televisions, purchasing ready-made programmes, and producing less and less original fiction or non-fiction programmes on international history, or only co-producing original movies or series produced by independent productions. After 2000, majority of films about history are produced namely by private productions<sup>(11)</sup>; the public television produces first and foremost journalistic or discussion shows, usually related to anniversaries. However, STV now refrains from producing features, or popular-history or historic-memory series that became typical for Czech Television's production. Despite this situation, STV remains the only television purchasing and broadcasting original author features or original historical series.

The private Slovak channels do not produce any original history programmes. Also, their broadcasting of foreign history programmes is more or less accidental; if there are any historical fictions or series broadcasted (historical non-fiction is very rare on private channels), they are usually bought from the foreign televisions. The only exceptions are the archive Czech and Slovak films, broadcasted by a commercially oriented private channel, e.g. the second channel of TV JOJ (JOJ Plus). The private news channel TA3 has no special history broadcasting, and it does not produce any historical documentaries; however, on the occasion of historic anniversaries, it usually puts together historians, political scientists or sociologists with a TV anchor, offering a TV discussion in the framework of 'The Theme of the Day' broadcasting.

Again, the most frequently presented period is the history of the WWII (both in documentary and fiction films), followed by the Czechoslovak history and/or European history after the WWII up to 1989.

The ancient history appears in the Slovak broadcasting mainly thanks to the Hollywood history fiction features. Yet, the documentary series on ancient civilisations of the Greek or Roman Empires or on Far East civilizations, even a digest of the European history, may appear from time to time on the public

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(11) Filmmakers begin to shoot their movies in 'self-production' - establishing their own production companies, obtaining finances partially from Culture Ministry's funds (the Pro Slovakia fund, since 2010 the Audiovisual Fund), from the third sector, or looking for foreign co-producers for their films. The public Czech Television offers favourable conditions namely for documentarists; to certain extent also other foreign televisions.

STV. Seldom, there are fiction programmes on WWI and almost never on the Middle Ages period or the Modern times. By way of a conclusion, we may make a slight exaggeration - the Slovak channels present either the ancient history, or the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nothing in between...

### **Audience response to history programmes**

There are very few original academic studies covering the issues related to television audiences. Certain sociologic surveys were made on the Slovak film audiences, but no relevant study exists about the Slovak television spectators and their response to the history programmes.

The monitoring of TV program audience rates in households is made by means of the so-called “People Meters” that have been used in Slovakia since 2004. Results of the audience monitoring are sometimes published in journals or specialised revues on media or advertising (the *Stratégie* monthly). The public service channel Dvojka [2<sup>nd</sup> channel], which is the main channel broadcasting historical documentaries, rarely reaches over a rate of 2%. In a certain way, the newspapers reviews or online articles on television programmes reveal audience reactions in the internet forums, but they are rarely a subject of studies or analyses. That is why this section will focus only on several specific examples of audience responses to historical programmes that have appeared in mass media during the past couple of years.

In comparison with the Czech Republic, there is still a considerable lack of audiovisual productions that would systematically reflect on the period between 1948 and 1989. While the public Czech Television has produced documentary series about recent history (persecution of different social groups in the 1950s, the samizdat and the dissent during the normalisation period, or the culture and film in the 1960s, that had or still have an important impact on the public), in Slovakia there are only rather sporadic contributions in this area.

However, in 2008 and 2009, the Slovak Television chose the same model of anniversary documentary series as the Czech Television (*The Magical Eight, 20 Years After The Velvet One...*). Production of these series (the first part of the *Magical Eight* was released in May 2008, the last one in August 2009) has

not engendered such debates as its Czech counterpart had achieved in the Czech Republic. Production of these documentaries served rather as a proof that the Slovak Television really does produce original documentaries<sup>(12)</sup>.

Much more lively debates were inspired by the announcement of the reprise of *Povstalecká história* (The History Of Uprising) in August 2009, a fictional series shot in 1984, characteristic of the official pre-November interpretation of the Slovak National Uprising (which used to be represented uniquely as a manifestation of the communist anti-Nazi resistance). The Slovak Television announced that, before and after the screening of the series, there would be a discussion with historians about the accuracy of the presentation of the past, but eventually STV used only an information cartoon prior to each part of the series, stating that this presentation of the past is outdated and influenced by the political regime during which the series was produced.

However, in August 2005, *Povstalecká história* was broadcasted, for the first time since the 1989, on the public STV. It was not followed by any intense reactions in newspapers or discussions forums.

The period from 2004 to 2005 was marked by a scandal and by several public protests and debates in relation to STV's premiere of a documentary about a post-war anti-Jewish pogrom in a small Slovak town of Topoľčany entitled *Miluj blížneho svojho* (*Love Thy Neighbour*, 2004, dir. Dušan Hudec). The premiere was set for June 2004. In May 2004, the director general of the public STV refused to broadcast it, declaring the film was unfinished. In reaction to this statement, an internal screening was held and the film was proclaimed complete. The director general still insisted on cancelling the film's premiere, justifying it by the anti-Semitic assertions of one of the film's protagonists. However, the film's director Dušan Hudec was certain the main reason for the his film's cancelled premiere was the impression it made of the Catholic Church, whose post-war attitude towards Jews could hardly be qualified as moral. After many

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(12) In February 2008, prior to the election of STV's director general, the Slovak documentary filmmakers made an official appeal to the Slovak Television Council to increase the original documentary production within the public television, where it was literally in agony. The appeal caused explosive reactions in STV, which assured the public that over 100 original documentaries, magazines or non-fiction series were in production or post-production, one of them was the Magical Eight series.

public protests<sup>(13)</sup>, the STV finally agreed to broadcast the film, but only as an introduction to a 2-hour talk show *Pod lampou* [In The Lamplight], which in fact violated the film's independence. In July 2005, the Slovak Television Council made an appeal to the director general to broadcast the film again - in September 2005, on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pogrom in Topolčany, but this time without the talk show. STV director took the council's appeal as a simple recommendation, and the film was not broadcasted. (One of earlier films by Dušan Hudec, *Divokí psi* (1995, Wild dogs) had a similar fate, but without the huge public stir that took place in the case of *Love Thy Neighbour*. STV refused to broadcast *Wild Dogs*, probably because of the negative image that the film was supposed to make of the Russian nation and its culture.)

Another film that caused heated public debates was Dušan Hanák's full length documentary for cinemas entitled *Papierové hlavy* (1995, Paper Heads, TV premiere 1997), co-produced by STV. The film reveals communist atrocities by means of re-montage of archive footage (newsreels and instructional police films) and using the victims' testimonies. In addition, *The Paper Heads* was furtively drawing a parallel between the practices of the communist establishment from before 1989 and those of the political representation in power in 1995. It was mainly this analogy that caused the most intense public reactions.

It is very characteristic that all of these films somehow relate to the portrayal of Slovakia's post-war history, or to the revision of the communist historiography. On one hand, this demonstrates the fact that the most controversial are those periods whose protagonists are still alive, but on the other hand it reflects the continued interest of the media in the most recent history. such movies also demonstrate how the public and the other media understand the role of the public television: broadcasting controversial historical programmes in private televisions does not draw any public discussion or requests for explanatory comments prior to their airing<sup>(14)</sup>.

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(13) See online archive of SME daily: <http://www.sme.sk/c/1500132/miluj-blizneho-svojho-zastavila-jedna-veta.html> (May 19, 2004) <http://www.sme.sk/c/2437281/stv-a-miluj-blizneho-svojho.html> (October, 24, 2005) and also [http://www.holocaust.cz/cz2/resources/ros\\_cho-des/2004/07/blizni](http://www.holocaust.cz/cz2/resources/ros_cho-des/2004/07/blizni), all links are dispoible on May 11, 2010

(14) Broadcasting of the Czech normalisation-era series *30 Cases Of Maj. Zeman*, main protagonist of which was an officer of ŠtB, the communist secret police, set in 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, on private TV channel JOJ Plus did not cause any scandal, while its broadcasting.

## The main tendencies of historical representations on television

Glancing at a TV program, it could seem that the most common example of a historical presentation in TV are currently the foreign costume fiction films, representing various periods or centuries up to the WWII, which are broadcasted both on the public TV as well as on the private channels<sup>(15)</sup>.

However, the costume films - attractive for the audience and usually produced by large US productions - are less numerous than the Czech and Slovak films about the recent or more distant history. This fact is most probably caused by the 'ostalgia' that some private channels rely on, especially the JOJ Plus. In its broadcasting, this channel even resurrected the profession of a TV presenter, which the public TV cancelled due to financial reasons in 1990s. Even though there are not so many Czech and Slovak historical movies produced during the past 20 years, it only increases their audience rates<sup>(16)</sup>. Practically all historical films that are broadcasted on Slovak channels were produced by independent private studios (or co-produced by the Czech public television) and were primarily designed for movie cinemas. In addition, they practically all deal with the topic of WWII and the period of the 1950s up to the so called "normalisation" or the "real socialism".

By far the most favourite and at the same time the most efficient TV article are the reprises of the 'pre-November' features and series. They can be divided into two groups - older pre-November comedies and series set in the-then present<sup>(17)</sup>, and older movies that had already been conceived

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(15) Here, we can include movies like *Gladiator*, *Troy*, *Passion of Christ*, *La Reine Margot*, *Titanic*; or WWII films like *Schindler's List*, *Enemy At The Gates*, or even old "art films" like the Soviet *Ivan's Childhood*, the *Ballad Of A Soldier*, *The Cranes Are Flying* or the French *Hiroshima Mon Amour*...

(16) From among the more recent Czech or Slovak historical films or retro-movies on history, we may mention *Musíme si pomáhat* (Divided We Fall, dir. Jan Hřebejk, 2000; WWII), *Tmavomodrý svět* (Dark Blue World, dir. Jan Svěrák, 2001, WWII), *Všetci moji blízcí* (All My Loved Ones, dir. Matěj Mináč, 1999, Shoah), *Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále* (I Served The King Of England, 2006, 1920-1956), *Krajinka* (Landscape, dir. Martin Šulík, 2000, 19th century up to 2000), *Pelíšky* (Cosy Dens, dir. Jan Hřebejk, 1998, 1960s) *Pupendo* (dir. Jan Hřebejk, 2003, 1980s), *Muzika* (Music, dir. Juraj Nvota, 2007, 1980s).

(17) The Czech series *The Hospital In The Suburbs* (script Jiří Dietl, dir. by Jaroslav Dudek, 1976), the *30 Cases Of Major Zeman* (dir. Jiří Sequens, 1974-1979), representing crimes perpetrated between 1945-1973), *The Ambulance* (script Jiří Hubač, dir. by Jiří Adamec,

as historical ones<sup>(18)</sup>. Documentaries and series form a special group that we look upon individually, as it is primarily designed for a 'more demanding audience,' which is why the private, commercially focused televisions practically do not broadcast this type of production. Thus, the only channel that both broadcasts and occasionally produces this category of films is the public STV. The non-fiction movies and series are primarily aired on the more intellectually focused Dvojka. Its program is dominated by foreign series about the turbulent history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, war conflicts, terrorism, political assassinations, etc. They are usually popular-education montage documentaries with a voice-over commentary and 'talking heads' of experts, e.g. the German series *Stalingrad* (BroadviewTV, 2004), *Assassination Attempts That Shook The World* (UK, 2007), *International Terrorism Since 1945* (UKTV History, 2008)

In addition, ethnographic or anthropologic documentary series are broadcasted, too: *Les voix oubliées - Chroniques et mémoires de l'humanité*, France 2004; *Neanderthals, The End Of An Era*. STV, dir. Karol Kopecký, 2006; or even various documentaries on geography, history and culture - *Treasures Of Civilization* (France 2007-2008, dir. Nicolas Thomi), which is a presentation of cities and monuments listed as a Unesco World Heritage Site. Increasingly, the entertainment historical sci-fi are broadcasted on Jednotka [1<sup>st</sup> STV channel] - e.g. the series *Primeval* (2007, dir. Cilla Ware, UK).

From among the Czech and Slovak (co-)production, it is important to mention at least some broadcasted documentaries on the 20<sup>th</sup> century history. Many of them offer new historical knowledge, thus predetermin-

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1984); comedies *Sweet Troubles* (dir. Juraj Herz, 1984), *4 Murders Are Enough, Darling* (dir. Oldřich Lipský, 1970), *Kulový blesk* (dir. L. Smoljak, Z. Podskalský, 1978) and many others. From time to time, this group also included films that became allegories of the regime, e.g. *Joseph Kilian (Postava K Podpírání)*, dir. Pavel Juráček, 1963).

(18) The Bell Tolls For Barefoot (Stanislav Barabáš, 1965, WWII), I'm Sitting On A Branch And I'm Fine (Juraj Jakubisko, 1989, 1946-1956), The History Of The Uprising (Andrej Lettrich, 1984, WWII), The Song Of A Grey Pigeon (Stanislav Barabáš, 1961, WWII), If I Had A Gun (Štefan Uher, 1971, WWII), The Shop on Main Street (Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos, 1965, WWII, Shoah), Closely Watched Trains (Jiří Menzel, 1966, WWII), or even the Czech sci-fi comedy I Killed Einstein, Gentlemen (Oldřich Lipský, 1969, contra-factual history from 1939 up to the 21st century...). Few series are representing the 19th and the early 20th century: *Dobrodružství kriminalistiky* (Adventures of Criminology, dir. Antonín Moskalyk, 1989) or the Middle ages: *Marketa Lazarova* and *Valley of the Bees* (both František Vlácil, both 1967).

ing to a certain extent the text version of historiography. We list at least some of them: *Nicolas G. Winton - The Power Of Humanity* (dir, Matej Mináč, 2002, WWII - Shoah), *Among Blind Fools 1-3* (dir. Petr Bok, script Martin Šmok, 1999, Shoah), *Between The Star And The Crescent 1-3* (Peter Bok, Martin Šmok, 2003, the Cold war period), *The Key To Determining Dwarfs Or The Last Journey Of Lemuel Gulliver* (dir. Martin Šulík, 2002, 1960s), *66 Seasons* (dir, Peter Kerekes, 2003, 1930s up to present), *Love Thy Neighbour* (dir. Dušan Hudec, 2005, 1945), *Cooking History* (dir. Peter Kerekes, 2009, WWII up to present), *The Journey Of Magdalena Robinson* (dir, Marek Šulík, 2008, Shoah).

These documentaries are built mainly on testimonies of survivors, combined with re-montage of archive footage. Sometimes they also reuse a voice-over commentary, when it is necessary to relate to a different topic or to explain the historical and political context that is not evident from the testimonies.

The series with an obvious education purpose, like those by Peter Bok and Martin Šmok, combine a voice-over commentary with the mosaic of archive footage or still photographs to open or explain the theme of the film, tying it up with testimonies of survivors and discussions of professional historians. *Among Blind Fools*, for example, deals with a specific topic of the Slovak WWII history - the Jewish anti-Nazi resistance within the Bratislava Working Group and their project of saving Slovak (and European) Jews. The film's historical supervisor was Yehuda Bauer; the documentary presents plenty of unseen archive footage. The role of the commentary is important here, therefore the most precious elements of the film are interviews with the Jewish resistance members, and the confrontation of their testimonies.

The same principle as in Bok's films is used in Dušan Hudec's *Love Thy Neighbour*, but the testimonies are dominant here, while the commentary and the archive footage serve only to contextualise various testimonial discussions, and the interviews with historians are completely missing.

Films by Peter Kerekes are one of the rare art documentaries. The use of archives here has a strong aesthetic dimension: in his *66 Seasons* (2003) for instance, Kerekes is projecting private archive footage on the water-table of a swimming pool to show the liquidity and virtual nature of

memory. There is no voice over commentary, the testimonies come from the dialogue with the director and from the film medium itself (reconstruction and re-enactments with a retro pattern is used to simulate the period the survivors are talking about).

Marek Šulík's *The Journey of Magdaléna Robinson* (2008) is a documentary portrait of a Slovak photographer and Auschwitz concentration camp survivor, with a very traditional use of newsreel footage to illustrate the political regime in Slovakia during the WWII. Thus, the film makes an interesting use of the audiovisual apparatus as an external memory - Magdaléna Robinson died during the shooting and the director decided to "re-film" some of her testimonies to stress the fact the very last Shoah survivors are passing away, and that we will soon have the tendency to enclose Shoah into external memory stocks: he is screening one of the interviews with Robinson on a small TV placed in a wide holocaust museum, and he films this "installation," thus achieving a strange alienation effect<sup>(19)</sup>. This practice is reused in the same context by Peter Kerekes in his *Cooking History* a year later (Marek Šulík was the editor of the film).

An unusual example of presenting history on TV is Martin Šulík's *Key For Determining Dwarfs*. It is a staged documentary based on intimate diaries of the Czech scriptwriter and director Pavel Juráček, in which the staged parts are shot as home movies - they are shot on 8mm film and are combined with archive footage from the 1960s. The voice-over consists of parts of Juráček's diaries. Except for the fiction movies and historical documentaries, Dvojka also airs regular weekly reprises of 50-year-old film newsreels (in Slovakia, newsreels vanished from movie theatres only in 1990, despite the existence of the daily TV news at 7 p.m. since 1956). From 2010, Dvojka is broadcasting also the "Retro Journal", the reprise of TV News made between 1961 and 1980. The film newsreels are broadcasted without introduction, but the Retro Journal is introduced and presented by STV's chief archivist Milan Antonič.

Apart from with the reprises of the old newsreels, there is currently no

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(19) It was only recently that I learned from a personal interview with the director that the title towards the end of the film is misleading. Marek Šulík obtained the video footage with Robinson's testimonies only after her death, he combined it in a montage, added some archive footage and shot only the scenes with a TV set in the museum.

regular programme on history in television. From time to time, especially on occasion of anniversaries, cycles of TV documentaries are shown, as it was done for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Velvet Revolution in November 2009. But these documentary cycles, such as the *Historical Panorama*, can consist of quite heterogeneous documentaries and are broadcasted at various times and days of the week.

Nevertheless, the “shape” of a typical Slovak (or even Czech) documentaries remains invariant: usually they use the same voice for the voice-over commentary, they use (all of them the same) STV archive footage and very interchangeable interviews with participants, politicians, historians or politics science experts.

Likewise, TV discussions on history, panels or the “*Theme Of The Day*” (TA3) have all a fixed structure: historians or politicians react to a topic presented by the TV anchor. Each topic, before being discussed, is also presented by a short video (usually from TV News, or an archive newsreels).

Despite the existence of original documentary cycles and debates on history organised on the occasion of various anniversaries, neither the public STV nor any other television produces programmes such as Marc Ferro’s *Parallel History* on La Sept/Arte that aired towards the end of the 1980s and in early 1990s. Slovak discussions and panels are introduced by a TV anchor, but the discussions are quite “rigid,” within only historians’ discussions. Filmologically speaking, there is no real reaction of historians to the short videos, or to the way how the topic was re/presented by the video.

Prior to 1989, there were programmes such the *Historical Calendar* or *History of the Small Mechanised Muse* that used clips of archive footage and a voice-over commentary, plus an anchor. This kind of programmes is not produced anymore, thus the same principle is used for programmes like *Reporters*, which is dealing with contemporary issues, political affairs or economical problems.

Presentation of history programmes or their introduction to the audience by a TV anchor accompanied by experts - historians or film theorists - was experimentally introduced by STV’s Dvojka in 2003 and 2004. Reprises of old films or documentaries were introduced by short, 3 to 5 minutes

long presentations of a “talking head” accompanied by a subtitle with the person’s name and profession. For economical reasons, the reprises are now broadcasted without any introduction.

## **History, memory and television**

To conclude, a certain parallel between the evolution of the Slovak historiography and the evolution of the history presented on TV can be made. After 1989, the Slovak historiography revised the way of presenting past events, but also of selecting historical topics. Practically all school history textbooks were declared to be ideologically incorrect and were gradually replaced with new ones. Historical research focused on the so-far uncovered problems or periods (especially the totalitarian era, the history of the persecuted groups, the history of representations...).

Despite this fact, the “thick dividing line”, so often mentioned by the media, separating Slovakia history into that before and after 1989, did not materialise in research. Many works remain relevant to the present day, even though their rhetoric or some specific parts bear the mark of the previous regime.

The same tendency can be observed on TV: some films or documentaries that were often broadcasted simply vanished. The new TV documentaries then focused on new topics: many of them were portrayals of people persecuted by the previous regime (priests, intellectuals, kulaks, bourgeois, etc.)

But while historians continued to present results of their research, the public television, due to its economical transformations, produced less and less new history programmes and preferred to draw on its archives, especially in case of fiction films.

However, transformation of methods and approaches in historiography has its equivalent in the history programmes production: interest in the small, private history is strongly present in both of them. In historiography, the method of the oral history is often applied, in documentary production, there is an upsurge of intimate, testimonial films and films reusing the private archives footage.

In the textual historiography, there is a plethora of research on propaganda and the history of representations. This has no equivalent in TV history, maybe with the exception of reprises of the old film newsreels or the old TV news. But there is a great tendency to use them to increase the “*ostalgia*” on TV.

This inevitably leads to formulating a side-note on the fact that Slovak television (including the public STV), despite its inevitable influence on retention and changes of the collective memory, follows first and foremost the marketing and media strategies that secure its audience rates. Naturally, these strategies more or less also form the nation’s memory, however, this influence is much less targeted and considerably less researched.

This text is only a first draft from a series of studies about presenting history in the Slovak TV broadcasting. It is impossible to provide an exhaustive and thorough report on just a couple of pages, with each reduction or limitation possibly leading to misrepresentation. Therefore, this general outline does not include details on the transformation of TV broadcasting after 1989, rather, it focuses on and prefers continuity of historiography and media history to partial overviews of the individual programmes, which focus predominantly on entertainment and only accidentally on presenting history. The goal of this text is to provide an overview, not an analysis. In order to offer an analysis, it would be necessary to literally “dig through” the TV archives. Which will be the next stage of our research.

# Marriages (not only) of convenience: history in Czech Television & television in Czech history

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## I. The history of television broadcasting

The roots of television broadcasting in the Czech Lands are to be sought in the period of the so-called First Czechoslovak Republic. Probably the first Czech television set was constructed according to the British model by the film technologist František Pilát as early as 1930<sup>(1)</sup>. Evaluated as historically significant are the television experiments of Assistant Professor Jaroslav Šafránek from the Physical Institute of the Medical Faculty of Charles University<sup>(2)</sup>. Another interesting chapter in the planning of television broadcasting was the project of the Baťa shoemaking concern for its own television broadcasts in the town of Zlín (the company's seat), based on the American and British models<sup>(3)</sup>. The Czech Lands<sup>(4)</sup> could not compete with their western neighbour as concerns the size of the market and commercial strength, but in terms of the status of the media, they traditionally belonged to highly advanced regions of Europe. Thus for instance the first public broadcasts of the Czech radio station Radiojournal went.

In the 1930s, the Czech media industry had at its disposal a viable structure of synergically interconnected audio-visual, sound and printed media, similarly to other industrial countries of Europe<sup>(5)</sup>. But unlike Germany,

- (1) Milan Šmíd, *Historie televize v ČR* (History of television in the Czech Republic) - 1. WWW: <http://www.louc.cz/pril101/p33his1.html>. (25. 4. 2010). Petr Szczepanik, *Konzervy se slovy. Počátky zvukového filmu a česká mediální kultura 30. let* (Canned words. The beginnings of sound film and Czech media culture in the 1930s). Brno: Host, 448.
- (2) Dtto. For more information in English about J. Šafránek, see e.g. WWW: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/285617> (25. 4. 2010).
- (3) Petr Szczepanik, *Konzervy se slovy...*, 448-450.
- (4) The Czech Lands ranked among the most industrially advanced regions of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy; the economies of Slovakia and Ruthenia, on the contrary, were traditionally oriented predominantly on agriculture. Hence the different level of the media development in the initial decades following the disintegration of the monarchy.
- (5) The idea of synergy of the Czech media industry is dealt with in detail by Petr Szczepanik

interwar Czechoslovakia did not succeed in implementing regular television broadcasts. Apart from the at first cautious, though serious interest of the state and the inadequate commercial strength of Czechoslovak investors, no small role was also played by the political situation of the time when the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak Republic was threatened by Nazi Germany. The plans for television broadcasting were definitively thwarted by the Nazi occupation and the Second World War.

Soon after the end of the war, the television project began to assume much more clear-cut contours. The first operational equipment for television broadcasting was presented in the spring of 1948 at the International Radio Exhibition MEVRO in Prague. The technology proper could be speedily installed inter alia thanks to the fact that following the liberation of Czechoslovakia, Czech engineers made use of some of the know-how of several formerly German companies which had participated in the television broadcasting research carried out in the Sudetenland.<sup>(6)</sup> But further development of television broadcasting in Czechoslovakia was artificially inhibited, because in the cold war period the expertise and radar technologies were used for military purposes<sup>(7)</sup>.

It was not until April 1952 that the Czechoslovak Government unexpectedly issued a decree charging the Ministry of Telecommunications with responsibility for the construction and operation of radio and television technical equipment<sup>(8)</sup>. In the summer of the same year, a committee was set up at the Government Presidium to deal with technical issues, coordinate television broadcasting and task individual state industrial sectors manufacturing transmitters and receivers, ensuring transmission and developing camera tubes<sup>(9)</sup>. On the May Day of 1953 - in a complicated

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in his book *Konzervy se slovy...*, 448.

- (6) In particular by Fernseh A.G. in Smržovka near Jablonec nad Nisou and Zentralstelle für Röhrenforschung in Tanvald in North Bohemia. After the war most of the equipment of these companies was however moved to the Soviet Union. Milan Šmíd, *Historie televize v ČT - 1*. WWW: <http://www.louc.cz/pril01/p33his1.html> (25. 4. 2010). Cf.: *Rozpravy Národního technického muzea v Praze* (Discussions of the National Museum of Technology in Prague), vol. 160. The series *Dějiny vědy a techniky* (History of Science and Technology), vol. 6, Praha 1999.
- (7) Dtto.
- (8) Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak Republic, Chapter 8, Government Decree no. 13 of 8th April, 1952.
- (9) Milan Šmíd, *Historie televize v ČR - 2*. WWW: <http://www.louc.cz/pril01/p34his2html> (25.

political situation a few weeks after the death of J. V. Stalin and Czech President Klement Gottwald - the Prague Studio of Czechoslovak Television started its public broadcasts.

Regular broadcasts began in February 1954, followed by the opening of other regional studios: in 1955 in Ostrava (for North Moravia and Silesia), in 1956 in Bratislava (Slovakia), in 1961 in Brno (Moravia) and in 1962 in Košice (Eastern Slovakia). Starting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, 1954, Czechoslovak Television broadcast regularly 3 days a week, later in the year the periodicity increased to 4 days a week, in 1955 to 5 and in 1958 to 7 days weekly<sup>(10)</sup>.

Comparing with countries which have access to the sea, Czechoslovakia as a landlocked country had (and still has) at its disposal only a limited number of terrestrial broadcasting frequencies. The second channel of Czechoslovak Television nonetheless went on the air in 1970. In 1973 the second channel started broadcasting in colour, and in 1974 colour programmes appeared on the first channel as well. The third channel, the frequency of which had been kept free in the preceding years for the needs of the Soviet occupation army, went on the air in May 1989, several months before the political changes in our country<sup>(11)</sup>.

The essential milestone in the history of Czech television broadcasting was the year of 1991, the date of the establishment of independent Slovak and later Czech Televisions; the existing Czechoslovak Television continued operating the first channel. Act no. 468/1991, on the operation of radio and television broadcasting<sup>(12)</sup>, which was adopted in October 1991, differentiated between two categories of broadcasters - public ones, whose operation is envisaged by law, and license holders (private radios and televisions). Czechoslovak Television ceased to exist as of 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1992, with the split-up of Czechoslovakia<sup>(13)</sup>.

The first licence for the operation of private television broadcasting was

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4. 2010).

(10) *History in a nutshell*. In WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/english/history.php> (25. 1. 2010).

(11) Dtto.

(12) The full text is available in English on WWW: <http://ceskatelevize.cz/english/act/php> (25. 4. 2010).

(13) *Konec federální televize* (The end of federal television). WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/federace.php> (25. 1. 2010).

granted to FTV Premiéra (later on Premiéra, TV Prima), which went on the air in 1993 in Prague and Central Bohemia. A real breakthrough was the appearance of the first nationwide commercial television TV NOVA, which started broadcasting in February 1994. Its attractive programmes and excessively benevolent legislation helped it win the interest of masses of viewers, but also led to many future protracted litigations between the Czech state and international investors who accused it of failing to protect their investments. The second half of the 1990s can no doubt be called an era of commercial television, while the public Czech Television struggled to find its identity, manoeuvring between its duty of public service and the need to achieve a rating high enough to attract buyers of advertising time.

## **II. The here and now of television broadcasting**

As in other countries, in the Czech Republic, too, the most important technical change in the television broadcasting of recent decades is digitalization. It was launched at an experimental level in 2005, and at the same time, a heightened interest in the acquisition of satellite and cable transmission licences was observable, with private investors clearly planning to acquire nationwide digital frequencies in the future. The CSFILM channel emerged inter alia (see below), and truly nationwide digitalization was gradually taking place in individual regions from July 2008 till October 2010.

In the second part of last decade, a noticeable shift also occurred in the till then rather limited attempts to interconnect television broadcasting with state-of-the-art telecommunication technologies. In 2007, O2, the largest Czech telecommunication operator,

launched a commercially successful project of multimedia services including IPTV and Video on demand<sup>(14)</sup>. The Czech Television has also adopted in recent years a very progressive strategy of disseminating its contents by means of the internet. On its web site it currently offers an extensive audio-visual archive, including a complete programme of newscasts, but also programmes protected by copyright, documentary films of independent producers etc<sup>(15)</sup>. Experiments with paid streaming of the complete range of Czech Television broadcasts were conducted in 2009 and discontinued<sup>(16)</sup>.

(14) The O2 project in English on WWW: <http://www.o2-tv.cz/o2tv/en/home/index.html> (25. 4. 2010).

(15) I-broadcasting on Czech Television on WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/> (25. 4. 2010).

(16) Paid streaming of Czech Television was discontinued as of 17th December, 2009.

The activities of Czech Television also have an impact on private operators of terrestrial television broadcasting, but so far only to a limited extent<sup>(17)</sup>. The Czech media scene is still waiting for its first strong purely internet television. It is obvious that the foreseeable future of television broadcasting in the Czech Republic, as in other countries, will be characterized by interlinking telecommunication and television services with modern technologies (HDTV broadcasting, D3-stereoscopic television etc.).

Currently most Czech viewers can choose from 4 broadcasting television multiplexes with 11 nationwide channels broadcasting terrestrially in the Czech language<sup>(18)</sup>. They include<sup>(19)</sup>:

Channel	Operator	Broadcaster category	Contents format and orientation
ČT1	Czech Television	public	full range
ČT2	Czech Television	public	more demanding target groups, documentary and discussion programmes, programmes for/about minorities, sport
ČT24	Czech Television	public	newscasts, commentaries, magazines
ČT4	Czech Television	public	sport
NOVA	CET 21 Ltd.	private	full range
Nova Cinema	CET 21 Ltd.	private	serials, films
Prima	FTV Prima, Ltd.	private	full range
Prima COOL	FTV Prima, Ltd.	private	serials, films
Barrandov TV	Barrandov Television Studio, a.s. (joint-stock Co).	private	almost full range
Z1	První zpravodajská, a.s.	private	newscasts, economy
Óčko	MAFRA	private	music

As concerns historical genres, a further number of nationwide TV channels are available in the Czech Republic only in cable, satellite or other

(17) For instance the TV NOVA portal [www.tn.cz](http://www.tn.cz) and others.

(18) Several other television channels (e.g. Public TV) broadcasting in DVT-T technology are available in most, but not all regions of the Czech Republic.

(19) Source: *Lists of operators on the web site of the Board for Radio and Television Broadcasting*. WWW: [http://www.rtv.cz/cz/static/provozovatele/list\\_ground\\_tv.htm](http://www.rtv.cz/cz/static/provozovatele/list_ground_tv.htm) (20. 4. 2010). For more detailed information in English regarding the programme orientation of individual channels, see e.g. WWW: [http://www.o2-tv.cz/o2tv/en/balicky/razeni\\_programu/index/html](http://www.o2-tv.cz/o2tv/en/balicky/razeni_programu/index/html) (25. 4. 2010).

paid-for broadcasting modes, namely<sup>(20)</sup>:

Channel	Contents formats and orientation
CSFILM	archive Czech and Slovak films
Docu	archive Czech and Slovak documentary films (the CSFILM group)
Viasat History	international documentary channel specializing in history
Spektrum	international documentary channel, thematic series focussed on history
Discovery	international documentary channel, including documentaries on history
National Geographic	international documentary channel, including documentaries on history

### III. Relation between television and history

When we look at the history of Czech television broadcasting, we find that from the social-historical point of view, the history of the nation influenced the development of the institution of Czechoslovak (later on the Czech) Television in much the same way as it did the destinies of the entire Czechoslovak population. But the opposite model applies, too: on many occasions, television became an active tool of shaping the nation's history.

While in the period of the First Republic television broadcasting on a non-state (whether private or public) basis was contemplated as well, after 1945 this variant was unthinkable. Even though the post-war Czechoslovak Republic then was not yet a communist country, the influence of radically leftist concepts of cultural policy was practically absolute<sup>(21)</sup>. And as early as the summer of 1945, that means a mere couple of months after the end of World War II, the Czechoslovak film industry was nationalized, according to war-time plans. From then on, all sorts of film-relating business were to be possible solely within the frame of the state monopoly. Czech and Slovak theatres were nationalized, too, as were other types of cultural institutions. Therefore it is not surprising that the regime counted with television as a potentially powerful propaganda instrument only provided it was put under state control.

The communist putsch in February 1948 naturally further tightened up

(20) The Nostalgia channel mentioned in the conference paper does not exist any longer. The Docu CS channel, on the other hand, is a new one. For more detailed information in English regarding the programme orientation of the individual channels, see e.g.:  
www: [http://o2-tv.cz/o2tv/en/balicky/razeni\\_programu/index.html](http://o2-tv.cz/o2tv/en/balicky/razeni_programu/index.html) (25. 4. 2010)

(21) From as early as April 1945, the Ministry of Information which was responsible for culture and propaganda headed by communist minister Václav Kopecký.

the state supervision over what was to become the **dominant medium of government propaganda**. The decision in 1948 to suspend experiments with television broadcasting as well as that on the reinstatement in 1952 of plans for a speedy implementation of an elementary form of television broadcasting in Czechoslovakia were taken at the highest places. The Czechoslovak Television was established as a state enterprise whose management directly reported to the Government and the Communist Party leadership. The exact mechanisms of official censorship practice and unofficial interference with the contents of the broadcasts practised by official circles (the Government, the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party etc.) have not yet been sufficiently explored. What is certain is the fact that they took place at many different levels, starting with jamming the broadcasts of 'problematic' programmes and ending with removals and replacements of the Czechoslovak Television management.

In 1961, Czech and Slovak households altogether already possessed one million television sets<sup>(22)</sup>, to which 250 000 were added each subsequent year, and by the end of the 1960s their number climbed to as many as three million<sup>(23)</sup>. Together with the radio, television became the most important mass medium in the country. The swift widening of the range of television broadcasting coincided with the far reaching democratizing changes in the 1960s, which culminated in the Prague Spring and were violently suppressed in 1968 by the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Treaty armies. After the abolition of censorship in March 1968, Czechoslovak Television became one of the most effective channels of disseminating the ideas of the democratic movement, and its Director Jiří Pelikán was one of the symbols of the revival process in general. The above-described two-way influencing of historical events in Czechoslovakia and the developments in the Czechoslovak Television was particularly evident in periods of political escalation. During the uprising of Prague's inhabitants against the Nazis in May 1945, it was the radio, as

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(22) According to the 1961 census, the Czechoslovak Republic had 13,741,529 inhabitants and roughly 2.900.000 households. Source: Czech Statistical Office, WWW: [http://www.czso.cz/sldb201/redakce.nsf/i/pramenne\\_dilo\\_1961](http://www.czso.cz/sldb201/redakce.nsf/i/pramenne_dilo_1961) (20. 4. 2010).

(23) Milan Šmíd. *SERIÁL: 50 let televize v kostce* (SERIAL: 50 years of television in a nutshell). WWW: <http://www.louc.cz/03/950310.html> (21. 4. 2010).

the chief mass medium, which directly intervened in the historical event: most blood was shed in its defence. In case of the occupation in August 1968, the influence of the radio and television on the historical event was balanced. They broadcast from secret temporary studios which were gradually exposed during live transmission and silenced by the occupation troops, until the transmission routes were completely cut off.

The resumption of Czech Television broadcasting on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 1968 met with a huge viewer response. From their very beginning, the post-occupation broadcasts were subjected to heavy censorship<sup>(24)</sup>. The reinstatement of neo-Stalinist cadres<sup>(25)</sup> and the onset of the so-called 'normalization' further curtailed the freedom of expression. But because of the prevailing mood in society, it was being clipped little by little. Quick and immediate were interventions in the coverage of current affairs, while artistic creation was not affected very much in the first wave of suppression. Still in January 1969 the television covered the suicide committed by the philosophy student Jan Palach in protest against the changes in society in the aftermath of the occupation<sup>(26)</sup>. Palach's funeral, covered live by the television, became one of the last national demonstrations against the occupiers. In March 1969, the Czechoslovak Television mediated for its viewers the euphoria of the whole nation when the Czech squad beat the Soviets at the World Ice-hockey Championship. But in August 1969, it already reported on the protests on the occasion of the first anniversary of the occupation entirely in the spirit of the normalization propaganda<sup>(27)</sup>.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovak Television was absolutely the most important means of government propaganda. The emphasis which the establishment placed on the contents of television broadcasts was connected with a general trend in society - a departure from the public to the private spheres, and also growing consumerism, supported by the

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(24) Daniel Růžička, *Srpen - prosinec 1968* (August to December 1968). WWW: [http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/1968-1969.php?leta1968\\_1969kapitola=4](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/1968-1969.php?leta1968_1969kapitola=4) (25. 1. 2010).

(25) The former Director of Czechoslovak Television Jiří Pelikán was declared one of the main 'counter-revolutionaries' and went into exile in order to avoid reprisals.

(26) Jan Palach (August 11, 1948 Prague - January 19, 1969 Prague) - see more a.o. at WWW: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan\\_Palach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Palach) (25. 1. 2010).

(27) Daniel Růžička, *Československá televize v letech 1968-1969* (Czechoslovak Television in 1968-1969). In: WWW: [http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/1968-1969.php?leta1968\\_1969kapitola=0](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/1968-1969.php?leta1968_1969kapitola=0) (25. 1. 2010).

regime. The television set became a matter-of-fact part of the equipment of households, weekend cottages, pubs and restaurants (which, with few exceptions, obligatorily closed at 10 p.m.). Another reason why the rating of Czechoslovak Television was so high in these decades was the shortage of other opportunities for the population to enjoy their leisure. As regards genre preferences, the television as well as the film output of that time, an effort of the makers to depart from topical to escapist, historical or so-called timeless themes is observable. As we will see below, they sometimes came up against bans imposed by the dramaturgy management. Propaganda dominated newscasts and commentaries, but also documentary programmes and fiction, including historical serials in which the communist regime made use of the proclaimed concept of historiography<sup>(28)</sup>.

The process of the so-called glasnost and perestroika, which started in the Eastern bloc countries in the mid-1980s, was becoming reflected in Czechoslovak Television programmes at a very slow pace. And it is symptomatic that the television kept more or less silent about the earliest moments of the Velvet Revolution. The massacre of the protesting students in central Prague Národní třída was trivialized in its newscasts, and the alleged illegitimacy of the rally was stressed. The key role was played by a rumour about the death of one of the students, spread in good faith mainly by the exile Radio Free Europe. Meanwhile a struggle of the employees for impartiality of informing about the events in the capital city erupted in Czechoslovak Television. The first uncensored newscast could be watched by its viewers on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, 1989<sup>(29)</sup>. The timely lifting of censorship no doubt contributed to the smooth progress of political changes in Czechoslovakia in 1989.

One of the last examples of Czech Television becoming itself an active co-creator of history was the so-called television crisis at the turn of 2000 and 2001. The conflict between its employees and its management caused by political pressure on the choice of persons to fill the managerial posts once again sent hundreds of thousands of people to the streets.

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(28) See below.

(29) Dr. [Daniel Růžička], *Revoluce 1989* (Revolution 1989). WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/revoluce.php> (25. 2010).

#### IV. The pre-1989 image of history in television

In the initial years, the television programme was to a large degree composed of 'borrowed' theatre performances, including operas, variety shows, later on also reportages and live broadcasts. But borrowed feature films and documentaries were predominant. The historical genre, mediated by such borrowed programmes, thus appeared in the Czech and Slovak television broadcasting scheme already in the first months of broadcasting<sup>(30)</sup>. A further number of genres appeared in the second half of the 1950s: newscasts, commentaries and educational programmes. Regular daily newscasts started in 1956. In 1959, Czech Television broadcast the first part of the first Czech fiction-type TV serial, but all serials presented till 1967 were void of historical elements<sup>(31)</sup>.

During the Prague Spring the Czech society started, among other things, to take interest in events of recent past which had been either suppressed completely by the totalitarian regime or the official information about them was had been strongly biased. Of the known examples, let us mention the reportage of Ota Bednářová and Milan Tomsa *Svědectví pro výstrahu / A Warning Testimony* - reconstruction of a 1954 political trial the rehabilitation process in 1963, or *Hele, Čendo, kvete bez / Look, Čenda, the lilac is in bloom* - an inquiry into the fates in 1945-1968 of the young people who were children in May 1945 and were photographed in the arms of Red Army soldiers. The important topic, condemned by the totalitarian regime, of Czechoslovaks in western exile who participated in anti-Nazi resistance during the Second World War was dealt with by Tibor Podhorec in the documentary film *Dvakrát odvážní / Twice Valiant*<sup>(32)</sup>. The absolutely best-known television film of this stream is the four-part documentary of Vlastimil Vávra *Na pomoc generální prokuratuře / In Aid of the General Prosecutor*, investigating the real causes of the alleged suicide of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk<sup>(33)</sup> in 1948.

(30) Milan Šmíd, *Historie televize v ČR - 4*. WWW: <http://www.louc.cz/pril01/p38his4html> (24. 4. 2010).

(31) Serials *Rodiny Bláhova / The Blaha Family* (1959-1960), *Tři muži v chalupě / Three Men in the Cottage* (1961-1962), and *Eliška a její rod / Ella and her Family* (1966). Milan Šmíd, *SERIAL: 50 let televize v kostce*. WWW: <http://www.louc.cz/03/950310.html> (24. 4. 2010).

(32) Daniel Růžička, *Televizní publicistika a dokument. Leden-srpen 1968* (Television journalism and documentary. January-August 1968). WWW: [http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/1968-1969.php?leta1968\\_1969kapitola=2](http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct/historie/1968-1969.php?leta1968_1969kapitola=2) (24. 4. 2010).

(33) Jan Masaryk was the son of the first Czechoslovak President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk.

The documentary and journalistic production in the 1970s and 1980s was characterized by a return to the traditional ideological frames of depicting history. Historical events were mostly commemorated on the occasion of various anniversaries. Those promoted by the regime were mostly connected with the history of the Communist Party, the workers' movement, the communist putsch in 1948 and similar events in other countries (the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia, the first manned space flight etc.). A part of the documentary output was produced under the direct supervision of the Ministry of the Interior; it included documentaries which showed the democratizing processes of the 1960s, Czech émigrés etc. in a negative light<sup>(34)</sup>.

A significant genre, which well documents the ideological development of the presentation of history, is that of feature (fiction) serial. It is a profiling genre, demanding in terms of production and cost, which the Czechoslovak Television intended to offer at prime-time, and into which both the makers and the ideological supervisors were logically prepared to invest great energy. Of the 123 Czech serials and mini-series about the events of 1989 produced by Czechoslovak Television, 34 can be called historical<sup>(35)</sup>.

The statistics make it clear that as concerns television serials, the most fruitful period was that between 1968 and 1976. In 1977 to 1981, on the contrary, the television dramaturgy left historical serials out of its calculation. We still know little about the causes of their total disappearance from the production plans of Czechoslovak Television, because no detailed historical studies relating to this period have been undertaken so far.

In 1968 till 1971, the liberal tendencies of the 1960s - the time when the notion of traditional Marxist historiography as the only possible interpretation of history<sup>(36)</sup> was being dismantled in literature and drama - were still

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(34) Good examples are the documentaries *Departure with Trust* or *Testimony from Seine*, the extracts of which are available on [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com).

(35) Including serials for children and young people. Source: Jiří Moc, *Seriály od A do Z. Lexicon českých seriálů* (Serials from A to Z. Lexicon of Czech serials). Praha: Česká televize 2009. See also Appendix below.

(36) Marxist historiography proceeded from the views of the historian and communist Minister of Culture and Education Zdeněk Nejedlý who in his theses connected the idea of communism with that of the Czech national revival. In his rendering of the Hussite movement, as a prototype of future social revolution, the period of national revival (from mid 18th till 19th century), as a time of struggle against social and ethnic repression, the workers' movement and the communist resistance during World War II, became momentous epochs

influencing the manner of depicting history. The authors of Czech serials unequivocally preferred the history of everyday life (serials *Marriages of Convenience*, *F. L. Věk*) to the big-men-history concept. Instead of some of the epochs highlighted before, the serial stories could just as well take place in other historical periods (e.g. late baroque in *F. L. Věk*). Their protagonists were no longer only workmen, communists and national revival artists, but also representatives of the emerging Czech bourgeoisie (*Marriages of Convenience*), foreign celebrities (*Alexandr Dumas starší / Alexander Dumas Senior*), or characters from the Prague underground (*Hříšní lidé města pražského / The Sinful People of Prague City*). One serial (*Dreyfusova aféra / The Dreyfus Affair*) was even made in Czech-French co-production.

*Example: Sňatky z rozumu / Marriages of Convenience (director František Filip, CST 1968)*

A serial based on a novel of the same name by the Czech writer Vladimír Neff. It narrates the story of two entrepreneurial families during the second stage of national revival from 1859 to 1881. Apart from the family peripeteias, the main theme of the serial is the crystallization of the Czech bourgeoisie within the frame of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Most of the protagonists are fictitious or loosely modelled after real historical personages. But renowned figures of Czech history are also directly present in the story, seen from the angle of vision of the middle-class Czech family. The script was written by Otto Zelenka. This serial belongs to the best ever produced in our country.

Starting in 1971, the presentation of history in Czech serials was gradually returning to the concept of Marxist historiography. The authors of historical serials were forced to promote the totalitarian regime. The most typical examples included extensive serial chronicles, spanning several decades and describing Czech modern history, but this time completely in the spirit of communist ideology. Most of them were the life stories of men

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of Czech history. Important elements of this ideology included negative presentation of the bourgeoisie, anti-clericalism, anti-German attitude and promotion of selected historical personages (the Hussite warrior Jan Žižka, writer Alois Jirásek, composer Bedřich Smetana, communist resistance fighter Julius Fučík and others). The Marxist historiographic ideology was influencing the development of historical genres in literature, drama, visual arts and film from as early as 1948.

facing historical reversals (farmer Jan Hamr in the serial *Nejmladší z rodu Hamrů / The Youngest of the Hamr Family /1975/*, glassmaker Jakub CírkI in the serial *Synové a dcery Jakuba Skláře / The Sons and Daughters of Jacob the Glassmaker /1984/*, resistance fighter Petr Vitásek in *Rodáci / The Fellow Countrymen /1988/* etc.). A good example illustrating the changes in the treatment of history is the loose follow-up of the serial *Marriages of Convenience*, called *III Feelings* (1968).

*Example: Zlá krev / III Feelings (director František Filip, CST 1986)*

*A loose follow-up of the serial Marriages of Convenience, based on Neff's novels Zlá krev / III Feelings and Veselá vdova / The Merry Widow. This time the story is situated in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Beside the two middle-class families from the preceding serial, the Pecold working-class family is put in the foreground as well. Contrary to the Marriages of Convenience, III Feelings completely gives up attempts to portray the whole gamut of the period cultural and social trends. Emphasis is put solely on the development of the workers' movement, the social and ethnic tensions of the time. The last scene of the serial shows demonstrating workers and students, while the commentator says: 'The people has closed ranks to offer resistance.'*

The most striking examples of the dominance of ideology over Czech television production in the 1970s and 1980s are serials celebrating exponents of the regime (*Gottwald /1986/*) and its protective apparatus (*Thirty Cases of Major Zeman /1976/*). In this case the regime made direct use of history for developing its own iconography. In terms of approach to history, these serials returned far back into the 1950s.

*Example: Třicet případů majora Zemana / Thirty Cases of Major Zeman (director Jiří Sequens, CST 1976)*

*This high-budget serial spans the period between 1945 and 1974 - one episode per year. The star hero is Jan Zeman, a communist and anti-fascist who, after returning from concentration camp, accepts an offer to join first the public and later on the secret police. He fights tirelessly against the criminal and political enemies of the regime. Most episodes are based on real political events (the post-war 'transfer' of German population from the border regions of Czechoslovakia, confrontations with the members of*

*the Ukrainian insurgent army of Stepan Bandera in Eastern Slovakia, the communist takeover in 1948, the murder of communist functionaries in 1951, the anti-communist resistance of brothers Ctirad and Josef Mašín, the Prague Spring, events of the year 1968, the case of the underground music band Plastic People of the Universe etc.). Some episodes are of a purely criminal genre, while the overall impact of the serial is heavily ideological, aimed against all 'enemies' of the regime (West Germany and its agents, former Nazis, the church, right-wing intellectuals etc.).*

Yet even in the 1970s and 1980s, there were honourable exceptions among Czech serials, in which the compulsory ideological ingredient was smoothed. They included in particular the interesting serial *Once upon a time there was a house*, or the serial for children and young people *Vlak dětství a naděje / The Train of Childhood and Hope* (directed by the outstanding film maker Karel Kachyňa), both situated in the period of the Second World War.

*Example: Byl jednou jeden dům / Once upon a time there was a house (director František Filip, CST 1974*

*The scriptwriters Jan Otčenášek and Oldřich Daněk made use of classical ideological frameworks: the chief characters of the serial, which covered the period from the late 1930s till 1945, are the inhabitants of a Prague tenement house - a group clearly stratified in terms of their class background. But there is very little ideology in the rendering of their stories. Taboo themes are raised, too, such as the Czechs' voluntary work in the Third Reich, the cowardice of some characters, human sacrifices that served no purpose, or casualties which could have been avoided. Big history is replaced by the micro-cosmos of tragicomic destinies.*

In the second half of the 1980s, an increasing share of serials were co-produced with western televisions, and an ideological slant was naturally undesirable in their case. They included for instance *Circus Humberto* (1988) and *Dobrodružství kriminalistiky / Adventures in Criminological Investigation* (1989).

## **V. The image of history in television after 1989**

After 1989, the image of history in the Czech media - television not excepting - assumed an unthought-of plasticity especially thanks to the substantial

broadening of the ways of its reflection. A single, compulsory concept of historiography was replaced by a number of approaches and methods. This change was followed by a dramatic upswing of the historical genre, which still continues. Growing interest of televisions in presenting historical programmes has been observable particularly in the past few years. The reasons are no doubt many and varied - major anniversaries in recent years, the trendiness of retro genres, or sufficient time distance from the collapse of the totalitarian regime. When we try to identify the main or significant elements of contents and form which are linked with the image of history, we can define several clearly profiled genre and thematic groups of historical programmes. The public Czech Television has four channels at its disposal (CT1, CT2, CT24 and CT4). As for format, the full-range CT1 channel focuses on the majority viewer and tries to compete by its offer with private televisions. CT1 presents all historical epochs which are currently popular - from antiquity to the revolutionary events of 1989. It does so through borrowed feature films (mostly of Czech, American, British, French and Italian make), but also serials and dramas of its own production. Serials, drama productions and films produced directly by Czech Television portray all epochs, most often modern history. These products frequently use history as an elegant retro backdrop (the serials *Četnické humoresky / Cops and Robbers*, *Náhrdelník / The Necklace* - a story unfolding at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, etc.); or as a necessary period setting for adaptations of important literary works (such as the novel of Karel Poláček *Bylo nás pět / There were five of us*, with children as the protagonists, Adolf Branald's *Stříbrná paruka / Silver Wig*, Josef Škvorecký's *Prima sezóna / Swell Season*, the biography of the writer Jan Neruda *Laskavý divák promine / Begging the pardon of the kind viewer*, Zdeněk Jirotka's *Saturnin* and others).

But even in the mainstream production we can find a group of works the main goal of which is to reflect history. In an overwhelming majority of Czech fictions of this type, it is reflection of the totalitarian (Protectorate or communist) past. So far its depiction is, perhaps without exception, deliberately set off against the communist ideology of the preceding period. Themes as the war-time communist resistance or celebration of the communist coup d'état in 1948 are perceived as politically improper and are not used. On the other hand, the stories of the victims of communism

and an innovative (in terms of political stand and genre) view of the Nazi occupation get the floor. Good examples include the psychological serial *Friendship in the House of Anguish*, *Zdivočelá země / The Land Gone Wild* - a serial with elements of adventure narrating the story of an ex-RAF pilot who, after returning to his homeland, wrestles with all sorts of persecution - or *Tři králové / The Three Wise Men*, describing the fates of three famous non-communist resistance fighters during World War II.

*Example: Přítelkyně z domu smutku / Friendship in the House of Anguish (director Hynek Bočan, CT 1992)*

*A serial based on the autobiographical memoirs of the writer and signatory of Charter 77 Eva Kantůrková, who was imprisoned in the early 1980s for her anti-regime activities. It is a psychological study of an intellectual who is forced to adapt herself to the prison environment. The work has won several foreign awards.*

Similarly we could give examples of television productions which approach history with a higher degree of reflection comparing with more routine retro products. Let us mention e.g. *Operace Silver A / Operation Silver A*, which combines the theme of the fates of Czech film stars of the Protectorate period with that of the assassination of Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich. The psychological television drama *Archiv / The Archive*, though situated in the present, deals with the issue of long-term negative impacts of the work of the communist secret police upon the lives of the people whom it targeted. Another, in artistic terms very valuable example is the television drama *PF 77*.

*Example: PF 77 (director Jaroslav Brabec, CT 2003)*

*The script of this television production was 'written-to-measure' by the renowned author Pavel Kohout and his wife Jelena Mašínová for the actress Vlasta Chramostová (appearing in the main role), one of the leading figures of Czech dissent in the 1970s and 1980s. It is a story of a famous character actress of the National Theatre and teacher at the Drama Academy. The crisis comes when the Charter 77 is published in January 1977: the authorities exert pressure on her, with the aim to make her publicly condemn the Charter. One of her students signs the Charter and is expelled from the Academy. The experimental form of the narration accentuates the psychological level of the story, the suffocating atmosphere and irrationality of everyday life in Czechoslovakia of the mid-1970s.*

A completely new phenomenon in the Czech television environment is the mainstream serial *Tell a Story*, which has been on the programme of Czech Television since 2009. It is the first Czech historical, prime-time soap opera of many parts, probably made according to foreign models. In its case, history serves as a commercial aspect of the product, and at the same time as its aim.

*Example: Vyprávěj / Tell a Story (director Biser Arichtev, CT since 2009)*

*The story covers the period from 1964 to 2005. Four series composed of a total of 14 instalments are planned, relating to years 1964-1975, 1975-1985, 1985-1995 and 1995-2005. The serial is being produced in a cheap retro-style. It is primarily a commercial product, designed to entertain and target the broadest possible group of viewers. Emphasis is placed on various aspects of everyday life, 'ordinariness', nostalgic set-design, amusing paradoxes of the past, and family atmosphere. History is reflected as a time of firm social bonds and certainties of childhood. It is no coincidence that the subtitle of the serial is 'In all times we long for happiness'.*

*The basic story line describes the twists and turns in the life of an 'ordinary' family - a young Czecho-Slovak married couple, their child, closest relatives and friends. Big history appears in the serial only insofar as it intervenes in the lives of 'ordinary', apolitical people. Specific historical events are mostly depicted with humorous detachment. But there are a few interesting exceptions: the part devoted to the suicide of Jan Palach, and the plot concerning the persecution of the musical underground, which are presented quite seriously or with an admixture of romanticism.*

*The serial is presented as a key product of Czech Television. Its screening is accompanied by a massive promotion campaign, focused on selected aspects of the past, and presenting history as a game (interactive web pages, combination of borrowed visuals from the serial and cartoon elements, historical quizzes, questionnaires regarding memories of the past etc.)<sup>(37)</sup>.*

To have the full picture, let us add that occasionally historical documents appear in the CT1 programme as well - mainstream products of the type of BBC's *Aircraft Crashes* etc.

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(37) More about the marketing campaign supporting the serial *Tell a Story*, see WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/program/208522161400019.html> (20. 1. 2010). Individual instalments are available at WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/208522161400023-vypravej/> (20. 1. 2010).

The CT2 minority channel grants much more space to documentary products, including those reflecting history. The documentary output itself can be divided into many groups - for working purposes I will use the terms 'typical CT documentary' and 'independent documentary'.

The first category involves documentary films, whether produced by Czech Television or independent makers, which are primarily designed for television. Such products are of a standardized length, depending on the current broadcasting scheme (e.g. ca 13, 23 or 53 minutes) but also a standardized form. For historical documents, the form of the so-called 'speaking heads' (surviving contemporaries, historians etc.) is used, in combination with illustrative scenes and out-of-vision commentaries. Illustrative shots are very often borrowed from archived audiovisual recordings (newsreels<sup>(38)</sup>, feature films, archive serials); or alternatively, shots of documents, photographs, or illustrative pictures of places. Less frequent is the use of elements of 'documentary drama' (acted scenes with elements of fiction, subjectivized camera etc.), which does not have a strong tradition in Czech television production<sup>(39)</sup>. This form of course is not binding, and a variety of its mutations (such as in-vision commentator) appear quite often. The dramaturgic lines of reflecting history are clear-cut in this group of documentaries. Most often, they present concrete fates of the victims of the communist regime. Many primarily television documentaries are produced in longer cycles and screened once a week. Among the recent examples, worth of mention are *Neznámí hrdinové - Pohnuté osudy / Unknown Heroes - Momentous Fates*, stories of less-known fighters against the totalitarian regime, or the series *Příběhy železné opony / Stories of the Iron Curtain* and *Captives of the Iron Curtain*.

*Example: the series V zajetí železné opony / Captives of the Iron Curtain (different directors, 2006-2007)*

*This series of thirteen-minute documentaries capture the fates of people who tried to defect from communist Czechoslovakia. Their stories greatly vary: from adventurous attempts to cross the borders in a hand-made hot-air balloon, to the stories of dissidents whom the secret police forced to*

(38) One of the reasons for the popularity of inserting newsreels into Czech Television programmes is believed to be the fact that several years ago CT bought the broadcasting rights for post-war newsreels from the private joint-stock company Krátký film (Short Film).

(39) But in general it applies that docu-drama in Czech television production is far less frequent comparing with e.g. with the Federal Republic of Germany.

*emigrate by means of torture. The moderator of the series is the famous folk singer Jaroslav Hutka, who spent a part of his life in exile himself.*

In terms of production, the so-called 'independent documentaries'<sup>(40)</sup> are more ambitious projects as a rule, often designed for further distribution (in cinemas and at festivals, in the form of DVDs etc.). Their form is authorial and very diverse, as is their length. They often deal with similar topics as the primarily television documentaries, but also draw attention to new issues or use novel ways of their treatment. Of all their authors, let us mention three renowned documentary makers who work with historical themes in an idiosyncratic manner. The established author of historical documentaries Pavel Štingl<sup>(41)</sup> works most often with themes relating to the period of the Second World War. Outstanding among his documentaries is *Deník pana Pfitznera / Mr. Pfitzner Diary* - a detailed portrait of an apolitical university teacher and later the Nazi Mayor of Prague, composed solely of archive material and commentaries. Jan ŠIKL is the author of the documentary series *Soukromé století / The Private Century*, a portrayal of selected human destinies cutting across the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, based on family and amateur films<sup>(42)</sup>. The Czech documentarist Helena Třeštková, who is best known abroad, specializes in a specific way of depicting the past - throughout her career she has been using the form of long-term observation cycle, observing many of the protagonists for as long as ten years. In these documentaries, history is treated as not the primary subject, but a secondary value of depicting the present which has in the meantime become the past. This manner of presenting history facilitates the highest possible authenticity. Apart from the life stories of the protagonists, direct representation of everyday life, of the mentality of young people 30 years ago, the social aspects of life in the given period etc. are the most attractive features of these projects.

*Example: Marcela (director Helena Třeštková, 2006)*

(40) Under the respective law, Czech Television as a public entity is obliged to broadcast a certain number of programmes by the so-called 'independent' producers. At the same time, in the case of most Czech feature films and a number of documentaries, Czech Television is a co-producer.

(41) For more information in English about Pavel Štingl, see e.g. WWW: <http://www.dokweb.net/en/documentary-network/professionals/stingl-pavel-4295> (20. 1. 2010).

(42) More about the project in English, see e.g. WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/soukromestoleti/index-en.php> (21. 1. 2010).

*This full-length film is based on the project of Manželské etudy / Marital Sketches, launched in the early 1980s. It starts with the wedding of the protagonist, a young woman called Marcela. Her marriage suffers from a number of risk factors - the dominant mother-in-law, financial shortage, poor housing situation. The living standard in the first half of the 1980s is shown as very different from the current one. Despite the birth of a child at its early stage, the marriage breaks up after several years. The son born out of Marcela's second short-lived relationship suffers from cerebral dysfunction. After 1989, Marcela, a single mother, is destitute. From her perspective, the 1990s look very different from the way they are presented in the Czech media: in concrete respects, they are much rougher. Marcela loses hope for an improvement of her social status and personal situation. For financial reasons the family moves out of Prague. The most dramatic moment comes when Marcela's first-born daughter is reported missing, and a few days later found dead. The documentarists themselves become involved in the stories, as do the viewers who, after the presentation of Marcela's tragedy, send the unfortunate women money and offer their help...*

Another important television genre dealing with history are discussion and journalistic programmes and magazines. The CT2 and CT24 channels of Czech Television devote a relatively large space to this type of programmes on history. Every week CT2 premieres in the prime time (and CT24 reruns) the historical series *Historie.cz / History.cz* (on occasions under the title *Historie.eu / History.eu*). The commentators, as a rule joined by three or four historians, debate on selected topics, often of a character relevant to the current situation. Apart from modern history, the discussions concern European and older history, and are supported by excerpts from archive newsreels, feature films, documentaries and serials. One of programmes of this type which attracts large audiences is the *Retro* magazine, focused on selected phenomena of pre-1989 everyday life (such as hairstyles, popular sports, housing, literature for children and young people etc.). The information is presented in an entertaining, sometimes playful forms, with the moderator dressed in retro style interviewing contemporaries and experts in the given field. In this case, too, illustrative materials from the television and film archives are used. Specific reminders of the past are year-long projects of Czech Television relating to par-

ticular anniversaries. The first appeared in 2008 under the title *The Fateful Eights in Our history*, a reminiscence of important years ending with the figure 8. It was followed by the project *20 Years of Freedom*<sup>(43)</sup>, devoted to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. The campaign of 2010 is entitled *Democracy: Year 1*<sup>(44)</sup>, and deals with the changes in society after 1989. These projects further include evening programmes on CT24 (and in some cases also CT2 or CT1), commenting upon selected issues, reruns of past prime-time newscasts and other archive documentaries, as well as new documentary films on the respective topics.

Even though private televisions are not primarily interested in presenting history, they, too, have contributed to the wide-ranging discussion about it. Apart from borrowed foreign films and TV serials, in which history figures more or less frequently, it was some private television channels in particular which have decided to make use of the popularity of the serials from the 1970s and 1980s and rerun them. First among them was Prima, which reran inter alia the above-mentioned propagandist serial *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman*. Currently the film and television production from the totalitarian times is utilized by several channels: beside Prima also Barrandov TV, which however concentrates on films from the television archives. A specific position is held by the paid-for television channels CSFILM and DocuCS, which offer exclusively older Czech and Slovak feature films and documentaries. With respect to their narrow focus, these channels include a number of almost unknown works of Czech cinematography (historical genres, propagandists ones not excepting) in their offer, and as such are important means of providing the public with access to the film archives.

## VI. Résumé: The Czech image of history

A discussion has been taking place in the Czech press for some time already which highlights the problem of Czech schoolchildren being taught mainly about older Czech and international history, while very little time is awarded in the curricula to modern history. The mass media, on the other hand, remain faithful to topics which are typical of them - current

(43) Selected video-recordings from the project are available at WWW: <http://www.ct24cz/demokracie-rok-prvni/videozaznam/projekt-20-let-svobody-v-ct/> (20. 1. 2010).

(44) More at WWW: <http://www.ct24.cz/demokracie-rok-prvni/> 20. 1. 2010).

affairs, information which is fresh and attractive. History is thus mostly recalled in connection with current events - such as anniversaries or new discoveries<sup>(45)</sup> - and in some instances used for making the discussion more attractive, whether by means of its retro setting or by raising issues which provoke it.

As in other countries of the former Eastern bloc, in the Czech Republic, too, the image of national history is still predominantly determined by the need for a reflection of the several decades of totalitarian rule. And this need is generally perceived as self-evident, understandable and desirable, even though not all viewers need to concern themselves with history in any way. Currently the periods reflected most frequently include that of the Velvet Revolution, because of its recent 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Very popular among the authors of television programmes are also the 1960s which culminated in the Prague Spring and the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Treaty armies in August 1968. Another gratifying subject of Czech television programmes are the 1950s and also the period of so-called normalization (1970s-1980s). A traditionally contemplated period is that of the Second World War (including the crisis year of 1938 and the Munich Agreement).

It is well known that for historical reasons, the Czechs are sceptical as concerns the trustworthiness of their authorities and hence also the official interpretations of history, and their scepticism is often peppered with specific humour. An interesting testimony to this effect was given several years ago by the television contest *Největší Čech / The Greatest Czech*, based on the model of the British competition *Great Britons* (2002). In this programme of the *Superstar* show type, the viewers were choosing in several rounds the greatest figure of Czech history. It is symptomatic that for a long time it seemed that the winner would be Jára Cimrman - a popular, mystifying character of a jack-of-all trades and all-inventor, created by the founders of a famous theatre ensemble whose plays parody the soapy images of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Czech national revivalists. Later on he

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(45) The wave of media debates, and as a secondary effect a reflection of a dramatic type, surged also as a result of the activities of the newly-founded Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, which in the past two years supplied journalists with new findings concerning the operation of the former State Secret Police. The best-known example was the discovery of a document testifying to the denunciation by the writer Milan Kundera of a person who was consequently sentenced to many years in prison.

was excluded from the contest because the BBC owners of the licence did not accept fictitious personages. In the end the largest number of votes were cast for Emperor Charles IV<sup>(46)</sup>, whose 'Czechhood' is however disputable as well ...

Another conclusion following from the above text is that Czech authors and viewers probably do not suffer from an excessive inferiority complex as concerns their history, nor do they feel a need to conceal its painful moments. Controversial topics and themes which are not pleasant for the Czech nation, such as its war-time collaboration with the Nazi regime, violence against Germans during their post-war transfer from Czechoslovakia, mass collaboration of the Czech population with the secret police etc., are debated and reflected relatively often. In some instances, what may no doubt be also problematic is the superficiality of the message, insufficient synthesis of information, the need of looking for narrative structure<sup>(47)</sup> and the consequent schematic conception of particular historical epochs. Thus the 1960s, for examples, are mostly presented very uncritically, very positively, with a certain measure of nostalgia, as a cult period in Czech history. The so-called normalization in the 1970s and 1980, on the contrary, and the time of the greatest political oppression by the communist regime in the 1950s, are mostly depicted as dark historical periods. The situation changes when it comes to the Second War World, because this period has already been subjected to a traditional positivist reflection and today emphasis is placed on innovation - new facts (non-communist resistance etc.), humour, a psychological view of history, aspects of everyday life, search for new genre types etc.

In the course of the past two decades, a trend of a departure from the

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(46) The top-ten contest for the *Greatest Czech* demonstrates inter alia that the Czechs look down on modern political authorities, whose representatives appear among the winners quite rarely: 1. Charles IV (14th century), 2. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1st Czechoslovak President, died 1937), 3. Václav Havel (1st post-1989 President), 4. Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius - 17th-century education reformer), 5. Jan Žižka (15th-century Hussite warrior), 6. Jan Werich (actor, died 1980), 7. Jan Hus (15th-century church reformer), 8. Antonín Dvořák (composer), 9. Karel Čapek (novelist and playwright, died 1938), 10. Božena Němcová (writer, died 1862). More at WWW: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/specialy/nejvet-sicech/> (25. 4. 2010).

(47) Cf.: the introductory chapter defining out-of-date approaches to history in: Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, University Press of New England 1997.

old, positivist concept in the spirit of 'big-men-history' to a micro-historical, subjective, particularized angle of vision is evident in the Czech television output dealing with history. A progressive line is set especially by authorial documentary films, which mostly do not slide into even a semblance of positivism. The micro-historical point of view is adopted quite often even in mediocre television production, also thanks to its relatively low costs. Production cheapness and low demands of course cut both ways - they are inter alia the main for returning excerpts from archive newsreels and television news to the Czech TV screens, but also for the reruns of more or less propagandist television serials from totalitarian times.

Czech viewers who are interested in the modern history of their nation thus get the green light - but not so much those who are interested in older Czech history and the history which unfolded outside the Czech valley. With a few exceptions (the cold war, the Second World War, the Stalinist persecution etc.), programmes aimed primarily at reflection of foreign political history are almost absent in Czech television output. It makes one wonder why we are learning so little about the history of our neighbours<sup>(48)</sup>, including Slovakia.

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(48) An honourable exception is modern German history: a number of borrowed German programmes appear in Czech television thanks to more intensive business contacts.

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(49) I have to thank Mr. Petr Bednařík from the CEMES FSV UK for his willingness to help me with the basic orientation in the sources.

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## Appendix

### Share of historical series 1959-2009<sup>(50)</sup>

Year	Number of all series	Historical series <sup>(1)</sup>	of historical series
1959	1	0	0
1960	1	0	0
1961	0	0	-
1962	0	0	-
1963	1	0	0
1964	1	0	0
1965	0	0	-
1966	1	0	0
1967	2	0	0
1968	4	3	75
1969	2	2	100
1970	2	2	100
1971	8	2	25
1972	7	4	57
1973	2	1	50
1974	2	1	100
1975	7	4	57
1976	3	2	67
1977	4	0	0
1978	4	0	0
1979	5	0	0
1980	6	0	0
1981	7	0	0
1982	6	1	17
1983	8	1	13
1984	7	4	57
1985	11	1	9
1986	9	3	33
1987	2	0	0
1988	11	3	27
1989	6	1	17
1990	3	1	33
1991	6	3	50

(50) Jiří Moc, *Seriály od A do Z. Lexikon českých seriálů*. Praha: Česká televize 2009, 5-293.

<b>1992</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>1994</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>1958<sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>1996</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1997</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2004<sup>(3)</sup></b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2005</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>27</b>

(1) Excluded classical fairytale serials and serials with historical figures inside the now-days story; included serials for youth, mini-series, and soap-operas

(2) Start of private television serials.

(3) Start of commercial soap-opera genre on private Czech televisions channels.

# Televising history in Polish television

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## The evolution of Polish television

The following analysis is focused on the main aspects of the evolution of the media scene in Poland, although some political issues should be developed thoroughly.

### *The beginning of television in Poland*

During the 30. The National Institute of Telecommunication worked intensively on the new discovery of televising technology. In November 1936 the first experimental television station was launched at Warsaw, thus the possibility of reaching the signal for the Warsaw neighborhood (about 30 km) was created. All equipment at the station was produced in Poland, but, unfortunately, the World War II interrupted the development of any ambitious technological projects for years. The Institute continued experiments in late 40., and the first public presentation of television took place in Warsaw, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1951, during an exhibition "Radio for the battle of peace and progress".

Officially, the birth of television in Poland is dated on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1952 when the first television program was introduced to the viewers by Maria Krzyżanowska, a pioneer presenter<sup>(1)</sup>. The first television show, similarly to the beginnings of television all over the world, was consisted of some songs, small talks, and dance etude. The show was seen by workers from Warsaw factories gathered around 24 television sets "Leningrad", produced in the USSR. After the successful experimental presentation of the program, the Polish Radio Committee decided to constitute a special team for developing the television program. Regular telecast started in 1953, the half-hour programming usually was broadcast on Fridays.

(1) The analysis of the television content in the 50. and 60. is based on the magazines devoted to the media, e.g. „Radio i Telewizja” (*Radio and Television*), „Biuletyn Telewizyjny” (*Television Bulletin*), „Antena” (*Aerial*), „Rocznik Polskiego Radia i Telewizji” (*Polish Radio and Television Yearbook*), „Ekran” (*Screen*) etc. Some examples of programmes, comments and letters are taken from the typical television magazines. The scientific books on the subject were also a good source of information, especially focused on facts and statistics.

Some topics of these shows served the legitimization of a new political system by popularizing celebrations of the holidays such as 1<sup>st</sup> May or the “International Day Against Colonial Oppression” etc. and a new type of heroes such as Josef Stalin or the youth from communist organizations.

The audience, according to official data and private memoirs as well, was fascinated by the new medium despite all the shortcomings of transmission and the price of television set. Systematically the presentations of a fresh technological phenomenon had been stretched out and more frequent: in 1955 the programming was usually broadcast 3 times a week.

Since January 1<sup>st</sup> 1957 the registration of TV sets is obligatory for all citizens, and the registers became the sources of interesting data. In 1958 there were registered 90,000 TV sets in Poland, so, according to official statistics it gave about 360,000 viewers. Estimated audience covered only 1% of population. In 1967 the number of registered TV sets rose above 3,000,000, hence it was estimated that the television programming had been seen by circa 1/3 of population of the country (it means more than 10,000,000 people). In 1968 statistics registered 3,000,000 TV sets in use, 18, 000, 000 people constituted the audience (6 person for 1 TV set), and “relatively regular”<sup>(2)</sup> viewers were calculated for about 9,000,000

(3 persons for 1 TV set). Two years later - in 1970 - the estimation is completely different: the number of TV sets (4,300,000) was multiplied by 5 viewers, so “television made happy 21,500,000 people. In 33 million nation it means total range of this mass medium. Practically the number of viewers is probably smaller”. However, there is one major problem with these data: all statistics from the communist period are not reliable, great number of research was prepared for the propaganda purposes. Official data covering the social stratification of the audience were also gathered rather carelessly, and the rules of estimation and interpretation of the results are basically unknown. Two last examples show that this kind of data provided more confusion than information.

### *Popularization of new medium in the 50*

Popularization of television in Poland started for good in the middle of 50.

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(2) This category was not explained, it is hard to guess its meaning.

During this decade, from the perspective of communist power, journalists were still seen as the activists of „ideological battleground” - but there was one exception - the group of television journalists. During this pioneer period of television development the medium seemed to have mostly artistic and informative character. Moreover, due to technological and financial reasons television was a medium of a limited broadcast coverage and at the same time - of minimal social influence. For about 10 years television was not in the spotlight of the Party<sup>(3)</sup> interest (it was not important in main lines of policy). The role of television was seen then in categories of cultural, artistic and educational influence till the beginning of the 60. Anyway, the power of television as a tool of propaganda had not been yet discovered in Poland.

The role of the television in viewers' lives was examined by a poll carried out in 1958 during the International Fair in Poznań. Surprisingly, the most popular category of answers were analogous to the critics' opinions: the audience considered the popularization of Polish culture to be the most important role of television. The next group of answers could be named as “the death of the province”: viewers stressed that even in the smallest village television offers possibility to “see the world”. The third category of answers was concerned with social issues: the viewers claimed that due to television the family life “became enriched”, and television was seen as an effective tool in the fight with alcoholism and anti-social attitudes. Six years later Jerzy Rudzki (a television analyst) took notice of serious social role of the medium: “Television is the medium of great influence on the youth's behavior, it stops (by stigmatizing) the hooligans, and «thoughtless laziness»”. The same attitude to television was typical to the popular discourse: in the educational article (the 70.), Pola Wert described some advantages of television and underlined the fact that television „contributed to the democratization of culture, integration of the villages with the cities...”. Unfortunately, both authors did not provide any interpretation nor explanation of the mentioned social processes. In fact, observations and comments provided by sociologist or television analysts had a lot in common with the propaganda slogans.

Viewers and professionals shared also opinion that television „intensifies the interest of the wide world” , „has an effect on the intellectual level of

(3) The word “Party” was synonymous to the PZPR. PZPR means Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza [*Polish United Workers' Party*], the main and practically only one political force in communist Poland.

the youth, as well the broadening the field of interest and knowledge". But since the 50. concept of the "world" had been changed and the concept of openness to the world differs through years. Let me remind you that cultural life in PPR was not the homogeneous construct (PPR was not the "monolith" neither ideologically nor politically or culturally). Not only during the 50. television treated as „window to the world”, which description became a popular cliché: even to the late 80. that phrase had been used in the context of the popularization of satellite television in Europe and the exchange of programmes among many different television channels from all over the world. Undoubtedly, a great deal of travelogue or tourist programmes were presented in the first 5 years of the television development in Poland.

Polish television during the pioneer period and the 60. could be seen as a medium which eagerly followed the main ethical principles of socialism: innovatory activity, secular worldview, egalitarianism and humanism. Television, by definition, was an example of „innovatory activity” and it was also able to cultivate the rest of the most important socialist values under the strict control of the Party’ representatives. The educational aspect of new medium was discussed and stressed as dominant feature of TV in some academic studies and popular articles. Television was treated as a tool to „polish cultural profile” of less-educated and not difficult to please part of society.

Academic studies and popular texts show two contradictory ideas (and goals) typical for the new medium: availability for mass audience and necessity of fulfilling needs of more sophisticated viewers. To satisfy the latter group the new medium prepared something special: in the first period of television development in Poland the theatre of television became one of the most amazing phenomena created by the Polish public television. Despite some obstacles (e.g. censorship did not recommend some dramas to be broadcast, and the technical problems often distorted live transmissions), the show was always produced on the best professional and artistic level. Ambitious performances were based on classical dramas from Polish and world’s literary heritage (Sheakspeare, Molier, Słowacki, Wyspiański). The logo of Polish TV Theatre quickly became the sign of the best quality and good taste.

### *The Golden Age of Polish television - the 60*

Polish society survived the most horrific period of repressions and terror of

the 50.; the new government established a new and softer socio-political order. So, at the beginning of the 60., political emotions of the society were successfully pacified and the prospects for the future were rather clear: Poland was for good enclosed in the communist block, which, according to propaganda, is “the best political system in the world”, “the last stage of social development” and unchanged. Now, instead of terror and repressions, a new government introduced another strategy of manipulation - bribery. The Party tried to bribe the nation by the prospects of welfare. The Party’ activists propagated - through different means of communication - the “revelation” of the economical development and social progress, so these efforts managed to create the optimistic image of Poland and one could think of PPR as of the “economical miracle” (late 60. and mid 70.). These manipulation, following the rule that nothing than the greatness of a country can stand for self-esteem of a nation, had been done in the name of political peace in the country. Despite the diversity of the character of communist Poland during different decades, television matters were regulated by the law. The special act on the Radio-Television Committee was introduced on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. It clarified the social role of the new medium: television development should lead to the mass reception of the program (point no 1). The program should be constructed from “the informational, political, musical, literary and educational units” (point no 2).

The mission of public television in Poland during communist era was different from the analogical missions of televisions in the Western world. Firstly, the main role of Polish television was the ideological one that means serving as a tool for the communist government and the Party. For instance, in 1960 the magazine „Peryskop” (“The Periscope”) was launched, which used to deliver news from all over the world and, according to the Party’ directions, the news was subordinated to very special socialist „political correctness” (it means the black and white vision of the world, in which the Western world was treated as the enemy and the hostile environment, following the conduct typical to socialist propaganda motifs during the cold war)<sup>(4)</sup>.

Another function of television was an educational one, which included providing the „window” to the world. So, this part of mission was fulfil-

(4) The socialist period in Poland was the time of “deep faith”, but instead of God, citizens had to believe and trust the Party, the socialist system etc. The small screen was also ideologized in a lot of aspects.

led by documentaries on the other countries and some studio discussion such as the studio discussion “Kawiarenka pod Globusem” (“Globe Café”), “Klub Sześciu Kontynentów” („Six Continents Club”), Latający Holender” (“Flying Dutchman”). The basic function of these programmes was not educational, but merely propaganda’s: reports from all over the world should convince the nation of the attractiveness of socialist system and socialist countries. Although in distant and exotic countries we can find the miracles of architecture and cultural treasures, nowadays (according to communist propaganda), the Western world presents itself as the repulsive, hostile and cruel environment for ordinary people (and, of course, the paradise for the representatives of the wealthiest sectors in social structure). Special programmes of this type were prepared in 1968, which was very dramatic year in Poland and in the whole socialist block. 5 editions of documentaries presented the connections between the Radio Free Europe and the CIA as well as the “radical” organizations from West Germany. Summarizing this motif, every type of TV show could be good enough to propagate the new (socialist / communist) ideology, sometimes this popularization was done in an extremely “clumsy” way<sup>(5)</sup>. Needless to say that Eastern Europe and its production dominated the foreign programming presented by Polish television (among the televising movies the lead position belonged to Russian productions).

Television in Poland under communist regime created its own stars, I mean very popular presenters and newsreaders etc. Among stars and great personalities, greater than the regime and its political obstacles, was for instance talented artist Professor Dr Wiktor Zin. He guided extremely popular educational program *Piórkiem i węglem* (*With feather and coal*). Professor Zin during the show was able to draw the picture of some architectural object (or the series of pictures) and simultaneously he told the stories on history of art connected to the discussed place or style in art. Another unconventional television personality was Michał Sumiński, the lead person in educational program *Zwierzyniec* (*Bestiarium*) on wildlife in Poland. Sumiński, a great story-teller with a lot of knowledge on animal life and the forest gained attention of the whole audience. Usually the program was ended with one episode from Hanna Barbera series, so

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(5) All these propaganda activities are typical for long term sociological propaganda.

we can watch “American” cartoons (The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Yogi Bear Show, The Magilla Gorilla Show etc.). Referring to programming for kids, during “the Golden Age” of Polish television the audience could follow the adventures of heroes of Polish popular cartoons such as Bolek i Lolek, Koziołek Matołek, Miś Usztek etc. These animations were famous also abroad, even now they can gain attention of international market.

Some television stars appeared in such unique programmes as “Kabaret Starszych Panów” (*Old Gentlemen Cabaret*), the entertainment series located on the highest level of popular culture. Sophisticated formula (far from socialist aesthetic), full of wonderful poetical and humorous texts, managed to create the nationwide admired phenomenon. The best level of art had been still the task of Polish Television Theatre; directors precisely choose the interesting dramas and great actors from the best Polish scenes. For instance, only in 1967 among performances we can find *Crime and Punishment* by Dostoyevsky, *Right You Are (If You Think You Are)* by Luigi Pirandello, *On ne badine pas avec l’amour* by Alfred de Musset, *Storm* by Shakespeare, Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*, Sophokles’ *Oedipus Tyrannos*, *Le Cid* by Corneille. Some recorded performances from this period are vivid and fascinating even today; they became “classical” in our television history and they are broadcast from time to time<sup>(6)</sup>.

*Entertainment and live transmissions.* In Poland under communist the transmissions of songs festivals, such as Festival of Polish Songs in Opole or International Festival in Sopot, Festival of Soldiers’ Songs etc. were famous and eagerly watched. Very popular were also sport transmission: so called the “race of peace” (the bicycle international race: Warsaw, Prague, Berlin) evoked a lot of positive emotions among viewers, also transmission of Olympic games and the transmissions of international athletic competitions were televised. The female part of audience was especially fond of the competitions of figure skating.

In this context, therefore, “popular” could mean the decline of taste and artistic ambitions. Even entertainment programmes were expected to fulfill

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(6) Nowadays some of the most popular TV Theatre performances are edited on DVD.

the serious tasks, more complex than the pure joy and relax. The content of entertainment programming should be ambitious, intelligent, spurious according to wishes of the TV audience. For instance, the December 1968 issue of „Biuletyn Telewizyjny” published such an opinion: „Why does *Gielda piosenki* (*Songs’ Fair*) offer only the sexuality? Why do the songs’ lyrics omit the topics such as factory work, peasants toil or nature? Songs tell nothing about the acts of patriotism, or the future of the mankind”. This viewer, identified himself as a „small-town intellectual”, complained on the shallowness the of the program and the attractiveness of this “shallow” contents to the young generation (which is “the hope of our nation”).

At the end of the 60., Polish television was strongly engaged in the politics again, censorship became more restricted. It is worth mentioning that Polish public was used to read between lines and identify the images prepared for “intoxication” with propaganda messages souls and minds of the audience. Polish viewers we were good in solving puzzles, and our creators were resourceful in playing with the censorship (e.g. mentioned series of programmes *Kabaret Starszych Panów* and some other cabaret shows by *STS, Dudek, Tey*).

During the Polish People’s Republic television had become the important but not reliable medium. Controlled by the Party media were dependent to the government or the leadership of the Party, and, in fact a lot of programming had been involved in politics and ideology.

### *Decline of the public television era - the dawn of the new media epoch*

Referring to the image of Polish television evolution we can identify at least 3 aspects of development: technological, aesthetical and political (of course, they work together in the process of improving the television as such). The first aspect is rooted in technological progress involved in development of the medium in Poland. In fact there are “natural” phases of television development, I mean technical innovations such as transition from black and white to color television (color transmissions started in 1971, but color television sets became available to ordinary people in late 80. in Poland), the invention and popularization of video recording technology which enabled to change the mode of production from live transmissions to more recorded material (it is also connected with aes-

thetical aspect, definitely it changes the style of television; in Poland - it occurred in mid 70.); or the possibility of satellite transmission (in Poland - late 80.) etc. Technology of transmission had been constantly improved, although the problems with the receiving television signal occurred not only in the distant part of the country. Frames with the letters "Sorry for the technical problems (with transmission)" („Przepraszamy za usterki”) or "The program will be continued after a while" („Za chwilę dalszy ciąg programu”) had been presented relatively often till the 80.

The second, aesthetical, aspect involves the convention of presentation televised materials, which is sensitive to the changes occurred on the media scene like e.g. the beginning of the Internet or satellite television, when looking for the audience enforced the television to change its formula. Even the introducing the second channel of public television in 1970 (TVP2) caused the changes in the style in the first program (TVP1). Although the major entertainment programming was located in the second program, the most popular entertaining program, Studio 2, born in TVP 2 in 1974 was immediately transferred to TVP1. It is characteristic of Polish public television - its channels do not cooperate but compete.

By the end of the 80., satellite television gained public attention and the audience's enthusiasm to a new medium and its possibilities was accompanied by anxiety of the Party and the political powers. In 1987 the weekly magazine „Ekran” („Screen”, devoted to presentation of the television program), published a report from the debate on „the invasion of foreign television channels into the Polish sky”. The debate gathered representatives of the government and the journalists from Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and the USSR. The threats of „satellite imperialism” were discussed, as well as some issues such as Americanization of culture and its negative influence to the cultural identity, pornography, and the strong anti-communist attitudes in some Western movies and TV shows. Although the mentioned threats the participants found the satellite television as the opportunity to strengthen the cooperation between the socialist countries, because „... 42 from 147 communication satellite belong to the USSR”. The debate is the best illustration of our political leaders' lack of imagination: the satellite television managed to popularize itself extremely quickly, also - before the collapse of the system - a cable television entered the communication scene in Poland.

This aspect of development is based on the changes on the TV market, which means the appearance and widespread of competitive media. This type of changes extorted the transformation of the medium's character, but the "giant leap" from paleo- to neo-television occurred in Poland in the 90. It means that the public television should react to these changes with the popularization of some new type of programmes: soap operas, reality show - the new formula and this type of evolution is based on the foreign license. More interactive, more entertaining programmes had been added to the everyday routine schedule. The results of competitiveness are twofold: the universalization of the form of programmes, and the specialization of the television offer.

The third, political, aspect of television development in Poland could be analyzed through the perspective of the messages and presented topics. There is a wide measure of agreement among researchers that the crucial moments in the history of Polish TV occurred parallel to the most dramatic political events like the crisis of 1956, the inauguration of Pope John Paul II pontificate in 1978, or the introducing of Martial law in 1981. The last event suppressed the young democracy in Poland and also caused the break in transmission the regular television programming, all the free press had not been published, some journalists were located in the internment camps or even in prisons. For a few months the newsreaders of *Dziennik* (the official news service during PPR, presented via TVP1) wore military uniforms, but politics restrained the official television for many years.

Among crucial moments for television development the interesting is June 4<sup>th</sup> 1989. It is a date of the first (after the World War II) free election in Poland. The election happened a few months before the fall of the Berlin Wall (*nota bene* this event was not covered nor mentioned by Polish television). In fact, Poland was the pioneer country in the context of the decline of communism in East Europe. So after 1989, the regime soften a little and the transformation had been observed also in the media sphere. The first private television channel, Polonia 1, was launched in 1990 (more precisely - it was the local station from Wroclaw "PTV Echo", which became a part of Polonia1). The second, and the more dynamic non-public television, Polsat, was launched in 1992. The rest is history...

### *The main TV channels in Poland at the beginning of the new millennium*

Since the beginning of the new millennium the television landscape in Poland has been changing constantly. In 2009 there is one active network of public television, consists of 5-6 nationwide stations and local channels transmitted by 16 local TV stations (such as TVP Katowice - the oldest one, TVP Opole, TVP Kraków etc.). Network of public television is based on two main channels: TVP1 and TVP2 (both broadcast general programming) and some supportive channels among which the oldest one is TVP Polonia (started 1992/1993)- designed for Polish audience living abroad, and the newest is TVP HD, started 2007. Four other channels of this network: TVP Info, TVP Kultura, TVP Sport, TVP Historia are more specialized. TVP Info is a typical informative channel which provides dedicated news and current affairs output from all over the country. It regularly broadcasts documentaries prepared by Polish local stations and sometimes foreign, controversial documentaries on the politics and contemporary social issues. One hour in the schedule of this channel is devoted to the local information services. TVP Sport is designed to present the recent sport events.

TVP Kultura (*TVP Culture*) is the channel with a mission of popularization the world' cultural heritage. A great deal of programming is taken from Polish national movie and television archives. The channel broadcasts the old documentaries of the classical music concertos, operas; a lot of studio music and popular music as well; alternative art and fine arts are also present in journalism and cultural commercials, video clips, cultural news etc. Circa 80% of its programming covers the European culture (including Polish culture) and its changes during the recent century. American culture is represented in more than 10% of the schedule. And some documentaries are devoted to the world social problems and political issues (only few percent of the whole programming).

The whole programming of TVP Historia (*TVP History*) is supposed to be connected with "history". However, the history here is understood as the past till 1989.

Some active commercial networks are thematic, such as movie networks HBO (HBO, HBO2, HBO Comedy, Cinemax and Cinemax2) and Cyfra+ (Canal+, Canal+ Film, Canal+ Blue, Filmbox, Ale Kino, Kino Polska). The most popular network of documentaries is Discovery; of music - MTV

(MTV Classic was changed into VH1 Polska, MTV), and Viva. A lot of foreign channels are present in both, cable and satellite, televisions: cartoons in Fox Kids, Cartoon Network; Russian ( RTR Planeta), Italian (Tele 5), Arabian (Al-Rai TV from Kuwait), American (CNN, Universal, FoXNews), French (Arte, Tele5?), German (RTL, ZDF, Pro7 etc.).

Among private television stations (commercial television) there are two main networks of general television: Polsat (Polsat Sport, Polsat Café, Polsat2 etc.) and TVN (TVN, TVN 7, TVN 24, TVN Meteo, TVN Sport); and two main cable networks (with own stations and professional program: Vectra (consists of 47 separate local divisions) and Multimedia Polska (consists of 13 local stations); and a few small networks such as Małopolska Telewizja Kablowa (5 stations) or Toya (4 stations). The commercial channels present tabloid offer with a lot of soap operas, different types of exciting, entertaining programmes; trash TV programming , all kinds of reality show including the licensed programmes such as *Big Brother*, *Idol* and so on; they broadcast also some soft-porn movies.

### **Televising history via Polish channels**

As it was stated before, some channels available in Poland are typically historical stations: Polish public channel TVP Historia (TVP History, detailed characteristic of its program offer is presented below), and some foreign channels: Discovery History, ViaSat History, History (previously known as History Channel). The latest and the first mentioned stations are specialized in both - documentaries and feature films. Moreover, history as a background or as a main topic occurred in some channels of Polish public television: TVP, TVP2, TVP Info and TVP Kultura. Commercial channels (Polish and foreign which present some parts of programming in Polish dubbing) sometimes also broadcast television shows on history. Discovery World presents from time to time the documentaries on technological problems with historical background, some programmes on the military techniques and great kings and military leaders known from the ancient times (Genghis Khan, Cesar & Cleopatra) to 20<sup>th</sup> century (JFK, Churchill). Some channels of HBO network rarely broadcast some documents on history.

Concerning fictional stories with the historical problems or epochs it is easy to identify leading channels: Ale Kino and Kino Polska, a channel

with the reference to the unique Polish history. Public television programs (TVP 1) and (TVP 2), and active in Poland religious channels such as Religia TV and Puls regularly broadcast the movies and documentaries on biblical themes, it means that ancient Israel and ancient Rome are present in those channels rather often. They broadcast also documentaries on the story of church as well as of the other big religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, etc.). Commercial networks (Polsat, TVN, HBO, Canal +) broadcast many movies on historical problems or persons, but it will be convenient to analyze the problem using categories typical to that genre.

Especially interesting in this group is Kino Polska, commercial channel which presents documentaries and movies devoted mainly to the World War II and the newest history of Poland (movies or documentaries on the reality of Polish People's Republic up to 1989). During the main Polish national holidays such as 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 15<sup>th</sup> August, 11<sup>th</sup> November this channel always all the day broadcasts the special program totally devoted to the particular special occasion (even public TVP Historia does not practice that!). Although Kino Polska specializes in the newest history of Poland, the station rarely presents some documentaries connected with the historical events from the different epochs and fiction television series and movies: based on renaissance: *Królowa Bona* (*Queen Bona*), *Marysia i Napoleon* (*Mary and Napoleon*) or on 19<sup>th</sup> century *Rodzina Połanieckich* (*The Połaniecki Family*), *Ziemia obiecana* (*The Promised Land*) etc.

Other stations presents sometimes feature films and television series with historical background, just like and *Wojna i Pokój* (*War and Peace*) - the Polish channel devoted to Russian cinematography, but history is not the dominant point in its programming.

### *Televising history: periods and problems*

The following analysis is based on TVP Historia, which program of 3 months (April, May and June in 2009) was investigated thoroughly<sup>(7)</sup> and this picture of history is accompanied by the "control group" of different stations programming. I choose 9 main Polish television channels (exclu-

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(7) I created a special database using the criteria suggested by the project' outline. In fact, the main problem in this section concerns the definition of history. What does history really mean?

ding Kino Polska and TVP History), four television stations from public television: TVP 1, TVP 2, TVP Kultura, TVP Polonia; and five commercial television stations: Polsat, TVN, TVN7, Puls<sup>(8)</sup>, TVP4. I analyzed the program from much more shorter period, I picked only 2 weeks of May 2009 (although the database for the whole month is prepared).

During the analyzing period TVP Historia broadcast 1686 new programming including 1447 purely historical. Total number of programmes, including repeated (rerun) documentaries, episodes of television series is different, is 2885, and the number of purely historical programmes - 2365. The tables below present two sets of data.

During the two analyzed weeks in the 9 channels I identified 168 television shows with the historical background: 37 television shows were presented by TVP1, 36 by Puls, 34 - by TVP Kultura, TVP Polonia - 27 television shows (with a lot of repetitions of programmes); 17 - by TVP 2; 7 - by TVP4; 4 - by Polsat, 3 by both TVN and TVN7. So, the most programmes on history or with historical background was presented by public television channels (115 from 168 transmitted during the mentioned fortnight).

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(8) This station is interesting due to its switch in programming during the relatively short time on air. Initially, in 2001, Puls was devoted to religious topics (it started as TV Niepokalanów), but in 2007 the station obtained the permission to change the profile to more „universal” issues. Now it is advertised as „the most familial television in Poland” (<http://pulstv.pl/o-nas>).

## Representation of periods in the TVP Historia

Let's consider the content of 3 month period in 2009.

Epochs	April 2009	April 2009 including repetitions	May 2009	May 2009 including repetitions	June 2009	June 2009 including repetitions
<b>Cross-historical</b>	53	74	83	123	89	123
Antiquity	1	3	6	14	2	9
Medieval	5	27	10	16	16	23
XVI	45	46	21	23	9	10
XVII	9	20	9	14	5	8
XVIII	4	10	14	17	3	3
XIX	3	5	20	31	8	11
XX	304	591	346	578	345	516
Unknown	15	21	15	27	24	28
Irrelevant	23	136	30	128	156	256
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>985</b>
<b>20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY</b>						
<b>the first half</b>	108	215	179	274	171	223
WW2	60	137	61	114	45	72
XX - PPR	104	180	105	159	118	200
XX - After 1989	32	59	19	31	11	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>516</b>

Analyzing the gathered data from TVP History it is clear that the most popular period is the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only in April 2009: 20<sup>th</sup> century was the topic of 304 programmes, other epochs: 120, in 462 total number of television shows. It means that 20<sup>th</sup> century matters constituted 65,8% of the program during one month. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the most popular period inside the results. What's interesting - Polish People's Republic is more popular topic (34,2%) than World War II (19,7%). The same tendency is observed in the programming of May and June.

The next, quite large, group of programmes was classified as "cross-historical", it means that the television show (documentary, feature film or television series) starts in one particular year (or epoch) and tries to trace the problem or family story through the next 300 or 500 years (e.g. biographical television series such as *Tudor* or documentaries showing the

history of Christianity or the military inventories). This group of television units constitutes 11,5% of the TVP Historia programming in April 2009, and 13,3% of the offer during the analyzing three months.

The popularity of the other epochs was not so clear in the programming during the mention period: 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were the next group of interesting periods in April 2009 television shows, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were popular in May 2009.

Slightly different panorama of history is obtained from the analysis of the 9 popular Polish stations. Similarly, 78 of total 168 programmes were connected with the newest history; it means that the 20<sup>th</sup> century' matters constituted 46% of these programmes. And among the 20<sup>th</sup> century' interests - World War 2 is the subject of 20,5% of different TV shows, and 32% were devoted to Polish People's Republic (proportions of representations of the periods are comparable here). The rest of units describes different parts of the century such as World War 1, the Korean war (the 50.) and the other decades of the century.

Fantastic history<sup>(9)</sup> was the background of 25 television shows (14,8%), and this point makes the biggest difference between the offer of TVP Historia and others analyzed channels. 21 programmes were located in 19<sup>th</sup> century (12,5%); 16 programmes were connected with the period 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries (9,5%), only 3 programmes were talking on the medieval (1,8%); and 12 were cross-historical television shows (7,1%).

### *Representation of problems*

Let's begin with the topics presented in analyzed programming of 9 chosen channels: in documentaries the most popular subjects are: war, and military action, history of religion and popular culture<sup>(10)</sup>. In the feature

(9) I decided to include the shows like *Lara Croft: Tomb Rider* or *The Flintstones* or the movies and TV series based on e.g. the adventures of Merlin - because in the common consciousness they are connected with „history“. And TVP Historia during the mentioned period did not broadcast any kind of such movies or television series. Thus fantastic history units (we can call them also "out of time" epochs narratives) constitute the large part of the programming.

(10) I mean the programmes which are dedicated to the history of popular art, e.g. *The Story of The Doors*, *100 years of the movies*, *Opole'63* (it was the recorded event: the final concert of the Polish popular songs festival which took place in Opole, it was regular event, and Polish television channels sometimes present the tapes from the festival), etc. And as I observed the programmes which go back to the 50. or 60. in the 20th century are advertised and treated as the 'historical' ones.

movies and television series dominated the customs and the biographical data (*Tudors*, *Marco Polo*, etc). It is worth mentioning that war was the background for comedy (*M.A.S.H.*), and although battles are the main building blocks of war stories, espionage and sensation in the war circumstances (*Stawka większa niż życie*, AKA *More than Life at Stake*), crimes committed during the war (*Foyle's War* series<sup>11</sup>) and military actions and propaganda (*Czterej pancerni i pies*, AKA *Four Men and a Dog - in a Tank*) are typical themes of these movies. It was fascinating that only one unit in the programming of 9 TV channels was linked to the national holiday, I mean the live transmission of official celebration of 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, the day of constitution (the same transmission was broadcast by TVP1 and TVP Polonia). During the news some information had occurred, even the data on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May as a day devoted to our national flag.

Analysis of TVP Historia programming is presented below. I decided to divide the main fields of interests into some categories. Distinction between 5 main fields of interest:

- *Political matters* (main events, biographies of the most important kings and people of power);
- *Military history* (mostly battles and armor, also technological improvements);
- *Cultural history*: (everyday life, religion, the story of art etc.)
- *History of technology and science*.
- *History of society* (social problems, urban and rural areas etc.).

### *TVP Historia, representation of problems*

Identification of topics was made in two columns: leading subject, the most important characteristic of the given program, and the background topic, it means the topic which provides supporting information about the leading subject, and helps to identify the whole story. E.g. in the docu-

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(11) The case of *Foyle's War* is especially interesting. The topic of crimes committed during the war seems to be the next step in telling the truth about the World War II. After heroic stories we can find some shameful stories such as infamous actions undertaken by people with unclear past and motivations. Although stories with those topics occurred during the last 60 years, traitors belonged to the enemies, not to the victims. "Our side" is now under the investigation, the films and TV series try to tell the whole truth about this war.

mentary film *Dzieje Polaków. Panowie na Zamościu* (*The Story of Poles. Lords of Zamość*) the leading subject is the story of a noble family which used to reign the city of Zamość, so it is identified as “society”, but supporting material is devoted to the story of the city itself (including the history of architecture and art), and that background topic is identified as “culture”. Another example: studio discussion *Kontrowersje: W służbie komunizmowi* (*Controversies: In service with communism*) firstly deals with the problem of organization and goals of SB (Służba Bezpieczeństwa: Security Services) and shameful cooperation with the communist special forces, so the leading subject is identified as “politics” and the background topic as “society”; etc.

	April 2009 Leading subject	April 2009 background topic	May 2009 Leading Subject	May2009 background topic	June 2009 Leading subject	June 2009 background topic
<b>Politics</b>	169	119	193	156	116	133
<b>Military</b>	93	79	109	205	69	51
<b>Culture</b>	333	75	411	250	234	177
<b>Technology and Science</b>	9	8	20	8	49	29
<b>Society</b>	127	281	12	188	254	192
<b>Entertainment</b>	7	39	5	51	3	35
<b>Various topics</b>	32	20	22	16	56	3

	April 2009 Leading subject	May 2009 Leading subject	June 2009 Leading Subject
<b>Biography</b>	195	180	159
<b>Events</b>	109	107	105
<b>Problem</b>	319	362	452
<b>Phenomenon</b>	108	156	131

The data gathered in the first table shows that the most popular leading subject is culture. In April and May programming it was dominated topic, and in June programming it followed the interest in society. Politics forms the next group of problems, and military matters the 4<sup>th</sup> section. And presentation of a given problem, such as the genesis of military conflict or revolution, the social

results of a given military action or political regulation, is the most popular frame of presentation the historical matters. Biography is also good method of presentation historical events and problems, and the next frame is analysis of phenomenon like social or cultural movements etc.

### *Typical forms of historical programmes*

The common day on air of TV Historia is very predictable. The whole programming is pure broadcast, without neither a presenter nor host in the studio. Transmission starts at 7.00 or 8.00 as usual without any special announcements. After the ending of any given part of programming commercial break is introduced in which among typical commercials appear short clips with the excerpts of programming and some comments (voice off) on the content which refer to the main problems discussed or main story told during the particular position of the programming. At the end of the day the programming for the next day is presented (only plates with the schedule accompanied by the peaceful music in the background).

TVP Historia presents the great number of documentaries - 45% of programming during the mentioned 3 months, including also so called drama documentaries based on archival materials (especially on documentaries)<sup>(12)</sup>. Usually archival materials consists of short documentaries, parts of newsreel, sometimes also of photographs and copies of some documents such as acts of law, memoirs, even of the identity cards. These materials are of historical and sentimental value. Referring to given months, documentary always constitutes almost a half of the program: in April - 53,5 %, in May - 46%, in June - 38,9% (during this month TVP Historia used a lot of reports, 14, 2% because of the weekend presentations of chosen regions of Poland). Some documentary cycles from the analyzed months: *Zamki kresowe Rzeczypospolitej* (*Castles of the Polish eastern frontier* - on the Polish past at the wildest, peripheral territories of the Second Republic); *Madonny polskie* (*Polish Madonnas* - on the Virgin Mary cult in Poland) and single programmes: *Goci z Kotliny Hrubieszowskiej* (*Goths from the Hrubieszów Valley* - on the traces of Goths culture in Poland), *Monte Cas-*

(12) Drama-documentary or docudrama is a typical form of presentation of the past, it is dramatized version of a given event. In Polish television the starting point to this type of documentary is the material taken from the archives, and actors or extras are used to perform the missing parts of action.

*sino* (on the one of the most tragic and bloodiest battles of WW2), *Czas wielkiej próby* (*Time of a great challenge* - on the imprisonment of a priest, Franciszek Majdajski, in a concentration camp in Dachau).

Let us describe some popular programmes. Worth attention documentary series is *Sensacje XX wieku* (*Sensations of the 20th century*). Although only 16 episodes of the series were broadcast via TV Historia during the analyzed period (with repetitions - the different episodes of programme were 29 times on air ) it is constantly the part of the Polish public television programming. A lot of them were broadcast by TVP1 and TVP Polonia and this documentary series had been released on DVD this year. A „godfather” of *Sensacje XX wieku* is Bogusław Wołoszański, a journalist and an author of the books on the history, especially the history of WW2. His books are well documented but provocative, written in sensational style; so the the same is the style of the whole documentary series. Even serious topics are presented in tabloid manner. Among typical topics we can find *Operacja Barbarossa* (*Operation Barbarossa*), *Operacja Zeppelin* (*Operation Zeppelin*), *Sprawa Admirala Canarisa* (*The Case of Admiral Canaris*), *Bomba Hitlera* (*The Hitler's Bomb*), *Jak zabić Fidela?* (*How to kill Fidel [Castro]?*), *Zabójstwo Roberta Kennedy'ego* (*The Killing of Robert Kennedy*), *Czerwony baron* (*Red Baron*), *Berlin '45* etc.

The formula of these programmes is simple and effective. The presentation of the subject started with archival footage and the voice off tells the basic facts and the mysterious events or secret documents behind the official version of the story. After this short introduction, the author and presenter (Bogusław Wołoszański) appears and continue the story on the visual background of archival newsreel, documentary or photos. Sometimes the figure of the author is hidden but some parts of the picture are exposed or underline. Also reconstruction of some events is popular form of telling the alternative or official version of the story. Some critics argue that in *Sensacje XX wieku* objective reality is being replaced by pseudo or staged reality. This kind of programmes is one of factors of distorting the truth in media, but in fact the “truth” is one of the crucial values declared by the author, however motto of the *Sensacje XX wieku* seems to be “information must be entertaining” because it must be easy to understand. Despite the criticism the described series is still popular.

Different concept of documentary is presented in the series *Polskie rody* on the history of noble families in Poland. The program consists of visual reportage from the nests of the families, we can admire their palaces, castles with gardens, sometimes the places are well kept and look gorgeous and in some cases the ruins of castle or devastated palace are presented. The plot is simple here, first we have to learn something about the past of the family, about the achievements and successes. Second part is devoted to the contemporary family members and we can trace their lifestyle. Almost always there are 4 to 5 interviews with the family representatives.

Going back to the main topic, the next form, located on the second position during the analyzed months was magazine (presentation of a problem or phenomenon by the presenter who introduced the topic and tries to comment the photos and the archival films, sometimes the interview with the witnesses or experts is the core of the narration). Magazines constituted 12,3% of programming in April 2009, 17,5% in May and 17,8% in June. Among typical magazines in May 2009 the most popular was *Portal* (21 editions on news connected with the history: celebrations of some military victories from the past, discussion on some new archeological discoveries, information about the events such as reconstruction of the historical battles, etc.), other magazines, although interesting were presented weekly, e.g. *Widzoteka Dorosłego Człowieka* (*Video Collection for Adults*, 5 editions on the popular songs of the 50., 60. and 70.), *Drugie dno historii* (*The Second Bottom of History*, 5 editions).

Third form in this classification is television series, mostly fictional stories based on historical events: 9,7% of the monthly schedule in April, 6,8% in May and 5,3% in June (e.g. *Tajemnica twierdzy szyfrów*, *Zakłęty dwór*, *Przedwiośnie*, *Hrabina Cosel*). Discussion in the studio constituted 11% of the programming, and discussion often is the introduction to feature film or documentary. Interesting part here is the quiz show *300% normy* (*300% of norm*), it occupies only 1,5% of the total programming, but the form is untypical (the quiz deals with the reality of PPR).

### TVP Historia, April 2009

Form (genre)	Single shows	Shows including repetitions
<b>Documentary</b> (including one „drama documentary”)	247	431
<b>Commentary</b> (including the archival footage)	5	17
<b>Animation</b> (*)	12	122
<b>Magazine</b> (including the archival footage)	58	98
<b>Studio discussion</b>	48	147
<b>TV series</b> (feature movies, fictional stories)	45	54
	<i>episodes of 5 TV series</i>	<i>episodes of 5 TV series</i>
<b>Quiz show</b>	13	13
<b>Report</b>	26	62
<b>Feature film</b>	6	10
<b>Live transmission / live program</b>	0	0
<b>Educational program</b>	0	0
<b>Unknown</b>	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>941</b>

(\*) *Pucut i Grzechu...* (names) they are talking about contemporary Polish language. The single episode lasts up to 2 minutes and e.g. one of them, *On dreams*, was presented 16 times in May 2009, *How to run fast* 11 times during the same month. All episodes of the series have been repeated constantly during the last half of the year.

### TVP Historia, May 2009

Form (genre)	Single shows	Shows including repetitions
<b>Documentary</b> (including one „drama documentary”)	261	392
<b>Commentary</b> (including the archival footage)	25	42
<b>Animation</b>	7	100
<b>Magazine</b> (including the archival footage)	100	119
<b>Studio discussion</b>	72	145
<b>TV series</b> (feature movies, fictional stories)	39	71
	<i>episodes of 9 TV series</i>	<i>episodes of 9 TV series</i>
<b>Educational program</b>	9	20
<b>Quiz show</b>	10	10
<b>Report</b>	36	51
<b>Feature film</b>	5(**)	10
<b>Live transmission / live program</b>	2	2
<b>Unknown</b>	6	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>971</b>

(\*\*) In fact, there were presented only 4 different movies, but one (Italian TV production, *Don Peregrino...*) was divided into 2 parts.

TVP Historia, June 2009

Form (genre)	Single shows	Shows including repetitions
<b>Documentary</b> (including one „drama documentary”)	<b>256</b>	<b>367</b>
<b>Commentary</b> (including the archival footage)	<b>21</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Animation</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Magazine</b> (including the archival footage)	<b>117</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Studio discussion</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>TV series (feature movies, fiction)</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>68</b>
	<i>episodes of 7 TV series</i>	<i>episodes of 7 TV series</i>
<b>Quiz show</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Report</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Feature film</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Studio live</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Educational program</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Live transmission / live program</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>986</b>

Referring to forms of programmes typical for 9 analyzed channels, the most popular was feature film (49 movies were broadcast during the first half of May 2009). Documentary is also an important element in this picture: 40 documentaries (some of them were presented 2 or 3 times). These stations broadcast also 32 episodes of different TV series (feature movies) with historical background: Polish series *Janosik*, *Rodzina Połanieckich* (*The Połaniecki Family*), *Stawka większa niż życie* (AKA *More than Life at Stake*), *Przygody Pana Michała* (*The Adventures of Sir Michał*), *Czterej pancerni i pies* (AKA *Four Tank Men and a Dog*); all of them were produced during the Polish Peoples Republic period, 3 last titles were produced during the Golden Age of Polish TV. Among foreign television series there were episodes of: *Foyle’s War*, *Zorro*, *M.A.S.H.*, *The Tudors*, *Merlin*, *Bleak House*; and, surprisingly, the animation on the bases of “fantastic prehistory”: *The Flintstones* (16 episodes). What is more, 11 units of quiz show (mentioned 300% of norm) were transmitted by TVP1 and TV Polonia. 4 episodes of educational program *Piórkem i węglem* (*With feather and coal*) were broadcast by TVP Polonia. Live transmission from the official ceremony of 3<sup>rd</sup> May, presented by two public TV stations (TVP1 and TV Polonia). Among the other forms I identified 4 reports on history, and 1 drama *Henryk VI na łowach* (*Henry VI hunting* by Bogusławski, produced in 1981 and presented 2 times by TVP Polonia). Cabaret performance probably seems strange in this classification: TVP2 broadcast 2 times the show

„Historia Polski wg Kabaretu Moralnego Niepokoju” (*History of Poland according to the Moral Turmoil Cabaret*), an ironic view of Polish history.

Among the documentaries one formula seems to be unique: broadcast by public television channels (TVP1, TVP Polonia, TVP Info and TVP History): *Był taki dzień... Kartka z kalendarza* (*On this day happened...*). One episode covers one day, brief information on the main events of a given day and some stills from the documentaries and archival photographs are presented.

## Production

TVP Historia production of shows during 3 months in 2009						
Production	April 2009	April 2009 (including repetitions)	May 2009	May 2009 (including repetitions)	June 2009	June 2009 (including repetitions)
<b>Poland</b>	385	833	510	881	611	929
<b>Great Britain</b>	21	36	30	48	15	23
<b>Italy</b>	46	46	23	29	6	6
<b>USA</b>	0	0	1	1	1	1
<b>Polish-Czech</b>	1	2	0	0	0	0
<b>Polish-Italian</b>	2	9	0	0	0	0
<b>Belgium Polish German</b>	0	0	0	0	24	24
<b>Unknown</b>	7	15	8	12	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>941</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>986</b>

In both cases - the TVP Historia and 9 others Polish television channels - national production dominated in the programming. TV Historia rather rarely broadcasts a documentary or the movie from the other countries. Italy and Great Britain provide some shows to this channel (e.g. documentary series *Churchill*, GB, 2003 or *The Treasures of Toscania*, Italy, 2003). Production in the 9 stations is also dominated by Polish programmes (70 of 168), however, in the case of the feature movies the proportion is different: 7 Polish movies “against” 36 foreign films. In the 9 analyzed

channels more American programmes appeared: 47 television shows came from the USA (8 from Great Britain, 1 from Japan, 1 from Germany and the others were co-produced by different countries such as Ireland, France, Australia, Canada, Hungary, Netherlands, Japan, GB, USA etc.)

### Foreign versus national history

TVP Historia - location, three months of 2009						
Location	April 2009	April 2009 (including repetitions)	May 2009	May 2009 (including repetitions)	June 2009	June 2009 (including repetitions)
<b>Poland</b>	259	479	362	557	494	689
<b>Europe</b>	149	240	100 + 8 <i>(Russia)</i>	161 + 18 <i>(Russia)</i>	50 + 1 <i>(Russia)</i>	8 + 2 <i>(Russia)</i>
<b>USSR</b>	9	29	3	3	6	7
<b>The world</b>	7	13	59	81	47	68
<b>Africa</b>	2	3	1	1	3	3
<b>Asia</b>	12	26	3	7	2	4
<b>Near East</b>	0	0	3	5	2	2
<b>USA</b>	0	0	3	5	5 +1 <i>(Canada)</i>	9 +2 <i>(Canada)</i>
<b>Latin America</b>	5	20	1	2	6 + 2 <i>(Mexico)</i>	12 + 2 <i>(Mexico)</i>
<b>Irrelevant</b>	12	122	7	100	34	99
<b>Unknown</b>	7	9	22	31	8	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>941</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>986</b>

One last issue deserves a footnote - representation of location of the stories. Foreign history is not so popular in TVP Historia as the history of Poland. What is more, the narratives focused on Europe quite often link the leading subject to Polish matters or the representatives of Polish nation.

Concerning the place of the narration (or the country or city of reference) in the television shows presented by 9 analyzed Polish channels in the mentioned period: in 68 of 1968 cases it was Poland, in 25 cases - fantastic world. 23 in European countries such as Germany, Hungary, France, Bulgaria, Ne-

therlands and Portugal plus 11 programmes situated in England. 14 television shows were based in the USA, 7 episodes of television series - in Korea, 3 shows - all over the world (the movies *Around the World in 80 Days* and the feature film on Marco Polo's journey), 2 in China, 1 in Japan, Argentina, India.

## **History in the popular memory and television discourse in 20<sup>th</sup> century Poland**

Analyzing popular historical discourse in Poland after the WW2 it is easy to distinguish two main lines of arguments till 1989: one is an official historical discourse, presented by the government and the Party (and public media), the other one is an alternative version of history presented by the opposition. One can ask who was "the owner" of the truth?

In the first period after the WW2 it was obvious that new political powers would like to confirm and strengthen their prestige and social support, and they tried to prepare special version of Polish history. Although Poland had got the same neighbors, among which there were the old enemies, the new allies appeared. So, post-war reconfiguration of political scene was crucial to the construction of Polish historical discourse. The first, ideological line of it was that of the Party, according to which the concept of history was subordinated to the official propaganda of the Soviet Bloc. Polish policy and propaganda doctrine on the Poland's past, as developed during the Polish People's Republic in conjunction with the Soviet specialists was presented in the school textbooks and other official books on history. Thus, in this discourse some facts were omitted or discredited (e.g. the denial of the real achievements of the pre-war Poland, the ideological interpretation of the Noble Democracy era<sup>(13)</sup>, etc.) and other facts and events were purposefully exposed and colorized (e.g. the communist movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was presented as the very active and extremely massive and popular phenomenon). "History or ideology?" seems to be the most appropriate question referring to the interpretation of historical and contemporary events in Poland. Censorship used to block some production, make decision on distribution of some movies or television programs etc.

(13) Both periods - the Noble Democracy in Poland (circa 16<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) and the period called "Sanacja" (1918-1939) - were treated as the shameful eras stigmatized by domination of the "rotten" social classes such as aristocracy, noblemen or Bourgeoisie. In the official version of history the criticism of the ruling classes and the dramatic fate of lower classes distinguished the essential points in interpretations of those periods.

Generally speaking, public television during the Polish People's Republic era support the official Party line, and television programming was almost always very helpful in fulfilling propaganda tasks and purposes. Not the same programmes, but the same judgments were repeated over and over again. Televising history was in these circumstances very delicate matter, thus the televisual version of history had a lot of gaps. One can say that it was more ideology than history on the Polish silver screen till the 1989 changes.

The second line in the historical discourse was the alternative version of history propagated by the pre-war elites, now - the groups of immigrants had formed the Polonia milieu in France and Great Britain. So, from abroad especially prepared materials were sent (s.c. "bibuła", which in popular language means underground publications), such as textbooks, critical books, essays of forbidden authors, examples of contemporary literature banned in Poland, etc. All these publications and some "living" memories of citizens and stories told in private live shaped the second line of historical discourse with some information on taboo issues such as 17<sup>th</sup> September 1939 (the day of the Soviet invasion of Poland on the basis of the secret protocols of Nazi-Soviet Pact) or the Soviet crime in "Katyń"<sup>(14)</sup>, the place of mass murder of Polish officers (c. 1940) located on the territory of the Soviet Union. Among the alternative media it was the radio Free Europe ("Radio Wolna Europa"), but unfortunately, there wasn't any television channel. It's worth mentioning that the second, alternative version of past was always supported by the Church<sup>(15)</sup>. Short period of 1980-1981 challenged the official version of historical truth, al-

(14) It is the location of mass graves in which the corps of Polish officers murdered by the Soviet forces were found in 1943. In popular discourse "Katyń" became the synonym of all places of mass executions of Polish soldiers. Norman Davies writes: "Above all, there were the Katyń massacres - not the biggest atrocity by any means, but one that acted as a litmus test of historical honesty. [...] Around 25,000 Allied officers had disappeared in Russia in 1940. But apart from 4,500 corpses uncovered by the Germans in Katyń Forest, near Smoleńsk, in 1943, most of the missing men had never been found. There was not absolute proof, but the probability was high that the remaining 15,000 or 20,000 were lying in other mass graves, and that their deaths had been ordered by Stalin not Hitler" (Norman Davies, *Europe at War 1939-1945. No Simple Victory*, Pan Books, London 2007, p. 13). Now we know some other locations: Starobielsk and Charków, but all the problem is still under the process of historical reconstruction, description and interpretation.

(15) "In Poland [...], as Norman Davies puts it, the independence of the Church has traditionally provided umbrella for a measure of cultural freedom..." (Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1984, p. 381).

though the evolution of communism in Europe was still presented in the old style, but in popular media the materials on Katyń and September 17<sup>th</sup> 1939 sometimes appeared.

1989 was a tremendous breakdown in the political history, the borders had been opened for other nations and for Polish, and some archives had also been opened and previously taboo stories could be told aloud in public and the official discourse had been changed dramatically. It was also the period of denial for the communist history, people often decided to change the streets' names (communist "saints" were replaced by the heroes of the independence fight, forgotten heroes from the local history etc.) and some monuments had been fallen down with the great applause of the crowds (these events sometimes were televised). Together with the changes in popular memory, the changes in the cultural production occurred. Now, the new vision of the past was presented and it was dominated by the glory of Piłsudski<sup>(16)</sup> and his epoch (that is the heroic times of building the new Republic after the era of Partition). Now one can ask "History or mythology?" And this period was rather short, after 3 or 4 years of enthusiasm for the new version of Polish history the nation became self-absorbed due to radical changes in national economy and lifestyle.

The other interesting turn was possible due to the collapse of censorship system. A lot of movies were released after a long time on the shelf; some of them were broadcast by public television. It is impossible to write about all the examples, I'd like to focus on the one important problem - the visualization of the Holocaust. In fact, in Polish media the topic was always present after the WW2; in the late 80. the great debate took place just after the broadcasting of some parts of *Shoah* (1985, a documentary film by Claude Lanzmann). Some voices argued that Polish were presented here in the wrong light. In fact, the problem of attitudes towards the hiding the Jews is still under the historical and sociological analyses. During the Nazi occupation hiding the Jews meant death sentence, thus the decision of help the Jews was so hard to some people. The story which pictures

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(16) Marshall Józef Piłsudski is an iconic figure of Polish freedom. He was not just a soldier and politician, but the independence warrior and the leader of the independence movement. In 1918, after almost 200 hard years of Partition, he managed to form new Polish army ("Legion") and became the first star on Polish political scene.

the spectrum of Polish attitudes was told in the movie *Długa noc* (*The Long Night*, directed by Janusz Nasfeter) produced in 1967 and released in 1989; now the movie is present in the programming of Kino Polska and broadcasts from time to time.

Since 1989 Polish public television had been trying to fulfill the cognitive needs of the audience as well as the tension release needs. Although the mission of public television is focused on contradictory tasks such as universality (the programming should be appropriate and attractive to as large audience as possible) and the best quality of programmes, still it is design to popularize Polish tradition and culture. Taking into account the new media scene with a lot of competitors, sometimes the need for escape from reality and diversion dominates in programming the other needs.

To sum up, it is hard to draw the panorama of historiography and its changes in the short essay. I tried only to emphasize some main problems, however the picture is incomplete. Politics was the main factor in the process of changes on the cultural scene. Even nowadays in conceptualization of history in public discourse in Poland there are still some taboo issues and gaps, some of them are connected with WW2. During the WW2 Polish were mostly victims of German and Soviet aggression, but some episodes from the occupation and warfare were not bright and noble; just the opposite - they are shameful events such as the murder of Jews in Jedwabne (1945)<sup>(17)</sup>, or painful events such as the mass expulsion of Polish from the new Soviet Union's territory (1945-1946)<sup>(18)</sup>, etc. These events are still the subjects of historical investigations, the truth is still hidden in archives and material evidence. Television - public and private - has been accompanying the changes in the conceptualization of

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(17) The fact is that in 1945, a large group of Jews were burnt alive in the barn in Jedwabne, the small village in Eastern Poland, near Białystok. The number of victims is unknown (800-14 000, the last figure seems to be unbelievable - barns in Poland were not so large), the causes are also mysterious. Some historians claim that the murder was done by Polish, according to other historians Polish were forced to do that by Nazi forces, and it is hard to judge without the firm and reliable body of evidence.

(18) Some Polish citizens who were born and used to live in the borders of pre-war Poland, after WW2 became citizens of the USRR (due to the new political shape of Europe); and they were forced to leave their homes and go to Polish People's Republic. The similar action (s.c. *Akcja Wisła*, "Operation Wisła") was performed in 1947 by Polish military forces, and a lot of Ukrainians were expelled from Poland. The problem is still very emotional.

the Polish and international past, even mentioned hard topics occurred from time to time in the programming, mostly as the material for discussion not the regular cycles of programmes or fulltime documentaries. Still there is a great need for the concept of History and the truth and for the appropriate picture of past in Polish television.

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# History at TV: a Romanian view on History on recent television

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## On public television

In Romania, public television is represented institutionally by *Televiziunea Română* (Romanian Television, TVR) with a history of a little more than 50 years and which broadcasts, at this moment, on six channels. The first things to mention, when talking about the past of Romanian Television TVR, would be that, beyond its institutional history<sup>(1)</sup> (related to technological progress, multiplying its channels, etc.), there is a critical point of reference, towards which we have the *before* and the *after*: that point is the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Although on TVR's site, [www.tvr.ro](http://www.tvr.ro), this divide seem not to exist (in texts related to TVR's history), the turning point is essential due to harsh censorship existent before 1989 in television, censorship applied not only in news, as in Orwell's 1984, but also on past and history issues, a past that, if not consistent with Romanian Communist Party's vision, was at best silenced (such as a large part of the period before WWII) or re-written and, if remote enough to exclude possible comparison with the current situation, was glorified (we'll come back to this idea below).

### *TVR - a brief institutional history*

In 1956 TVR, Romanian public television channel was inaugurated, with a total of 21 hours per month of emission. Later, it became TVR1, with the launching of the second channel of public television, TVR2, in 1972. Yet, TVR2's broadcast is interrupted in January 1985 and was resumed only after the Revolution, in 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1990. Regional studios of TVR are created also in 1990, the first being TVR Cluj, followed by TVR Iași (1991), TVR Timișoara (1994), TVR Craiova (1998) and TVR Târgu Mures (2008).

In 1995 was launched TVR Internațional, TVRi, which broadcasted a program of approximately 3.5 hrs using Eutelsat II - W2 (in 2000 broadcasts daily 12hrs/24 and in 2002 gets to 24/24).

(1) Which can be found at [http://www.tvr.ro/articol\\_organizatie.php?id=13](http://www.tvr.ro/articol_organizatie.php?id=13)

The fourth channel of Romanian public television is TVR Cultural, launched in 2000, destined “exclusively to promoting Romanian and international culture”.

The latest channels of the public television were opened in 2008 and are called TVR 3, dedicated to “regional communities”, that reunites broadcasted shows and news of all the regional studios and TVR Info, centered on useful information and live broadcasts from traffic.

As an anecdote, but with relevance to our subject, we should mention that, in 2006, TVR aired the campaign “Great Romanians”, a contests who aimed to select the best figure to represent Romanians - and the winner was Ștefan cel Mare, Stefan the Great, who ruled in Moldova among 1457 and 1504 (Moldova being a Romanian province and different from what is called now Republica Moldova, former part of Soviet Union). Stefan the Great was later on sanctified by the Orthodox Church, in 1992 and was elected “the biggest Romanian of all times”. The event was heavily covered (anyways, the PR campaign for “Great Romanians” was awarded Golden Award for Excellence, for the “Non-Commercial Campaigns”, at the “Gala Excelenței în Relații Publice 2006”, according to the site [www.tvr.ro](http://www.tvr.ro)) and represented a re-legitimization of the founding history<sup>(2)</sup> of Romanian people, on public television.

### *The historic broadcast during communist time*

During this rather limited history of the Romanian public television before 1989, the space granted to the shows on historical topics was reduced to minimum. This topic could not find a permanent place in the grid as a documentary or talk-show/debate, but only for an encyclopedic/informative show (« Teleenciclopedia »), for the rest making its presence especially in connection with anniversary moments or incidentally/episodically in some general topic shows. Nevertheless, fiction movies with historical

(2) This ruler is an almost mythical figure in Romanian history, even though not in its founding history. Yet, he’s considered to have been one of the keepers and guards of Romanian identity, through the wars he fought with the Turks (Ottoman Empire) that resulted in keeping our Christian faith. The usual discourse is: “During Middle Ages, Europe’s main problem was the Turk threat. In the face of those, the old continent was identified with the Christian Republic, making Christianity as a basis of its unity. Stefan the Great not only participated in these wars, but was one of their promoters. In 1499, Lithuanian envoy of the Great Duke Alexander tells Ivan the Third: “Stefan the Great’s country is the gateway to all Christian countries around here: if his country goes down (...), then our countries won’t be at peace with that mighty enemy”. <http://www.nordlitera.ro/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=2396>

themes were produced (sometimes mega-productions for the respective period, with huge budgets) approaching different moments, from founding moments in history to recent day history (the WWII, crowned with the establishment of the communism in Romania) The stress was set on the heroism of certain historical figures, realizing an idealization of the Romanian people according to the nationalist-communist ideology of the ruling party (« brave », spirit of sacrifice spirit, « fighter » etc.). Anticipatory, we can say that the post-1989 television is characterised by an opposition to that period, as only one historical fiction movie was shot (Carol, 2009, directing Sergiu Nicolaescu, who was also a director of many historical movies during communist times), but compensating with documentaries and especially with debates/talk-shows on historical topics.

### **Romanian television landscape: between public and commercial**

Romanian media landscape virtually “blew up” after 2000, so that today we have, alongside the six channels of the public television, at least 18 private channels, (we excluded the very *niched* channels as the music and sports ones). In most of the cases, a certain media group has many TV channels (the most visible being Media Pro Group, with four television channels, several radio stations, newspapers, magazines, a film production branch, video content and others). Thus, an overall picture of the Romanian TV market looks like that:

*Public Romanian TV stations* (under the “Romanian Television” umbrella):

1. TVR1: launched in 1956; general content
2. TVR2 : launched in 1972; general content. In the beginnings, it was meant to be a youth channel
3. TVR Internațional: launched in 1995; general content. Usually, it broadcasts the programs from TVR1, but it also has some shows made especially for the Diaspora.
4. TVR Cultural: launched in 2000. Niche on culture.
5. TVR Info: launched in 2008. News and useful information channel.
6. TVR3: launched in 2008. Regional channel, takes over shows from the regional studios in Cluj, Iasi, Timisoara.

*Private Romanian channels:*

- Channels owned by Media Pro group:
  1. Pro TV, launched in 1995, general content

2. Acasă TV, destined to women, specialized on telenovelas; later became a family station.
  3. PROTV International
  4. PRO Cinema: niched on films, series and feature films.
- Channels belonging to Intact trust
    1. Antena 1: general content
    2. Antena 2: specialized station - talk shows on showbiz subjects (2007)
    3. Antena 3 : channel specialized in news
    4. Euforia TV: feminine-oriented channel
  - Realitatea-Cațavencu trust
    1. RealitateaTV: news channel
    2. The Money Channel: financial channel
  - Centrul National Media (CNM) group
    1. Național TV: general content
    2. N24: news (redirecting towards “national” content)
  - Other stations:
    1. Prima TV: General content
    2. Kanal D: General content (a subsidiary of Dogan Group)
    3. B1TV: General content
    4. Romantica TV: feminine-oriented channel
    5. OTV
    6. Trinitas TV, Orthodox TV channel, belonging to Romanian Patriarchy, launched in October 2007.
    7. Televiziunea Romania de Maine (TVRM): educational television belonging to Spiru Haret University - private university, highly controversial nowadays, for its mass education figures and its curricula. Also, its rector, a former high profile member of the Romanian Communist Party, is controversial - and the information is relevant to our subject only because other professors at the University, who also make educational programs broadcasted by TVRM, are loaded with the same ideological charge, especially regarding 20<sup>th</sup> century history, a hot subject these days. The title of the history program at TVRM is a reference to the same issue of uniqueness versus multiplicity of the history: the program is called “*Istorie si istorii*”, “History and Histories”.

## Note

*OglindaTV (OTV<sup>(3)</sup>) station is a special case in our audio-visual landscape. Launched by the journalist Dan Diaconescu with very few money and being known as an “apartment television” (due to the fact that its actual set was an apartment), OTV won its notoriety through the marathon program “Dan Diaconescu in direct” (DDD, Dan Diaconescu Live), a talk-show based on “sensational stuff revealed live”<sup>4</sup>, which started every day on a fixed hour (19.30) and stopped “late in the night” (after one a.m.), actually, until guests and host get tired. At this talk-show (that obtained relatively high audiences during 2007<sup>5</sup> most of the times controversial history is under debate, but it’s either seen from a certain conspiracy perspective, or the guests are disputable<sup>6</sup> public figures, whose appearing is refused by other television channels. etc.).*

*Another issue is that of local television stations. Each county has between one and six local stations, private ownership. The programming strategies of these channels are so different and the ways of putting a program together so varied, no rule or inference could be established. Most of these channels use free documentaries produced outside Romania, religious materials and survive on talk shows (the cheapest form of televisions).*

## History programs rather than history stations

Although, as one may have noticed, the specialized channels (the so-called niche channels entered the Romanian television market, still none of the Romanian TV channels is specialized in history. The only channels covering history being the foreign, international ones Romanians can watch whether they pay a subscription at a local cable or digital distributor (cable: RDS and UPC as the major, almost oligopolistic players and digital distributor: Boom TV and Dolce TV). Thus:

<b>Main TV providers</b>	<b>Channels specialized in history</b>	<b>Type of subscription “package”</b>	<b>Company</b>
<b>RDS&amp;RCS-DigiTV</b>	History Viasat	Medium	RCS&RDS
<b>UPC</b>	History Channel	Medium	UPC Romania

(3) Surnamed, the last few years, but rather ironically, “the people’s television”, in reference both to its audience standards (common people) and to the audience’s great numbers (see the references to its audiences growth).

(4) The motto being: “Because you don’t know what you are missing!”

(5) According to AGB-TNS International (the company in charge with studying audiences and the market) at the end of 2007, a few months in a row, OTV was in top five for audience, at urban level and nationwide, to an average rating of 1.1%, meaning 106.000 viewers per minute. <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/2007/cazul-elodia-ridica-puternic-audienta-otv.html>

(6) For example, former Securitate General Nicolae Plesita was invited many times as a guest of the show. He used to unravel saucy things from recent history backstage that were challenging.

<b>Boom TV</b>	History channel	Standard	DTH Television
	History Viasat	Optional package: <i>Adventure</i>	
<b>Dolce TV*</b>	-	-	Romtelecom
(*) Clients of the digital platform Dolce TV made numerous demands of getting History Channel and History Viasat in their package of stations received ( <a href="http://opinio.ro/petitie/introducere-canale-tv-noi-in-grila-operatorului-digital-dolce/page3.html">http://opinio.ro/petitie/introducere-canale-tv-noi-in-grila-operatorului-digital-dolce/page3.html</a> )			

As it can be seen, the specialized foreign programs Romanians have access to, via digital platforms or cable TV, are in over-charged packages of programs. Except for Boom TV, one of the digital platform, the others have program packages that include History Viasat and History Channel in various price ranges, optional and, of course, more expensive than the basic packages. A higher price package would comprise HBO packages and adult-oriented programs.

So, the foreign channels are: History Viasat and History Channel. In Romania, television, much for our benefit, the foreign channels, as well as foreign programs broadcasted by our stations are not dubbed, as in the rest of Europe, but subtitled. Thus, the Romanian viewer has access to all the original sound (all the richness of nuances of the original language and the original sound).

Although history did not find its place in a Romanian specialized channel, it appears frequently in our programs, both as fiction, as well as documentary and talk shows. History occurs on television mostly at the public stations. But some of the news channels cover history, in various formats, during historical moments' anniversaries (August the 23rd<sup>(7)</sup>, December the 1st<sup>(8)</sup>, January the 24<sup>th</sup>, May the 10<sup>th</sup><sup>(9)</sup> etc.) or controversial moments' anniversaries.

Also, certain subject matter that are related to history (masonry, conspiracies to global ruling of the world, etc) are, from time to time, being revived in various talk shows, as mere "crisis solutions" for low rating periods, as opposed to crowded times of major political or social crisis ("In Miezul

(7) Who was Romanian National Day during communism and who was celebrating the famous turn of arms towards Nazi Germany and the alliance with the USSR.

(8) The current National Day, celebrating the Union took place at December the 1st, 1918, when Transilvania (Romanian province) united to Romania, who comprised, back then, Moldova and Muntenia (Tara Romaneasca).

(9) King's Day, marking the beginning of the reign of king Carol I - May the 10th, 1866

problemei”, National TV, “Codul lui Oreste”, B1TV, “Dan Diaconescu in direct” when there’s no other mysterious suicide case to stage as a detective story, OTV etc.). They work as a kind of “maintenance” television pool of themes and subjects and are as popular as *Home Alone* or *Die Hard* series (you can watch them as many times without getting bored, provided you’re a fan of).

As we were saying, there are three ways history can occur in TV programs, other than fiction, in our television:

1. Inside periodical programs dedicated to history or inside a series of historical documentaries. This kind of programs appears mostly at the public stations (*Istoria aproape - History by Close*, *Istoria polemica - Polemical History*, *Dialoguri despre altadata - Dialogues on Past Times* or the *Memorialul durerii* series), but they can also get, yet seldom, on commercial channels - they could never get on some of the general content ones, but rather on the niched ones. That was the case with the series *Bucuresti, strict secret* (Bucharest, Strictly Secret), broadcasted by Realitatea TV, a Romanian production (we shall get back to it), with the series *A Biography of America*<sup>10</sup> - documentary produced by WGBH Boston and broadcasted by N24, on and off between 2005 and 2009 -, *Nasterea unei națiuni (Birth of a Nation)*<sup>11</sup> - a series of feature-documentary, broadcasted by Realitatea TV in 2005 and made by Alex Mihai Stoenescu, “a documentary that intends to inform the public on the truth that is not in the books etc. We can put here also the history programs of Trinitas TV - *Pagini de istorie* (History Pages), a documentary program - and *Istorie și istorii* (History and Histories) on TVRM - a set talk show with an an-

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(10) See the presentation of the series at <http://www.learner.org/resources/series123.html>

(11) Although this show was called just like its famous predecessor, made in 1915, it doesn't keep from it but the name and the idea of presenting a significant moment in time, considered a founding moment, of the history of one nation (Romanian, in our case). The program was presented by its maker, in an interview, as a low budget production, being rather a monologue of Alex Mihai Stoenescu, taped in various locations, sometimes significant in themselves (near the Royal Palace, the current National Museum of Art of Romania), and sometimes not (like parks, Cismigiu Park being one of the locations). “The result is a hybrid, situated between a filmed monologue and a spectacular and logic chain of images, characteristic to high budget documentaries. The footage of the maker in various locations or the archive footage with voice over are part of a rather rudimentary recipee, but one of a certain success.” (<http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/LifeStar/9252/Televiziunile-din-Romania-descopera-documentarele.html>)

chorman and guests that are historians. Another example would be Antena 2, who reserves an hour, on Sunday at 22 p.m., for foreign documentaries, many of them on historical subjects. In January 2010, these documentaries will be reunited under the name: *Decoding the Past*, as they treat very distant histories, but there were some occasions when the documentaries were related to the history of the XX century. But they are a mixture of portraits of important figures in finances, business, show biz (music, cinema, arts, etc.), features on important moments of the XX century, documentaries on innovations and inventions and are, all, produced abroad (Canadian and British production are favorite when it comes to history, American productions are related mostly to showbiz).

2. Inside permanent programs, with a fixed position inside the grid, but who aren't dedicated to history; here are two other possibilities:
  - i. The historical subject is enforced by its timeliness (be it an anniversary moment, a major political event based on historical considerations or a book launch<sup>(12)</sup> etc.). We can give as an example almost all the talk shows or debates centered on the moderator, especially those found on the commercial channels, which had at least one edition on historical subject matters. The debate kind of programs on public television is highly specialized; thus, unless they are specialized on history, they rarely approach the theme.
  - ii. The history subject matter as a "filling" into a void of events within public actuality (we mentioned above this situation, characterized by "unprepared" programs, focused rather on the personal memories of some important figure of the past. OTV, B1 TV, National TV are just a few of the televisions who used this recipe. As far as we know, on public television history was never covered this way.
3. As a disparate, self-sufficient program, no series attached - and we have here two situations:

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(12) See, for example, the "100%" program, moderated by Robert Turcescu, broadcasted by RealitateaTV, the edition where they invited Neagu Djuvara as the guest, with the occasion of him releasing his book on the history of Negru Voivod, Thocomerius - Negru Voda. Un voivod de origine cumana la inceputurile Tarii Romanesti, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDe8be6lf34&feature=Playlist&p=BEE11EB895487803&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=6](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDe8be6lf34&feature=Playlist&p=BEE11EB895487803&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=6)

- i. Some of them, although not part of a series, are justified by a moment of historical prominence, such as the National Day of Romania and the commemoration of 20 years from the 1989 Revolution.
- ii. These shows are disparate, with no apparent justification, mostly as a “filling” program.

### Periods and issues preferred in coverage of history

Mostly represented, inside history programs, is the Romanian Revolution<sup>(13)</sup> in 1989 and the moments of the WWII that led to the rise and consolidation of communism.

Also, when The Union of Romanian Regions<sup>(14)</sup> is feasted, it comes to discussion the role of one or another political leader or party (ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, King Carol the First, etc.). Furthermore, The Great Union in 1918 represents, as we shall see, a subject matter that is still on TV.

During festivities related to most of the historical significant data, most televisions broadcast debates or documentaries, new or old. Usually, the set is the same as in a casual TV day, but the screen displays more information than a usual talk show, new crawls and, usually, new colors. Many times, the talk-shows are not illustrated by reels of actual footage. The access to the historical archives of images is not handy for every station, so most of them re-play time and again the same images and fill in the rest of the time allocated for the event with talk-shows (the cheapest form of television). <http://video.woow.ro/adevarul-despre-revolutia-din-decembrie-89-video369.html>. Most of the shows are Dossiers, due to the special moment they appear.

*Communist times: re-valued in fiction, re-discussed in TV features/debates*

A mere set of circumstances (the fact that this year it's the anniversary of 20 years since the fall of communism and they were, all along Europe, a series of manifestations; the fact that we have a whole new generation of young people knowing nothing about communism except from indirect sources; the fact that a hole series of feature films presenting a slice of communism won important prizes in important international film festivals; the domestic political events that put under scrutiny the issue of “con-

(13) Yet, TVR has, on its own site, under Archive, a special section dedicated to the *Revolution in 89*.

(14) The first of the two Unions, in 1859.

demning communism”) led “communist times” being all to present on the television screen, during 2009. We shall not recall the anniversary documentaries and talk-shows we already mentioned; instead, we shall focus on the way communism appears in fiction and in news.

Thus, on one hand, we have the fiction feature, made during communism about communist times, which glorified communism within a cheerful manner, which can be seen as an exotic view of society today.

B1 TV was the first channel to reduce its costs by broadcasting Romanian movies made during communism (criticized heavily, at the time, for this decision, but later followed by Pro Cinema, for instance, in the same policy of programming). Still, B1 TV is not a movie-oriented channel, but, on certain television seasons, for four nights a week, it broadcasts two Romanian movies, one around 20.00 and the other around 22.00.

On the other hand, there’s the fiction feature produced today by the New Wave of Cinematography, which replays the major themes of communism, in a minimalism manner, in a key sometimes tragic (4 Months, 3 Weeks, 2 Days) or amusing, as in Memories from the Golden Age, the omnibus-movie.

The novelty this year brought along is that, alongside with the classical TV shows where communism was under scrutiny, communism became news subject, not as a political reality, but questioning the daily lives of Romanians, back then. Thus, in December, Antena 1 had, during the main newscast of the day (“Observatorul de la ora 19.00”) a special column, “A fost odata in Romania” (“Once Upon a Time in Romania”). In it, there were talks of communism, on themes (*The Car for Romanians, Propaganda and the Print, Made in Romania - on Romanian Brands, etc.*), mirroring the theme/subject in the past and present. The series ended on December, 21st (considered as the last day of communism, back in 1989) and, as it was said in the last edition, where the producer of the series and the reporters were invited in the studio (some of these were five years old at the Revolution), the series proved “the best history lesson ever”. In what concerns the techniques, it was a montage of archive footage and current/new footage, interrupted by witness stories by personalities or experts on each subject/theme.

Although not within news programs, but with the same intent of mirroring the two periods of time, in December also, the public television broadcasted

a 10 minute program of 10 minutes each edition, called “Before and After”, who was meant to be a sort of “illustrated account of the things Romanians thought and felt, before and after the December Revolution in 1989” ([www.tvr.ro](http://www.tvr.ro)). The show had a waggish tone, being no more than a montage of footage taken before 1989; most of these were excerpts of other TV shows from before, and recognizable from the technical code/properties; most of them were in b/w and were edited against a background of silent movie-like music. Sometimes, the original scores/sounds were kept, other times, the images were edited with voice over or an off voice of the anchorman, that makes numerous referrals to common places of both periods (*Bula* as the representative of Romanian jokes in communism, *maneaua* as a lifestyle, excessively valued nowadays. The discourse of this program is not the classical history discourse, but a jolly one, based on intertextuality.

*The 1989 Revolution: between “icon” and unpublished images. History searched through film*

A special place is reserved to films and documentaries covering the 1989 Revolution, as a threshold, a transition between dictatorship and democracy. Since 20 years have passed since then, the discussions on the 1989 events were allocated a lot more antenna time.

Thus, during October, November and December, B1 TV broadcasted, inside Nașu’ talk-show, the first half (approx. one hour) allocated to a series called “The End of Ceausescu - The series that will change history”, made in collaboration with a print journalist, Grigore Cartianu from *Adevarul*. The talks and disclosures within the show were printed, the next day, as an investigative feature, in *Adevarul* newspaper (“quality” newspaper, with the biggest circulation numbers, according to BRAT<sup>(15)</sup>), its online edition being accompanied also by the video files presented during the TV show. For most of its editions, the show featured Radu Morar, “Nașu” (The Godfather, the name of the show and the nickname of its moderator), Grigore Cartianu (*Adevarul*), playing the role of the investigative journalist and Alex Mihai Stoenescu, historian, often invited as the “expert voice”. The concept of these series was “to uncover the truth on those events who are still questionable”. The presentation, yet, was not necessarily a chronological

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(15) <http://www.brat.ro>

one, nor did exist a certain periodicity of the editions of the show (Nașu' show was broadcasted live, Monday to Thursday, from 20:00 to midnight, but not all editions from October to December contained the half dedicated to the end of Ceausescu. The last edition of 2009, broadcasted on December the 21st, 2009, was different: the first part it has been the on set discussions between Radu Morar and Alex Mihai Stoenescu (Grigore Cartianu was not there) and, the second part presented a much promoted (the whole evening, both by Radu Morar, and on a crawl: "in a few moments, the Re-enactment of Ceausescu's execution" <sup>(16)</sup>) journalistic feature, "The Re-enactment", done by Cartianu in the military barracks where they were taken after being apprehended - and where both the process and the execution took place. The technique used for this film was a poor one, there was no actual re-enactment, but a mere verbal story telling by witnesses of that time, some of them taken at the site - the very room Ceausescu slept in, the wall against which they were shot and so on.

Also, these moments were presented by almost every TV station, either public or private, inside their news programs, during the so-called "Revolution Days", in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of December to match the "Timisoara Events" and 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of December, matching the Bucharest events. These news are, usually, illustrated with archive footage, but not with any kind of new or unpublished images, but quite the opposite, with rather "familiar" images, who entered the collective mind as representative for what was called the "live Romanian revolution".

Quite contrary, the unpublished images on Revolution do appear inside programs dedicated to the event, elaborate documentary programs - which were broadcasted during the same anniversary days. We'll describe three of these unprecedented programs who premiered in 2009, on public channels, documentaries that brought something new in the way history is being covered in general, on TVR channels.

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(16) This continuous announcement was not merely informative, but, in some sense, it recreated the context of 20 years ago: in December the 25th 1989, when the two Ceausescu were executed, the converging of this event was preceded by a long (five to six hours) of waiting, during which the sentence, "in a few moments, we'll present the footage of the execution of Ceausescu spouses" was heavily announced, verbally and written on screen, at the only TV channel or that time, TVR.

## *Videogram of a Revolution*<sup>(17)</sup>

*Videogramme einer Revolution (Videograme dintr-o Revoluție)*, made in 1992 by Andrei Ujica and Harun Farocki has been broadcasted in premiere on TVR1, on December the 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009, at precisely 21.00.

The main characters of this documentary are the “cameras” capturing images during the Revolution<sup>(18)</sup>. Thus, alongside the consecrated images/footage broadcasted by the public television, amateur footage of that period<sup>(19)</sup>, footage by professionals, but taken unofficially and not destined to being broadcasted, sometimes even taken against expressed orders by superiors or by foreign journalists. All these cameras represent some “privileged eyes<sup>(20)</sup>” through which the Revolution was seen, eyes composing and re-composing permanently the picture of the Revolution.

The idea of “character-cameras” is underpinned also by the end credits where, on a black background, with no other sound but the raw sounds of a film roll rolling, the characters credited are, in white, the “cameras”, identified by the moment they come into play.

The image of cameras “filming each other” pops up frequently - or cameras filming the screen (or even cameras filming other cameras that film the screen (see the News Release chapter of the documentary).

At 1 hour: 34 min: 10 sec, there’s a meta-discourse on the role of the media on history: “the cameras and the event... Ever since it was invented, film seems to be destined, first, to immortalize the history. It can also re-construct the past, and reproduce the present.” The dialectics of this monologue is that the perspective over the film-history relationship has changed; if before we could have asserted that “film is possible only because history exists”, now we can say that “*if film is possible, then history is possible*”. (1:34:49)

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(17) It won the big prize at the *The Art of the Document Festival*, who took place in Warsaw, 17<sup>th</sup> to 30 November. This year’s edition celebrated 20 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall: “The Year 1989 in Europe. Image-Memory-Record”.

(18) Camera being identified with the characters of the film is visible also from lines like: “Camera is in danger”, “That day, all the cameras were gathered into one of the “Actualități” studios, all focused on a TV screen” (1:33:49).

(19) Such unpublished footage do surface - taken by amateurs, shaky footage, the “hidden camera” sort, which, in most of the times, we can hear free talk or explanatory talk of the people present around the camera.

(20) On the privileged statute of the camera: “Everybody is staring at the screen with the hope they will see the images that only cameras have the right to record” (1:34:06)

The voice over is in German, in original. The voice analyzes what we can see through camera's lens, sometimes in a manner specific to semiotic analysis, instead of historiography; some images are put on still and they are analyzed, cropped, zoomed at (25:14), replayed etc. ("The bluish image is due to the winter light", "the foreground and the background are marking two separate time slots").

The voice over not only gives an account of what happens on the screen, but dictates to the viewer how to look at the images: "The foreground, to which we lend no attention..."

The difficulties in understanding history are due, within this unprecedented interpretation, to the cutting the *technical means* allow for: "The camera gets as close to the events as its lens allows it for".

Inside it, there are analyzed and considered as important, the cameras filming, but also the interruptions of emission, the technical malfunctions such as jamming (51:37); all idle time or dead angles of a camera are attempted to be reconstituted with the help of other cameras. Many times, the same events are presented in footage by different cameras (one on the whole screen and the other in PIP, a smaller square on top of the other) (min. 45 : sec. 30: the government resignation seen by three cameras) or the same place in two different moments (min. 22 : sec. 51). Another instance of parallel broadcasting (still with the big screen - small PIP screen) is that of people talking of an event that takes place somewhere else, at the same moment. The parallel shooting usually ends when the secondary camera overlaps with the primary one (for example, the arrest of Nicusor Ceausescu, the son).

Another dialogue between cameras - another parallelism: an amateur camera is filming the TV screen in one room, as an official discourse over the events. The TV set shows us the very same images the camera, moving towards the window, is going to shoot at first hand, un-mediated by the TV screen.

As a particular feature of this documentary, there are no testimonies by eye witnesses. The eye witness, in this case, is the camera and what it captured - be it sound, image or both.

Furthermore, cameras have a performative role in this documentary.

Thus, at min. 45 : sec. 50, chapter “The Resignation is Done Again for the Camera”, the prime minister of the moment is made to repeat the resignation of the government just because it wasn’t being transmitted live (although having been filmed and heard by all the people in the square).

The film segmenting was done by black frames of three seconds on which the chapters’ headlines were written in white, no sound attached. Actually, it is a manner of emphasizing on the key moments, yet offering us a key for decoding it; the criteria used are multiple (temporal, spatial, “main characters” and the segments differ in length, from one to two minutes, to 10 to 15 minutes):

<b>Live for the first time</b>	<i>Pentru prima data în direct</i>
<b>A camera gets the situation right</b>	<i>O camera de filmat surprinde situația</i>
<b>22.12.1989 Bucharest</b>	<i>22.12.1989 București</i>
<b>A cross-roads</b>	<i>Încrucișare de drumuri</i>
<b>The central committee</b>	<i>La Comitetul Central</i>
<b>The cameras go down in the street</b>	<i>Camerele de filmat coboară în stradă</i>
<b>More and more cameras are filming</b>	<i>Tot mai multe camere filmează</i>
<b>At the television building</b>	<i>La televiziune</i>
<b>The man in the elevator</b>	<i>Barbatul din ascensor</i>
<b>Television gets to the Central Committee</b>	<i>Televiziunea ajunge la Comitetul Central</i>
<b>The resignation is done again for the camera</b>	<i>Se repetă demisia</i>
<b>Attempt of relay</b>	<i>Tentativă de a retransmite</i>
<b>23.12.1989 Bucharest</b>	<i>23.12.1989 București</i>
<b>At the television site</b>	<i>La televiziune</i>
<b>Where from do they shoot?</b>	<i>De unde se trage?</i>
<b>24.12.1989 Bucharest</b>	<i>24.12.1989 București</i>
<b>The identification</b>	<i>Identificarea</i>
<b>25.12.1989 Bucharest</b>	<i>25.12.1989 București</i>
<b>News release</b>	<i>Comunicat</i>
<b>The last camera</b>	<i>Ultima cameră de filmat</i>
<b>Bodies on the screen</b>	<i>Cadavrele pe ecran</i>

The film ending is symbolical; as a historical moment, it coincides with the execution and then the bodies being showed on TV - and we should notice that the broadcasting of these makes them real. In the end, the camera gets away from the scenes depicted, and away from the TV screen it filmed, on and off.

*1989. Blood on Velvet (Sânge pe catifea)*

Directed by Cornel Mihalache, *Blood on Velvet* it's a three episode documentary, 45 minutes long each. It was broadcasted many time during the fall and winter of 2009, last time during the festivities around the Revolution days.

The documentary puts under scrutiny the Revolution, but starts from its very first buds, the very first explicit moments of dissidence from communism (in 1979, at the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, when Ceausescu was for the first time contested publicly and overtly, by a single person, though). A significant part of the documentary - related to the 20 years that passed since the Revolution - practices a sort of meta-discourse, analyzing not the facts, but what it was said, thought, intended to be enforced as the official view on things or at least the right view. In other words, the new wave of historical documents this documentary is part of, is not so much focused on the events (hard facts, first hand), but on the discourses on the events, on the way history is made up as a story. The discourses on the revolution are analyzed; the documentary presents footage from previous TV shows covering the Revolution; books on the same event were presented and analyzed - including the *Dictionary on Communism* (2007). It was a probe into the ordinary people's minds, especially of the generations born after the Revolution.

From the narrative point of view, the meta-discourse appears to be endemic to this documentary. Technically, they made use of various archive footage, retrieved and re-interpreted - and filmed another set of materials, most of them, interviews with unknown participants in the Revolution. All too seldom does the voice of C. Mihalache, who was also the interviewer and the anchorman, edited over the images. Most of the times, he comments the images or opinions expressed by others, being placed in a familiar set - in an armchair situated in a cozy office, a large bookshelf in the

back and a cozy pilot light, suggesting warmth and calm in a documentary full of “hot debates”. He conveys the sense of a “wise man who’s there to clarify things”, the sense of competence and neutrality in judgments.

### *After Twenty Years (După 20 de ani)*

The feature-documentary presented by Cristina Liberis and made by Cristina Liberis and Radu Danila (both from TVR) was broadcasted on TVR Cultural the evening of December the 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009.

The subjects and the narrative approach were somewhat classical to this kind of documentary, and the footage used, well known. New to it were only a couple of techniques used: the chrome key - usually used by the Discovery-type documentaries and, in Romania, in showbiz and paparazzi-like shows on stars and their love life (Antena 2, Euforia). Another “first” is that the voice of the two makers is virtually inaudible. Except for the first sentence, at the beginning of the documentary: “We earn our right to freedom twenty years ago”, and the end one, as an account of “duty fulfilled”/ mission accomplished: “They died here, shot, on the stairs of the Cathedral in front of the Opera. We have the moral duty of never forgetting them!”

Thus, the documentary is led, somehow invisible, by its makers, through the persons invited to testify, through the cuts operated, etc. - and the explanatory or informative (bringing supplementary information to the pictures shown - such as The Memorial of Pain did) speech is missing. This speech would have dictated a certain interpretation of the events.

### *The National Day: between consecrating and re-discussing history*

The National Day, one of the state symbols, is, by its very festive nature, a good chance of covering history seen as a characteristic of the building of the nation. That is why I chose to analyze the way this event is broadcasted and covered, at the public television as well at some private stations, with the overt purpose of seeing the extent of and the ways history is being called down (be it “the great History” or various “small histories”) on this occasion.

In order to draw the empirical background, we must remind that December the First has been Romanian’s National Day only since 1990 (before,

it was August the 23rd - on this day, in 1944, Romania broke the alliance with Germany and allied with USSR). On the other hand, December the First is a date important also in the media context/landscape, as, since 1995 was “confiscated” by ProTV (one of the most important private stations, considered for a long time the symbol of commercial television) who was launched on that day<sup>(21)</sup>.

Thus, by tradition, the big players on the television market were, for December, 1st, the public television, who presided and made official all the official feasts (by broadcasting the parade, by its anniversary shows and concerts) and ProTV - who launched, for that occasion, an “anthem”<sup>(22)</sup> and usually organizes “popular shows”, concerts, special edition for the station’s shows. But, in time, the way the two stations appeals to history is becoming more and more different. For Pro TV, December the First relates more and more to its own history as a TV channel (“For ten years we’ve been this way, my story’s here to stay... ProTV taught me to live for real” said the “Pro TV anthem” launched in 2005<sup>(23)</sup>), while public television is relating, on this occasion, to the “great founding history”, seen as sacrosanct, inviolable and indisputable.

The year 2009 represented a clear delimitation of the public television against the private ones, regarding the broadcasting of the National Day and, in correlation, the broadcasting of history.

Thus, TVR1 is starting with the documentary *Istoria imnului (The History of the Anthem)* (7:30-8:00), a TVR production, typical for the public television. It is a sequence of pictures of places, personalities of our history in still pictures, written pages of music scores or simply still pictures of the print media of once. Over all these, on and off, the voice over, who gives us the story, leaves the floor to the music, which has an important role for

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(21) The irony is that Pro TV was launched and perceived, at least at the beginning, as “American”, not only because of the financial investment, but also for the kind of television it meant to be (for a long time, it broadcasted exclusively American movies; the news were spectacularized on the same recipe; the shows were following the patented formats famous in America, etc.). Under these circumstances, Romanian National Day was celebrated, at Pro TV, in an American manner - actually, constantly re-interpreted.

(22) Each year, a new anthem. In 2004, celebrating its 9th year of existence, it was orchestrated and re-interpreted the official National Anthem of Romania, Desteapta-te romanel!: <http://www.protv.ro/emisiuni/shows/best-of-pro-tv/video/31079>

(23) <http://www.protv.ro/emisiuni/shows/best-of-pro-tv/video/31080>

setting the pace - either slow or rocking - and the tone - serious or jolly of the show. This kind of documentaries, typical for TVR, is placed somewhat between documentary and journalistic features. They are informative, but on an emotional note and do not lead to debates, deliberation or search of an “alternative” view. Thus, *History of the Anthem* is quite the opposite of the *Videograms of a Revolution* or *Blood on Velvet*, described above, which are attempting to offer the truth of some events already known differently. Such documentaries, as the *History of the Anthem*, take on the assumption that things are not known and the role of the documentary is to make them known to the public. The two kinds of documentaries are, thus, representative for two ways of seeing history: on one hand, History, singular, which should be known, as it is presented, without questioning it (*History of the Anthem*); on the other hand, “histories”, plural, are rather different points of view over history, thus, tributary to the reference point and partial (as in subjective). These “histories” get in the new documentaries, in a Popperian manner of starting from the idea that all you can do is to advance an image on history by showing the falsity of another image - instead of discovering the “Truth” of the history. Thus, we get to a fallible view of the history (we shall get back to this idea later on).

Another show, another way of using history as a legitimating tool: “*Atunci si acum*” (“Then and now”), a show joining the talk-show with the journalistic feature, had an anniversary edition - a historian invited on the set, Academy member Dinu C. Giurescu, descendant of a historian family, his father being a well known history author in communist times. The talks on the set were asymmetrical: the historian was allowed to narrate what happened one time or another, more like lecturing than really “discussing”. The talks alternated with live broadcasts of the anniversary events taking place in Bucharest (the military parade at the Triumph Ark, the *Te Deum* service in Alba Iulia, the iconic location of the 1918 Union). The program is a mixture of a classical history discourse (see above), in a modern to futuristic set (see min. 1: sec. 22): the set is a giant clock, black on a white background; the two desks are like the clocks’ hands. The filming techniques, also, unusual for a talk show (the cheapest TV production) - sometimes they are being filmed from above, to see the clock, which otherwise looks like a mere minimalist black and white set; when live broadcasts are introduced, the screen is divided in four.

On TVR2, anniversary shows ended with a feature-documentary produced by TVR: *1 Decembrie la români (December the First for Romanians)*, which, although seemed to maintain the eulogizing tone predominant all day long at the public stations, let us see the desuetude into which the symbols of our national history fall, the rest of the year (the triumph ark, the mausoleum for the heroes in Marasesti, etc.). Thus, the festive approach of that day is paralleled with the behavior of common times; the declaimed values (heroes, history), with the current values (money, having fun). It seemed interesting especially because this show closes the circle opened by the military parade down the Triumph Ark, an iconic place for our history, a place which is shown, in this documentary, integrated in the night life of Bucharest, as a place where brides go to get photographed on *manele* rhythms. The technique used is the same (war time footage, prints from 1918 with the king, voice over, interviews with participants in the war, footage of Bucharest's night life. The high speed filming of the Ark (min. 1: sec. 49), is an innovative technique, for a history program, conveying the feeling of steadiness compared to the agitated daily life. Other than that, the documentary is special by the way it mixes the archive footage to very fresh one; the silent film and very loud *manele*-like sound; the black and white and color and not last, very harsh stories (of Russian camp life and war exploits) and cheerful stories of the nightly parties around the Triumph Ark.

#### *Benchmark 789: The Last Redoubt*

Meant to close the day, The Last Redoubt is an unprecedented show (not a special edition of a current show) broadcasted by the main public station, TVR1, on the occasion of the National Day.

The synopsis of the show presented on the [www.tvr.ro](http://www.tvr.ro) site says, "debate followed by the broadcasting of the documentary on Romania during the WWI, made by two Americans of Romanian origins: Dan Dimăncescu (producer) and Nicholas Dimăncescu (director). The hero of this documentary is Dimitri Dimăncescu, who went to war in August 1916, and who was followed, a while later, by its brother, Ion. The movie<sup>(24)</sup> follows the dramatic experiences of the two brothers and the encounter they had with the British

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(24) The film also has a dedicated website, <http://kogainonfilms.com/Pages/Hill789/Hill789.html>

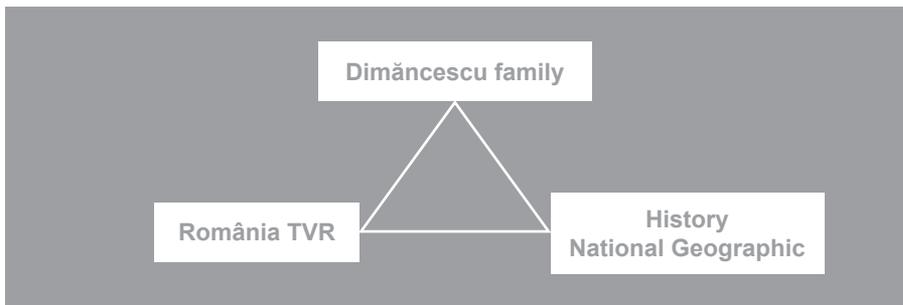
Colonel Norton Griffiths, whose mission was to sabotage the Romanian oil digging equipments.” (<http://www2.tvr.ro/1decembrie/index.php>).

The debate on set was between Radu Grozea (moderator, program maker for the Education - Sciences division of TVR), Nicolas Dimăncescu (director of the movie, the grandson of the main character of the movie) and Cristian Lascu, editor in chief of National Geographic România. The set was relatively poor, the only feature has been the screen in the background, screen used to cast pieces of the film during the debate.

The talks started on “heroism”; Radu Grozea declared, in his opening words, that “Tradition is demanding for this day to be dedicated to **heroes**”, and foretelling that we shall get to know, by the end of the show, “another hero” (Dimitri Dimăncescu), “we might say, a national hero”.

Other values brought in foreground, during the show, were patriotism and the identity (the belonging sentiment one get when one finds one’s roots).

There’s an interesting threesome, by the way it is set during the show - threesome which is visible, institutionally, by the very disposition of the participants on the set.



The novelty of the situation is that, within this format of a TV program, between the three poles there are bidirectional relationships. Thus, not only that Dimitri Dimăncescu enters the history by the fact that he’s Romanian and that he participates to the war in this quality, but Romania enters History through the Dimăncescu family. Not last, as a personal history, the young Dimăncescu re-gains his “Romanianity” via the knowledge of “history” (Nicolas Dimăncescu: “I made this film for patriotic reasons, but also with the desire of retrieving our roots... and I also wanted to find out what does it mean to be Romanian” ).

In the introductory part, there's talk of the relationship between the Dimăncescu family had with National Geographic, a three generation relationship, which resulted in three articles<sup>(25)</sup> on Romania inside the famous magazine pages and in the film, Benchmark 789: The Last Redoubt.

The moderator advances the idea of re-discussing history<sup>(26)</sup> and the statute of history starting from this "family" film who represents "an extremely important and necessary correction of Romanian history". The idea is took over by the National Geographic Romania editor-in-chief, who talked about the state of confusion regarding the "history", confusion generated by two antagonistic images<sup>(27)</sup> over the same event (World Was I), both images taught in school. In contrast with these, the film represents "an ever so lively, human event, who is so telling of so many events of history". Furthermore, Nicholas Dimăncescu accentuates on the same a-typicality of the movie when he's to say why the movie is worth watching: "This is not the typical war documentary. It's a film about transformation, a metaphoric film that uses snapshots in a new way".

As far as the technical means of production is concerned, they used, from the director's confessions: standard software for post-production and image enhancement (Photoshop, Final Cut, animation effects) and a series of media (snapshots from Dimitri Dimăncescu's personal archive and not only, drawings and sketches of the same author, modern images and images from television's archive).

As a matter of narrative techniques, it was used, for the first time, said the author, (minute 21:36) "a Japanese narrative patterns, called Genji... it's a sort of Japanese scroll... a kind of art that implies parchment drawings. It's a series of drawings that germinated into a continuous story. The spectators will

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(25) An article from 1934 to which Dimitri (the grandfather) also contributed, by the photos it is illustrated; an article written by Dan D (the father) in 1968 ("America Steps Again in România") and an article written by Dan Dimăncescu starting from his grandfather war journal, published in December 2008 ("Proba de foc", <http://www.natgeo.ro/istorie/personalitati-si-evenimente/proba-de-foc/toate-paginile>).

(26) Of that who was thought in school and who's now disavowed as being imued with comunist ideology, but replaced quite illogically by a "stardom" ideology

(27) On one hand, from the "scientific"(gloryfing historical) literature, who used to heroify excessively conflict and war and, on the other hand, by the fiction literature, where conflict was presented more realistic but less heroic: "a lucid mind such as Camil Petrescu (writer) is presenting to us, in his novel *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* (Last Love Night, First War Night) very convincingly, the real situation and I tell you honestly, to me it seemed much closer to the truth when he's saying, for example, of the way Romanian entered the wae totally unprepared".

see for the first time a modern interpretation based on the Genji technique.” As a novelty, and as well as a difficult task for the author who recognizes he belongs to the American culture, the difference of vision of this movie towards the all too dynamic American films, (minute 26:00): “So that making a documentary based on drawings and snapshots, about a period of time so undocumented on the video level, proved to be a big issue”.

The film, which interwove the personal history to the Great History (the war is seen globally and not only nationally) used in an unprecedented manner the re-enactment, which made it look “strange” in our media landscape.

### *Covering the National Day on private TV stations*

We were saying, above, that there was a clear demarcation between public and commercial stations on that occasion. Thus, if the first had in their programs a load of special programs or special editions of current programs, the general content private stations mentioned the event only in passing. More precisely, the current programs mentions were made of the “special day today”, without any other emphasis on the signification of the day - and thus, on history. Even Pro TV, the traditional competitor of TVR for the first day of December, was, in 2009, rather inconspicuous.

The private news channels, RealitateaTV and Antena 3, were somewhat more active in this direction, introducing history as subjects for their ongoing talk shows. But the talks were different than those on public television - first, because of the guests invited (at RealitateaTV, for instance, alongside with the historians there were journalists and politicians), and then by the critical approach of history. Also, the quality of the talks made the difference, the logic of the talk-show being much more present on RealitateaTV than at TVR's *Then and Now*, where Academy member Giurăscu rather lectured in front of Marian Voicu, the anchorman. The approach, on the two private news channels was heavily loaded with politics (as the show was in the midst of the election campaigns) and the approach was rather pragmatic than scientific. Thus, the issue of the significance of the day and the appropriateness of this particular day as National Day occurred. At this point, the judgments were leaving the historical sphere only to enter the pragmatic and commercial logic, arguments as “it's too cold outside”

and “the national day should be in spring or summer and not in the midst of winter”. Other subjects under scrutiny, equally controversial, were: the “educational” role of the media (sic!) in what concerns history, the ability of knowing a nation by watching these “privileged moments” etc.

Anyhow, whatever the subject, historical or not, RealitateaTV is “killing” it by suffocating it with politics - this time, with the political actuality of the December the First, 2009.

### **Covering history in neutral times (when nothing is commemorated or feasted)**

We mentioned above that there are history programs on TV even in neutral times, when nothing important is being feasted or commemorated. Some of them are semi-permanent programs in the TV grid, especially for the public television, but also for niched commercial stations (educational, religious, news). These shows are mostly low budget productions and are either talk shows, or documentaries, or a mixture of the two. Most of the time, the subjects are related mostly to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century; they are centered on the “expert” voice, the tone being rather informative than interpretive (usually, it’s only one guest, besides the anchorman/maker).

Two documentary series, produced in Romania and broadcasted one by the public television and the other by the news television Realitatea TV (private station) are different, among others, in the Romanian media landscape: *The Memorial of Pain* (Memorialul Durerii, MoP), produced by TVR (made by Lucia Hossu Longin) and *Bucharest Strictly Secret* (București Strict Secret, BSS), written and directed by Stelian Tanase. Both, after being broadcasted on TV were turned into DVDs and sold on the market, MoP in a series of 10 DVDs with 36 of the episodes and BSS into 7 DVDs). The Memorial of Pain was also turned into a book.

We set ourselves to analyze these two series in parallel, as two good examples, although almost antagonistic, of the way history is approached by the television, in Romanian documentaries; on the other hand, they are both representative for the new way history can be seen, nowadays, in the media.

The unifying element of the MoP period is the communist times and what

was called “the crimes of communism” (crimes as in murders), whereas BSS’s unity is rather a concept/narrative one. Its “formal” unity is given by the date and place (Bucharest) where its various stories happen (very different times and subjects: theatre, politics, military, literature, horse racing, earthquakes, etc.). We are using the term “formal” only because Bucharest was one of the few political and cultural centers of the country, so, inevitably, most of the history took place here. Both documentaries are built on the “disclosure” pattern, but if one of them discloses the atrocities of a political regime, with the overt purpose of making us assume a history we would like to forget as soon as possible (thus the term “memorial”), the other is the kind of bringing to light the “skeletons in the closet” type of documentary, revealing the backstage of history.

They both relate to people which are not “front stage” in history - not the common man in the street, but still not the great historical figures (it’s about professors, writers, etc.). But, if in MoP the purpose is that of revealing the crimes of communism at the society level, exemplifying them through these virtually unknown characters, in BSS, the individual person’s role in the big picture of history is rather fragmented, as history itself.

We continue to compare: on one hand, a classical, simple cut documentary series, where all elements are saying the same thing, in a redundancy of message (MoP); on the other hand, a sophisticated series, a real waste of creative imagination (with frequent cuts, many narrative times, many approach angles, many levels of reading the history).

Furthermore, on the similarities slope: they both use archive materials juxtaposed with new footage, they both use the testimonials; BSS uses a lot the “expert” voice; they both use the voice over. As a distinctive feature, while MoP the maker (Lucia Hossu Longin) is almost never seen on screen; in BSS, Stelian Tanase is a frequent appearance. They both play a lot on the atmosphere, but, while the MoP is intended to be most authentic, the BSS features a renewed atmosphere, much in the spirit of contemporary society (if an earthquake is presented, the style of the coverage is similar to the Five O’Clock news).

In BSS, the Great History, the one they teach in school, the official, heroic history, is a mere set or scenery for the “real” history, which is made up, in

fact, by the small histories. An example would be the reconsideration of August, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1944 (for 45 years, Romanian National Day - its significance was the turn of arms against Germany and the alliance with the Soviet Union) - from another perspective: that day, the identity of a play writer, who wrote *Steaua fara nume*, successful on Bucharest stages without being known the fact that the author was Mihail Sebastian - a Jew.

One of the episodes in BSS is The Old Court Philanderers. The documentary is about the novel with the same title by Mateiu Caragiale. The characters in the novel were a group of decadent aristocrats, placing themselves, by wealth, experience and knowledge, above good and evil. The documentary is treating, altogether, the historical characters thus names (who lived before the time of Caragiale's novel), who were people living on the fringes of society and the inspiration for the author, and the personal history of Mateiu Caragiale. Three different stories, three different times and a discourse, that of the documentary, which is based on intertextuality. The novelty of this documentary is the fact it brings the past into the actuality through narration and settings specific to the television news. Thus, a "reporter" hanging on to his microphone is reporting of the events in the distant past as if they were current events transmitted by the news programs; the feeling of the "live transmission", of the imminence of things presented is also conveyed by the reporter's tone; also, the sensationalism is there.

Time slots of the narration:

- The historical time when the "philanderers" lived
- The history of the "Old Court" and its significance in the history of Bucharest and Romania
- Mateiu Caragiale's life and the "history" of his book ("Craii de Curtea Veche")
- The present (what the Old Court Philanderers means in the present, what do people think now of the book, scenes not yet discussed from the lives of current "philanderers", the night life of Bucharest)
- The future: something that carries over the past (the end line: "The philanderers will exist as long as Bucharest shall exist")
- It is a very complicated narrative where we can find: the story telling of rough historical facts (by the documentary's director or by experts), the

story telling of “histories” regarding rough historical facts (found either in that period’s documents, or in personal diaries).

All these slots and characters do meet in a single place, and that is Stelian Tanase’s story (for he’s also the writer and director). Contrary to this, in Memorial of Pain, everything converges towards creating the holistic picture of the communist history.

As a conclusion of the analysis of these two series, we would say that history documentaries are becoming more and more “author films”. And this is an obvious exceeding of the “communist” type of documentaries from Teleenciclopedia, identified on a scroll by two elements: the voice over reading the text and the “expert” who had documented the whole thing, as images were merely illustrative. With both these series presented here, we have real narrative constructs where the director or the maker hallmark the work through the cut on the facts, for example; through the voices called to witness, etc. And, moreover and most important, the films’ authors are undertaking this personal hallmark!

Still on the common ground for the two series: the history documentaries are exceeding the knowledge sphere, to address also the emotional, esthetical, moral and even epistemological registry, the identity issue etc.). They are not objective/neutral anymore; moreover, they don’t even pretend to be neutral anymore. They contain value judgments; people express the hope that history should or should not repeat, etc. But what makes them differ fundamentally is the ending: if, in the Memorial of Pain, the history presented is thought forever gone<sup>(28)</sup> - and is hoped never to repeat - in Bucharest Strictly Secret is induced the feeling of a history that may repeat at any moment, and the idea that things like that can occur even at this moment.

### **Covering foreign history on Romanian channels**

Foreign countries’ history is present seldom on Romanian television: the elections or special times when dossiers within news programs present key moments in that country’s history. USA’s history was present outside news, when Obama was elected and sworn in. As we have seen, some of the private stations, especially the niched ones, do broadcasts series

(28) the film has the role of making history known, but also of making us “learn” from it (as learning from history means to assume its teachings, not only to “know”)

of history documentaries produced abroad - of course, covering foreign countries' history (such is Antena 2). B1 TV broadcasts, in weekends, various documentaries produced by a Romanian film production house, Cine-thronix: Balcic, Carol the First, but also Eiffel Tower history were subjects for this one man show production house. The public television also broadcasts, on some of its channels (especially TVR Cultural), series of documentaries, some of them covering history, other on art history or culture.

The same public television, on its main channel, TVR1, programs, inside its most long lasting show, Teleenciclopedia (weekly program broadcasted on Saturday evenings, who was not interrupted not even when TVR's emission was cut to two hours a day) is showing documentaries and TV features, most of them, with foreign footage and dubbed sound (the items being bought), on history among other things, alongside with geography, biology, religion or art. In this context, foreign history appears at the public station, on TVR1. Sometimes, Romanian history is also present, in features produced by TVR. This is the only history program being dubbed, the Romanian voices being, besides the most recognizable beginning, the "trademark" of this program (Florian Pitiș, Sanda Țăranu are some of the persons whose voices are known "from Teleenciclopedia"). Teleenciclopedia represented, thus, the only permanent show covering history, during the last years of communism. In festive times, it was added documentaries - and never debates - on historical issues related to the event.

In the beginning of television, the sixties and seventies, there were programs with fixed place in the grid, dedicated to history, one of them being "Documents in Stone".

### **Political and cultural events that changed the approach of history**

As we mentioned when talking about the evolution of public television, the significant change in approaching history took place with the regime change in 1989, meaning the Revolution in 1989 (event which is integrated to the series of historical events that ended communism in Europe, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the fall of Soviet Union, etc.). Until that moment, in Romania history was intangible, a science not to be contested or re-written or tampered with and comprised the indisputable, official history of Romania. It was taught in schools as such and, the rare mo-

ments it mingled in the media it was as documentaries or feature films on “our glorious past” (that was the stereotypical sintagm used most of the times by the communist media), respecting totally the official version. During communism and especially under Ceausescu, a heroic history of Romanian people - heroically resisting for ages to foreign threats and invasions - was established and, in some points, invented, with a strong nationalistic feel to it (especially after the Prague Spring and the moment Ceausescu responded unfavorably to Russian tanks invasion and thus set himself and Romania outside the communist internationalism). It was, above all, a profound history filled with ideological messages, where the between the wars period of economic development in Romania was stigmatized as a bourgeois time of exploitation of workers and peasants. The big change, after 1989, it was precisely in the way of seeing history, a fallible<sup>(29)</sup> science that allows for alternative views. Thus is set the way for a shift from the big History to histories. The small histories, most of the times approached in a *telenovelistic* manner, according to Ion Cristoiu, Romanian journalist, boudoir histories, get the “big History”<sup>(30)</sup> de-mystified, most of the times by exposing the small reasons of facts and events considered, before as great, based on ideals and important values and revealing the plots and affairs through which history was in fact created. To some extent, this shift is responsible for the current tendency in representing history at television. This approach of history is part of a more general phenomenon encountered in the current Romanian society. Thus, the tone and pace were set, among scholars and academics, by Prof. Lucian Boia<sup>(31)</sup>, historian, Professor at History Department, University of Bucharest, who published many history books as a mixture of national mythology, current days’ ideology and historical facts. In the same time, other reputed historians are trying to re-compose the history of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a mewhat taboo-ish part of our history during communist times.

(29) Although communism falsified history by re-writing it, as in Orwell’s work this idea was not accepted.

(30) In this respect, an important role in legitimizing this position also had Professor Lucian Boia in his work, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Humanitas, 1997, book considered to be “the best known book by Boia, at least among Romanians, (which) constituted a true cultural shock and opened the way to vast revising from the hystorical perspective. Lucian Boia makes a clear divide between history that has been and its various representations, unavoidably adapted, deformed and often mystified, according to the changing perspectives of present day and most often by the ideologies at play.” [www.humanitas.ro](http://www.humanitas.ro)

(31) *Two Centuries of National Mythology* (2002), *Myth of Democracy* (2007), *The Game with the Past* (2008). He also published books which attempt to “demystify” some other subjects, as “*Jules Verne. Les paradoxes d’un mythe*” (2005, Societes d’edition Les Belles Lettres).

Another event that led to this situation was the publishing of the “alternative” school books, in 1999. Up until then, for each school discipline there was only one hand book on the market, for each year of study.

Usually, the same handbook was used, with insignificant revisions, for decades - after being approved by the Education Ministry, it was republished year after year. The alternative handbooks phenomenon, which gave rise to many debates in the media - and still does - shook mostly the “history” discipline. Not only that history was demoted from the lives of the “great rulers” (who occupied the most part of the old handbooks) to describing daily life of remote times; not only that the rulers were sharing the same space with semi-contemporary figures who hadn’t passed the time test, but in the beginning, especially, provided different explanation for the same historic event. This “exercise” of getting familiar with and accepting the alternative handbooks was, in my opinion, one of the key elements in forging the new way of regarding the history.

Not last, the abundance of conspiratorial literature, both in its fictional (see Dan Brown phenomenon), and “scientific” versions (in books that pretend to be about the “real” history), do contributed - but to a smaller extent, because it brought along a big load of ideology and to the official history it opposes it own history, its own “truth”, equally “unique and irrefutable” - to the acceptance of the fallible character of the previous history.

Thus, as a reaction to the way of seeing history as “unique, official and for the use of everybody”, as it was actually seen before 1989, was the opening towards conspiratorial views or the “history for the *connaisseurs*”, history beyond history. If, in communist times, masonry was taboo (practically, there was no such discourse, neither in the media nor in history handbooks), now it is a subject of high TV ratings, either in debates and talk shows or in documentaries (for example, the role of masonry during the 1848 Revolution).

As a speculative fact, I think that a major change in the way of conceiving history at least in its televised version is the major change in its evaluation criteria: from fact correspondence with the facts (“story X is true because that’s the way it happened”) to the coherence of description (“story X is true because all the proves we have on it hold water”).

Actually, the tendency is to switch from the GREAT History, the national his-

tory, towards micro-history and living history. To turn the attention from the wider problems related to nation and nationality, to turn away from ethnic conflicts and the ongoing issue of “why communism”, towards the little history of common people. Recovering the small history from design, objects, myths and drawing from the lives of people that witnessed many ages (pre-war, war, communism, post-Revolution) is the new trend in television history.

### **History: from the media to the public space**

It is rather unlikely that history programs on television would have a considerable impact on the audiences. They do not yield nation wide debates; rarely, the “real historians” or the descendants of the actors of some historic moment are denouncing the dilettantism of pseudo-historians of post-Revolution era” (with direct mention to historian Alex Mihai Stoenescu) that risked creating a false history, a thing that even the communist historiography failed doing it, although it had the apparatus of an oppressive ideology with a vested interest in forging an inexistent truth”<sup>(32)</sup>.

Thus, in a protesting letter signed by the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD), the successor of the *Christian-Democratic National Peasants' Party* (PNTCD), protesting against a TV program by Alex Mihai Stoenescu, PNTCD alleged that at least four of the statements made by AMS during the show were totally false. Among the history “mystifying” assertions, one was related to the birth of the Romanian National Party in Transilvania, from which PNTCD rose - which later became PPCD. A.M.S. explains this chain as a hidden strategy of yet another party, who was in power at that time in Romania (Transilvania belonged, at that time, to Austro-Hungary and not to Romania). The second assertion is that Iuliu Maniu, founder of PNTCD, who was seen as a hero of the anti-bolshevism, did not defend Romanian interest in the Budapest Parliament. The accusation of dilettantism and “mystification” appear in tough words in the letter when heroism of a person or a party is questioned. As long as this “rewriting” of history does not affect somebody in particular, that sort of public outbursts towards a possible “mystification” of history are missing. In the above case, the protesters assign the guilt for re-writing history to the desire of saying something new, of giving its own version of history, briefly, of being original at any cost, which, in television, translates by getting a good rating.

(32) <http://2005.informatia.ro/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=92652>

For this reason, the freshly created freedom of speech, which is most of the times equal to absence of rules of any kind, be it deontological, is the best background against which to play.

If we can speak of an impact on the audiences, that must be at individual level, manifesting at least in the talks the next day, at work or in discussions with friends (the so-called “secondary reception”). Although there aren’t such studies, our observation is going towards this interpretation.

The issues/matters that continue having the most impact (at the individual level - and not that big as we already mentioned), are still related to the communist time and the Revolution in 1989. Among these, especially within the current opening towards conspiratorial scenarios, a special place is being reserved to the “Romania being sold at Yalta”, when it was decided, by the great powers of the moment, that Romania should remain under the influence of Soviet Union. But, again, this is a subject of impact more on the psychological level, placing us in a “victim” position that brings along the alleviation of the “responsibility” in front of history.

### *The 100,000 Romanians Campaign*<sup>(33)</sup>

We should mention here this social campaign that, although has nothing to do with covering history in the present times, has everything to do with media and with what became history. The “100,000 Romanians Campaign”, destined to raise funds for bringing into Romania and digitizing the radio programs archives of Free Europe radio station, was on promoted through all the media (radio, TV, newspapers, the Internet) and used two main approaches. The testimonial strain used personalities of the moment (historians, politicians, singers or civil society prominent figures) who testified of the importance for him/her of Radio Free Europe. All the copies were ending on an inclusive note: I am X, one of the 100,000 Romanians that are bringing their history at home. Be one of them yourself!”. Then, a voice over says: Donate two Euros via SMS at \*\*\* in order for you to be able to say: “Free Europe is here <sup>(34)</sup>!”. The second approach is present especially in print and on the Internet and it has the shape of some fliers with the message: “A hundred thousand Romanians that ever listened to Free Europe are wanted! We shall bring home the radio

archives of the Free Europe. Be one of the 100,000 Romanians that are bringing home their history!” - or: “Wanted: 100,000 young persons who want to find out what Free Europe meant! We shall bring home the radio archives. Be one of the 100,000 Romanians bringing home their history!”.

This campaign seems important to us because the media (in this case, Radio Free Europe) are seen not only as the conveyor of the history (post factum), but as a history maker - as in *Videograms of a Revolution*.

Unfortunately, the campaign didn't reach its goal (when it ended only the amount of 65000 euro was donated, and this after two more “teledon” shows were organized by the public television. This obvious failure of the media to provoke a movement in the public space, as linked to a historical problem, made the written media talk about the relationship between media and history before and after 1989 (the article “Where are our anti-communist people?” in *Dilema Veche*, nr. 319, 25-31 March 2010).

#### *Use of history theme in advertising*

Talking about the influence of covering history over the audience, we find interesting to see in what measure “the history sells”, in other words if and in which measure historical themes connected with history are seen in advertising. As a first remark, we shall notice that this theme appears only in the Romanian publicity after 1989, a fact which should not puzzle us though, as the advertising during communist times was almost absent from different reasons (censorship, associating advertising with the consumerist society, state monopoly for most products and services, which made the advertising useless etc). Surprisingly enough, during the last years also, historical themes are not very much present in advertising. In the table below we synthesized the manners of using history in Romanian advertising.

(33) <http://100000romani.ro/>

(34) Pun remembering the opening line of the radio program in Romanian of Radio Free Europe, «Here Is Free Europe» (on Ciprian Porumbescu's music).

Brand	Type of product	Short description	History is employed as...	Past and present report	Historical moment put in value /historical theme
Timișoreana	Beer	The brand pays off/makes up for, from the very first glass (1716) offered to the Emperor of the Time, the savior water given under siege conditions, war, drought. The slogan is "Timișoreana - the story goes on".	Founding moment for the product, identity moment.	Continuity	Beginning of the 18th Century, war.
Bucegi	Beer	Under the slogan "Bucegi - together for good and worth" there are exemplified in a minimalist manner (white and black shooting, no distinct characters, the situations being recomposed only of "voices" different frustrating situations from communist times (lack of TV shows, the night queue for an uncertain meat supply). The final line, the only one uttered clearly, being "to our good health!"	Exemplifying of a situation of product use.	Ambivalent: discontinuity - connected to the idea that "then" it was bad, "now" it is good; but also continuity, offered by a brand that offers stability, with identity values.	Recent history, communist times.
Ciuc	Beer	The beer presented (falsely) as an alternative to a legendary gesture of Burebista, the first ruler of the Dacian people (sec. I b.Ch.), to burn the vineyards in order to limit the wine consume.	Founding moment for the Romanians, who puts a "label" on them as "bear drinkers"/the history justifies the product.	Continuity/identity mark	Very far history in time, practically the beginning of the history in nowadays space of Romania, the Burebista moment, sec. I b.Ch.
Rom	Chocolate	Common aspects from everyday reality of the nowadays youngsters are taken and "translated" under communist reality <sup>(1)</sup> with the slogan "Rom tricolor. Hardcore sensations from 1964"	A founding moment for the product, exotic context.	Discontinuity	Recent history, communist period of time.
Romstal	Heating systems	There are employed legendary characters of the Romanian history in problematical current day situations (lack of heating or excessive heating, bathroom etc.) that are improved by the modern techniques (in a time cut) The slogan used "modern solutions offered by professionals to old time problems."	Exemplifying a situation of possible use of the product/the history is mocked at/the historical figures are "taken down" from their legendary pedestal to the comic portrayal of the everyday life.	Ambivalence: continuity of problems, discontinuity in solutions.	Different moments clearly announced at the beginning of the spot (1459, Vlad Tepeș period; 1709 Brâncoveanu; 1475 Ștefan Cel Mare)

(1) If we'd set ourselves to recur to fiction movies as parallel, the most adequate term of comparison for the Rom Chocolate bar would be the most acclaimed "Tales from the Golden Age" (an omnibus film consisting in everyday life situations from that period).

As a conclusion of the analyses of the presence of historical themes in advertising, we can say that preferred products are alcoholic beverages (especially the beer), a favoring of everyday situations over “great events” of history and also that the recalling of history is put under the sign of historical continuity.

Though, at the question from the beginning of this section, we have to answer negatively. The history does not sell, being used very few times in publicity, and when it is recalled, it is reinterpreted, minimized, descended from the “pedestal” where the collective imaginary put it (a pedestal we learnt to appreciate in school, as we were students, regardless of the sincerity of the admiration each of us felt for the nations’ heroes and history), the presentation tendency being similar to that met in the “new wave” movies, both fiction and documentary. The question remains open: to what degree this manner of seeing history is conform with the public expectations or, on the contrary, it gives to the audience a feeling of discomfort, thus explaining the reduced quantity of advertising using historical themes.

**TV shows with history content**

*Istoria aproape*<sup>(35)</sup>, *History Close*

- TVR Cultural
- Format: documentary followed by and/or preceded by studio talk
- Host : Neagu Djuvara, historian, PhD with Raymond Aron
- Period :October 2007- present

*Istoria polemica, Polemic History*

- TVR1 and TVR International (2002), then on TVRCultural (still there in 2005)
- Host : Neagu Djuvara

*Dialoguri despre altadata, Talks on Old Times*

- TVR Cultural
- Format: talk-show
- Host : Constantin Balaceanu-Stolnici

*Memorialul durerii, The Memorial of Pain*

- TVR1, and then sold as DVD series of 10 and as a book: Lucia Hossu Longhin, *The Memorial of Pain. A History Not Taught in School*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucuresti, 2007
- Format : series of documentaries on communist history within the perspective of “small histories” of victims of communism: “The only documentary film in Romania that interweaved individual stories with the national history<sup>(36)</sup> », based mostly on footage of witnessed things, footage taken within communist political prisons, in the dark atmosphere specific to this kind of places<sup>(37)</sup> (shares a common feeling to Gulag Archipelago of Soljenitin).
- Creator and director : Lucia Hossu Longhin
- Realized during a period of 16 years.

*Bucuresti strict secret*<sup>(38)</sup>, *Bucharest Strictly Secret*

- RealitateaTV (sold afterwards on DVD)
- Format : series of documentaries (32 episodes)
- Director and host: Stelian Tanase

*Nasterea unei natiuni, Birth of A Nation*

- Realitatea TV
- Format : series of documentaries<sup>(39)</sup> on a tight budget (a “counting of

history” by historian AM Stoenescu, coupled with cine verite pieces of footage)

- Director: Alex Mihai Stoenescu

*Istorie si istorii, History and Histories*

- TVRM Educational
- Director Mircea Dogaru
- Format: Lectures or talk show in the studio

*Pagini de istorie, Pages of History*

- TrinitasTV
- Documentary

*Zig zag cu Ion Cristoiu, Zig Zag with Ion Cristoiu*

- Antena 3
- From 2005 to 2009
- Initial format: show with an audience present, then - debate or talk show in the studio, no audience in the studio. Inside the show there were many sub-sections, among which History as Telenovela (this is also the name of a column Ion Cristoiu writes in Jurnalul National, whose articles were then gathered in a volume<sup>(40)</sup>).

(35) At this moment, the show continues at one of the public stations, but without anchorman, and it consists in Romanian documentaries.

(36) The way it is described on <http://tvr.ro/articol.php?id=3693>

(37) <http://www.bookblog.ro/biografii-si-memorii/memorialul-durerii---o-istorie-care-nu-se-invalta-la-scoala/>

(38) [www.realitatea.net](http://www.realitatea.net)

(39) <http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/LifeStar/9252/Televiziunile-din-Romania-descopera-documentarele.html>

(40) Author Ion Cristoiu, *Istoria ca telenovela*, (The History as telenovela), 2005, Ed. Evenimentul Romanesc, **ISBN: 973-86704-3-8**

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# European history on Finnish television channels

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## General ideas

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed many significant and wide changes in television on technological, aesthetic, political and social levels. Digital production, proliferation of television formats, YouTube, and other dimensions of web-based footage have caused rethinking inside television circles. Digital technology has made it possible to build on the ability to artificially construct realism. For example, digital images can be produced without a camera, but they can still look like photographs. (Finnemann, 2000; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001: 10-44; Seiter, 1999: 116-121; Lister et al., 2003: 190-199).

This means that the photographic image is produced without a reference in the real. Certain technologies and style encourage us to believe in a tight correspondence between images and reality, but the effects of lenses, focus, colour, depth of field, high-resolution media, etc., seem to guarantee the authenticity of what we see. Thus in the contemporary world of audiovisual culture and visual images, different forms of image manipulation are creating a broad array of images that defy traditional notions of time and space (Austin & de Jong, 2008: 1-5; Rieser and Zapp, 2002; Valkola, 2006).

We can ask: What is the speciality of historical material in our digital age? The phenomenon is very wide, and difficult to determine. We can talk about history programmes in television and their relationship towards the society, or towards human development, and towards situations inside human communities. Through this context we can observe and analyze them from the point-of-view of (1) semantic density (meaning), (2) aesthetic impressiveness, and (3) historical significance.

In most cases, the same historical programmes in context can be approached from a variety of different perspectives, all of which are relevant to understanding some aspect of their form or significance. It is important to recognize the multidimensionality of historical programmes where the se-

mantic, aesthetic, affective and purposive dimensions all apply to the same object at hand. Historical analysis must involve an understanding of how the parts contribute to the whole and what makes historical programme as it is in contemporary context. This can only be determined by analysis across media and across contexts. (Morphy & Perkins, 2006: 18-19).

The study of historical programmes encourages researchers and theoreticians to deal with the temporality of cultural processes, to connect the experiential dimension of culture, the immediacy of performance with longer term and general processes. Historical works have different duration. Some may be over in a matter of seconds, even if the impact of a single work can endure for a lifetime. Others may be present and last for many hours. Others may be part of a permanent structure as an iconic presence, as it is the case with many classics. The different durations of presence will affect how such works are seen, how people relate to them over time, how they can be used in knowledge transmission, how they can be perceived, and so on. The analysis of their form and content must take these factors into account - the historical programme is not simply the object itself but the whole context in which it is produced, seen and used.

There is an added complication. The experience of a single historical programme is not necessarily confined to a single event or context. Different dimensions of it may come into play over time as a result of multiple exposure or evocations of the memory of form. A more general point is that there must be a central proposition of the meaning of historical programme in the contemporary world: understanding the significance of it requires placing it in the widest possible context. It is not sufficient - or perhaps possible - to understand its immediate effect or significance without first understanding the historical, social, and cultural backgrounds of its production.

One of the advantages of studying responses to programmes is that they provide a means to access the processual dimension of culture. They connect events with processes and they connect experiences separated in time. (Seiter, 1999: 12-20). Studying viewer responses recognises the direct relationship to actuality in them. (Vaughan, 1999; Ward, 2005). The relationship between fiction and non-fiction is a blurred boundary (Nichols, 1994), so, the spectatorial activity of interpreting the material becomes central. The modalities of performance in drama/documentary

programmes foreground the hybrid and uncertain nature of the contemporary situation. Television studies is an attempt to account the specificity of television, often using comparison with radio and cinema with particular attention...to debate about the nature of the television text and the television audience. (Brunsdon, 1998: 96). The meanings of television have ideological significance that shapes relationships between television texts, audiences and society. (Bignell, 2008:103-106).

### **Changes in media policy**

The place of television in Finnish culture can be analyzed as a builder and circulator of meanings and technology, and as a re-builder of social practices and general life style. In another sense, television has been a kind of memory machine with continuing elements of nostalgia and past. Television has also been a time machine with a kind of futurist perspective. It has, in many ways, represented the modern world, and the inevitability of change as a part of larger cultural category. Television has also been an example of virtual tourism with capabilities to wander around the world. In the beginning of Finnish television, the broadcasting activity was based on live recordings from TV-studio and from public places like theatres and sport happenings. (Wiio, 2007).

Thinking about television licenses, a crucial happening was the televising of Rome Olympic Games in the summer of 1960. Another big thing was on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1969 when Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. In this year there were over one million television licenses in Finland. In the 1960s, in Finnish society there were a lot of young people, who were also targets for political and cultural impulses. Then, television had an important role in present new world views, and also it had a special significance in gathering people together.

Typical of the 1970s was again a belief in the omnipotence of politics. During that period especially YLE reflected heated political struggles and came under close scrutiny. Finally in adapting to the “markets” of the 1980s and 1990s YLE has once again been a product of its times, adapting to a globalization of the media markets.

The 1980s saw a clear change in the paradigm of media policy in Finnish society. The shift can be described as a move from policy oriented to market

oriented broadcasting. But Finland was not alone in the process. Winds of de- or re-regulation, liberalisation, commercialisation and internationalisation had been blowing all over the European continent. Because of the ideological, economical, and technological changes, broadcasters were suddenly thrown into a new situation where they had to be able to negotiate with different interest groups from the fields of technology, politics, competitors and viewing public in order to survive. (Aslama, Hellman, Lehtinen, Sauri, 2007).

In Finnish media and broadcasting culture, Yleisradio (YLE) as a public service broadcasting company has during its whole lifetime always been an image of its times. In the late sixties (the period called Reporadio) YLE stepped to the forefront of a process of change in the society. It opened up a new kind of publicity. Television's significance as a kind of far-seeing instrument was highlighted. The speculation around the alternative future was an important element in the discussion of television's role in Finland, especially in the seventies.

One of the best examples of this has been YLE's documentary programme *Maailmantelevisio* (World Television), which was launched in July 1975. The idea was to present thoughts and visions concerning television's significance in the future broadcasting. Also technological changes were forecasted. The essential concept was interactivity, which was suggested already in *Maailmantelevisio* programmes. It played with the idea that television and computer would be converged into one medium. The belief into informative television policy was strong then. The history of Finnish television shows how paradoxical views related to media changes and public reactions have been strongly present. (Kortti & Salmi, 2007: 22).

### **Explaining the national past**

In the history of Finnish television, the past has always been present. History lives through those traditions, which have their continuation in television as audiovisual medium. There is an ontological dimension in the history programmes, since they can reflect the work and nature of memory, the construction of history, and they create phenomenological reflections on the medium itself. History programmes and films can enact a mimetic desire and evoke an aura of authenticity. They are dialectical negations arising from within the province of the documentary or other forms, accepting

their central presuppositions, yet displacing their context.

They bring the private and the marginal into the field, discarding often the centralized perspective of the narrator in favour of multi-layered fragments, and can rely on affective expression without always forgetting analytical interpretation. As immanent negations, they enlarge the framework and scope of history. In a way, historical films and programmes are research trips into the past, and the presentation of memory in these programmes can be compared with the knowledge proposed by various disciplines that research and speculate on memory processes.

History programmes have always been present in Finnish television, whether the function of them has varied. Finnish perspective shows that if history programmes give us images of memory, the personal archives of the past, they also give us images of history, the shared and recorded past. In fact, films and programmes often merge the two levels of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history, and the subjective mode of a single individual's remembered experience. So, it is a kind of flashback in its innovative use of found and other footage. They are re-edited traces of a past framed by a narrative which transmits the concepts of history and memory. In this sense, the past is not regained but reframed through montage and fragmentation.

The turn to more personal histories has also happened in Finnish television during the last two decades. The daily experiences of people, their individual destiny and efforts are concerned in these programmes more affectively than before. This phenomenon has had larger dimensions in Finnish culture, since these symptoms have not only been present in television history programmes, but, for example, also in new Finnish documentary. In a larger scale, documentaries are aimed at local and global audiences. They precipitate and influence change individually and at the grassroots level. Documentaries resonate deeply with people and show results in visible and measurable outcomes. Usually a documentary with a profound local effect will also speak to a wider national audience through television and potentially internationally. (Corner, 2008: 13-28). In this way, it is possible to reach both a targeted and broad audience.

The most powerful documentaries and history programmes show how

people's lives are interwoven with historical, cultural and social issues and how they reflect on how we live, think and interact with each other and our world. In Finland, recent years have seen a re-emergence of the documentary form from its cultural background and movement towards a proper recognition of its role as a model of cinematic and televisual practice which can educate, entertain, provoke, persuade and affect audiences emotionally. Maybe documentary is nowadays also in a state of crisis and it might be so that documentary makers turn their critical faculties on the discipline itself trying to keep the genre alive. Tracing the survival and redefinition of the genre is part of the picture concerning documentary narrative. Drama-documentaries have also had their traces in Finnish television. In drama-documentary sequence of events from a real historical occurrence or situation are taken, and real people are involved to authenticate the dramatisation of events. Even though their acting style may differ from more naturalistic professional styles, their performance draws attention to the truth claims of these programmes. The position of the television viewer is marked by changing sequence of camera shots, the words of on- or off-screen narrators and the accompanying music. These are signs and codes of narrative structure, which determine the audience's identification with the role positioned to her by the broadcaster.

On cognitive level, the problem of representing history is bound up with finding another way to write history, one that acknowledges, rather than occludes, the processes of constructing history; a form of history that finds a place for history's indeterminacies, in terms of both the limits of representation and the problems that beset our understanding of the temporal. Special programmes on the history of Finnish architecture have dealt with the northern location, natural conditions and the often sparse resources are behind the distinctive architectural tradition in Finland. Outside influences have been adopted to suit the Finnish conditions. Besides mutual characteristics, local conditions, differences in cultural landscape and ecological preconditions and building methods have created differing environments in different parts of the country.

The significant distinction husbandry has produced in the Finnish landscape has been studied through inventories and history programmes. Heritage biotopes, heritage landscape and traditionally built environ-

ments are in the intersection of nature, industry and architecture. From and point of view of Finnish architectural heritage, the continuous use of old buildings and the control of new building work take a central role in these programmes. Concrete and prefabricated construction methods are connected in Finland to the architectural heritage of the last few decades as creations of the industrial and post-industrial society.

In Finland, the connection with television and Finnish film history has been crucial. Many film stars were able to create their own programmes in Finnish television. Television has always been a forum for old films. When the Finnish studio system ended due to television's rapid increase, studio's sold the television rights of their films to YLE and commercial channels after the beginning of 1960s. Nostalgia as a form of a mediator between popular culture and fashion is highlighted in Finnish television. The number of nostalgic programmes has increased tremendously after the year 2000. For example, the circulation of old classic television series is cheap programming for all channels but still there are slots for documentaries and educational programmes. In modern Finnish television history is in many ways present and it is used for many purposes. (Wiio, 2007).

The structure of Finnish television - a combination of public and commercial activities, is even in European standards exceptional. Still, the symptom is that entertainment programmes have increased at the cost of more informative programming. The scale of programming was relatively stable between the years 1960-79. The increase of entertainment happened after that. After 2000, the development has been more stabile, and nowadays the informative role of Finnish television has even increased. The research of history shows that Finnish television output has been many sided at least when the scrutiny is based on programme types. Although the profiles of different channels have changed in the course of time, and two independent commercial channels have come along in the 1990s, the sphere of the whole programming has been as broad as before.

### **Telling about history with educational challenges**

Finland is a multilingual country, in that sense, that there are lingual minorities. Television out put covers both Swedish (from the beginning of Finnish television) and Saami-language programmes (from 2000 on), Russian and

Roman language programmes have been more in the radio. The rising multiculturalism in Finland is one of the challenges also in television. In the year 2005 YLE accepted a service strategy for special and minority groups. European Union's television directives were applied in Finland in 1994.

As examples of history programmes in Finnish television have frequently evidenced, conventionally, television history programmes are made by first settling on a story line, then looking around for visual material to illustrate it, without any attempt to analyse what is being seen on the screen. Visual evidence is in itself of great value in historical study; television programmes should concentrate on those areas where there is a richness of visual source material and should be built up, outwards as it were, from that source material. Some of the programmes concentrate strongly on the problems and techniques involved in the critical analysis of different types of visual source; others concentrate almost exclusively on bringing out the value of particular visual sources in making a special contribution to an important historical problem. While it would never be possible to deal comprehensively with any historical topic through television alone, nonetheless history could be presented on general television in a more authentic way if the conventions and clichés of traditional television production were jettisoned in favour of a recognition of the potency of visual sources properly and critically handled.

A special programme and project called *Dokumenttiprojekti* (Documentary Project) was launched in YLE TV2 in the year 1990, to secure continuing documentary production. Nowadays it is an established institution with several special projects like *Toinen Suomi* (Other Finland) and *Steps for the Future*. Generally, the history of documentary since the late 1940s is very closely associated with the development of television industry, and some of the most interesting developments in the form of documentaries have been directly attributable to television's constant generation of new types of programming in the relentless quest to maintain or increase audience share. One of the clearest illustrations of this is a marked tendency to produce hybridised forms, in which generic boundaries have been blurred in the effort to create an attractive new format. Documentaries have indeed often been regarded as a form of antidote to the more entertainment-orientated part of the television schedule. They may make greater

demands on concentration, but they have traditionally been seen as a type of programming which is on a par with the various forms of broadcast journalism. Documentary Project has had many international projects during its existence also the programme has taken part in producing films, especially documentaries related to Finnish traditions and everyday life.

In the eyes of television viewers, documentaries are defined as much according to their relationship with other forms of television output as by being measured against that notional template 'documentary'. In spite of more recent developments in which film makers have been required to produce work that is more accessible to the television audience, documentary has not entirely cast off its reputation of being a serious, worthy, but ultimately rather boring form of programming. This has led to the more traditional forms of documentary not being given a high priority in today's television schedules.

Finnish television has had a media educational aim since the beginning. This role has not always been the same, there have been changes. In many cases, historical scenes may build themselves up with more reliance on the principles of sound or spoken commentary. There can be big generalisations when talking about identifiable scenes in a history programmes. In reality, many scenes in these programmes may build up more on the argumentative power of sound than of image. As suggested in many historical programmes in Finnish television, voice-over narration might bring in elements of the story, and hint to any other directorially suitable conclusions. It is, moreover, quite instructive to consider the respective gains and losses which occur when broadly the same subject matter is treated in different media formats.

### **YLE Teema's significant role**

The increase of history programmes, and especially European history ones, is largely connected with the birth of YLE Teema -channel. YLE Teema started in 2001. It is a special channel for science, culture and history programmes. YLE Teema's evenings comprise of drama series, documentaries and late night movies. The speciality is that each evening features a different theme: usually popular culture on Mondays, history on Tuesdays, art and culture on Wednesdays, science on Thursdays, everyday-history

on Fridays and the special Theme-Saturdays. The different programs on Theme-Saturdays are carefully chosen from a wide selection of documentaries and movies, forming unique pairs according to each week's theme.

YLE Teema is committed to seeking out documentaries that dive deep into their subjects. These documentaries fall under the headings of Popular Culture, History, Art and Culture plus Third Dimension, which addresses issues concerning the third world. YLE Teema's TV-Archive searches the massive databases of the Finnish national public service broadcasting company to find immemorial moments from the past. The viewers can also wish for their favourite programs to be shown by sending e-mail to the channel. YLE Teema science programs each explore their respective fields in detail, both pinpointing problems and offering solutions and positive case studies. Thursdays are devoted to science. Once a month certain themes are investigated in detail.

There was a special report announced on 25th of September 2009, and according to this Brand-measuring report for the first time in Finnish Broadcasting history the channel YLE Teema (Theme) won other main channels like YLE TV1 and TV2 and MTV3. The result was based on reliable research among Finns.

As indicated before, the role of historical programmes has increased after 2000. In last decades, most of the history programmes are dealing with Finnish past, how Finland was born, what is the history behind these happening, how can we relate ourselves in the modern world, and especially as part of EU? Finnish history examples: Special projects like *Unelmana Karjala* (Dream Karelia) highlight Finnish past and the idea of lost Karelia to Soviet Union after the II World War. Karelia has been a constant topic in history programmes after the Second World War. Consequently, Karelia has always been a place of utopias and dreams in Finland. The images that we have of this area tend to originate in national projects and Karelianism. Historically, Karelia has been divided between two states - Finland and Soviet Union - since Finland gained independence in 1917. Karelia belonged to Finland until 1939. After World War II a total of 430,000 evacuees, 407,000 of who were Karelians, were resettled in different parts of Finland. Actually in this interview-based programme series Karelia is told by Russians living nowadays in that area. The broadcast

used archives, interviews, witnesses of happenings and also interviews with the specialists. Memories were awakened through the use of various subjects. National history, political happenings and past events in society were highlighted during the broadcast.

Another ten-part programme called *Muistojeni Karjala* (Memories of Karelia) focused on Finnish people living in that area. Generally, utopias anchored in recollections are central in the discourse about Karelia. They are attached to the imaginary properties of place and to the meanings created by absence and cession. The hopes and desires of migrant Karelians are anchored in places of memory which do not exist: the ceded Karelia, home village and one's own yard. Similarly, they are attached to places with images of future harmony and hopes like perhaps the ceded Karelia will be returned to Finland in the future. In this case, truth and reality do not constitute primary meanings in utopian speech or memory but the action and contents emerging from this thinking are more significant. The programme showed how utopias are real in reminiscences and dreams of people. Utopian thinking has varied in different decades and developed contents related to that particular period. The earlier impressions are associated with the phenomena described as Kalevalan cultural nationalism and political ethnography. From the historical point of view, Karelianism forms the core of this discourse. The first people to go to Karelia were the representatives of peaceful nationalism - collectors of folklore, authors and artists -, then followed the advocates of revolutionary nationalism, white soldiers and red workers who dreamed of Great Finland. These visits created a dream of an independent nation of related peoples with Finland, because of its developing ties to Europe. This dreamland was created around myths and therefore a lot remained outside the appropriate discourse and was left unsaid.

Finnish history with Russia has been under scrutiny in many programmes over the past decades especially Finnish Winter War in 1939 has been topic of various history programmes: Veteran soldiers remembering the happenings in a style of straightforward documentary with archive images in between interviews. The Soviet-Finnish War of 1939 - 1940, which lasted 103 days and is commonly known as the "Winter War," had its origins in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939. The secret protocols of that

non-aggression accord divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet security zones. Finland, which had been part of the Russian Empire for more than a century prior to gaining its independence during the Russian Revolution, was included by that agreement within the Soviet sphere.

These war memories are usually shown during good broadcasting times, and they attract widely audience's interest. The style of these documentaries is emotionally laden and memories of Winter War and later Continuation War between Finland and Soviet Union during the 1939-44 are a continuing aspect of historical documentaries and dramas. One of the most important themes to be found in these programmes is the concept of national unity. For the Finns, the Second World War was not a wanted war, more like they were forced to fight in defense of the nation, but for most people these were also turning points, which showed the Finnish unity, a nation that stood unified against a big and powerful enemy. The symbolic role of war memories is a continuing topic on these history programmes.

A larger perspective is found in programmes like *Industrial Revolution - Story of Europe*, which tells about the European heritage. The programming of these documents shows that it is a big question, and therefore, historians and economists have tended to explain the Industrial Revolution in different ways. Some have focused on the long-term nature of economic growth in Europe, seeing British industrialisation as one, striking, part of this. Others, particularly economists, have formulated general propositions about economic growth: to them the Industrial Revolution is one instance of such growth, albeit a very important one. And some have seen the Industrial Revolution as a dramatic, once and for all, change. The French documentary *Bas in Babylon* (B ... comme Babylone, 2007) offered a fascinating voyage to meet a lost civilisation between historical, cultural and fantastic realities.

A strong European perspective was found in *History of Fashion* with many parts devoted to the opening of world-view, started already in 16<sup>th</sup> century. Setting fashion within its social, cultural and artistic context, *History of Fashion* presented an engaging history of the interplay between commerce and culture, technology and aesthetics, popular culture and pastiche, and fashion and anti-fashion. War documentaries, *The Battle of Sedan* in 1870, Swedish documentary *Like Witches in the Night* tells about hap-

pening during the II World War in Soviet Union. There was a special unit comprised only of women, who were specialised in night bombings. A documentary about Henry VIII and his building projects featuring castles, palaces, war ships. Architectural documentaries concerning Europe's buildings from the Middle-Ages are also shown in Finnish television.

## Highlights of 2009

Fictional series and films are frequently broadcasted in Finnish channels, both on public and commercial ones. There were special highlights in the year 2009 by Teema-channel. On 5<sup>th</sup> of September the channel organised *Berlin 24 hours* programming, a 24-hour nonstop-broadcast on the life of the metropol-city. One million Finns were following this spectacle. It started the *Theme-Deutschland* programming, which included many other programmes. *Life with Enemy - Allied Powers in Post-War Europe* (2009) - a four-part history series about the years which changed attitudes and beliefs after the II World War. *Walks with an Architect*, in which two famous architects Ricardo Bofill and Roland Castro talk about the personal and professional significance of Berlin to their lives. It also featured strolling around the city, point-of-views towards the historical significance of Berlin, the logic of architecture and the changes among the cityscape of this city.

*Grenzenlose Liebe* (2007) was a point-of-view of how historical happenings affect our lives, and how people were separated in Germany in 1961. It followed a documentary narrative consisting of two pairs living on both sides of the wall. It showed how many documentaries and historical narratives bear all the hallmarks of a gripping story or a well-wrought drama. Individual characters assume the conventional roles of hero, villain and victim and are played off one against the other in ways with which we are all familiar from television drama or film. Plot is used as a device for creating interest and suspense. Events are recounted in such a way as to create the impression that all hinges on the resolution of a conflict between opposed forces or warring fractions.

Historical fictions were broadcasted largely as well: examples include *Die Frau von Checkpoint Charlie* (2007), a two-part programme about an East-German woman, *Nikolaikirche* (1995), a two-part programme situated in Leipzig in the years 1987-89, *Deutschlandspiel* (2000), a two-part

fiction about the unification of Germany, *Die Unberühbare* (2000), a story about the writer Gisela Elsner, and the collapse of values after the breaking of the wall, and *Brennendes Herz* (2006), a narrative concerning a member of the neo-Nazis in contemporary society. Also Rainer Werner Fassbinder's monumental *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) was broadcasted in Teema-channel. Other programmes related to Germany-theme were Wim Wenders's film *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987), Bernstein- Ode to Freedom (1989), *Als der Ostblock Geschichte wurde* (2009), *Lost world of communism* (2009), a three-part documentary using archives, and interviews with people from East-Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania.

### **A final note**

The question of television as a mediator between past, present and future is not always a linear one. Television's role as a communicator in the middle of our everyday lives is also connected non-linear and cyclical features. Television brings in new elements of circulation. It also has an important role in the cycle life of people. It gives people a special rhythm to follow, and this often means a certain special feeling of secure, as well. The Finnish experience shows all these symptoms very well. The communication system has had a vivid influence on the lives and perspectives of human beings, especially into the control of their usual habits.

History shows how the idea of broadcasting to private homes from a certain source was widespread long before it became reality. Broadcasting as a social form goes on with the development of modern society. Multichannel broadcasting systems do divide audiences between various channels related to the pluralistic nature of it. Digital broadcasting has already had significant influences on the storage and distribution of information. The future will show us the new possibilities dealing with the merge of broadcasting, telecommunications and internet. We can say that we need new media policy in front of all new developments. The critical awareness of media users in private, professional and public contexts is the only key for a better future.

History programmes concerning European history leave behind glimpses of that knowledge we have about history, life of our parents, public life, and about that everyday

history which has become an essential part of our national heritage. Microhistory, psychohistory, private everyday history - they all have a modern day relevance, and in them historical programmes function more like shadows with important messages. Historical programmes explain happenings, reveal them through gestures. Historical programmes highlight the secret strategies of destiny. Mankind has never have as powerful tool of philosophical speculation. In television, the situation does not always look so bright. We have a lot of material in our hands but still often I have the feeling that we do not seem to “understand” it any better than before.

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