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Civil disobedience in the movies as an example of politics in pop culture

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CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN THE MOVIES AS AN EXAMPLE OF POLITICS IN POP CULTURE

ABSTRACT

The law cannot justify breaking the law, but it does not mean that law must be blindly followed. For law to be effective it takes more than just written rules and enforcement agencies. It takes people who respect it. It takes society understanding social contract. It takes civil society. Society strong enough to notice when the law or authorities are unfair, unjust against rationality or simply not effective because of a lack of social acceptance. Civil disobedience is a social conscience in action. It's transcendental and makes perfect movie material, therefore acts of resistance against law and government fill popular culture. One may not accept civil disobedience, treat it as a crime, undermine its legal and moral basis, but cannot notice that nowadays this sort of resistance plays an important part in legal, social and cultural changes around the world.

Key words

civil disobedience, nonviolent resistance, popular culture, film, *Robin of Sherwood*, *Born on the 4th of July*, *V for Vendetta*, *Sophie Scholl*

1. Civil disobedience as a social conscience in action

The law cannot justify breaking the law, but it does not mean that law must be blindly followed. For law to be effective it takes more than just written rules and enforcement agencies. It takes people who respect it. It takes society understanding social contract. It takes civil society. A strong civil society is closely related to democracy and representation helping to build a strong democratic political society. But sometimes in democratic states the authority of law and government can be so weak that citizens react by refusal to abide by the law. Civil resistance against unfair law or government practices is called civil disobedience. This quite

controversial behavior is being examined by a vast amount of authors around the world.¹ There are many definitions of civil disobedience. One of the most discussed elements of the act of disobedience is violence. It is usually accepted that it should be nonviolent, even though very aggressive protests are often classified as civil disobedience the majority of scientists agree that disobeying the law cannot cause a threat to a human's health or life.²

Generally one can say that civil disobedience is a refusal to governmental institutions undertaking actions and decisions against the well-being of society (wider view) or is an action contrary to law in order to change unfair laws (narrower view).³

Civil disobedience is the conscious and public refusal of a person to obey the law or governmental decision that is unfair, unjust or irrational. It takes the form of a protest or nonviolent resistance i.e. demonstrations, boycotts, blockades,

¹ The aim of this paper is not analysis of the civil disobedience per se but its portrayal in the movies. Civil disobedience is widely presented in literature, for example in: J. Galtung, *On the Meaning of Nonviolence*, "Journal of Peace Research" 1965, No. 3, Vol. 2, pp. 228–257; H.W. Jones, *Civil Disobedience*, "Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society" 1967, No. 4, Vol. 111, pp.195–198; A.M. Bickel, *Conscience, Power, and the Duty to Obey Law*, "Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences" 1974, No. 6, Vol. 27, pp. 16–30; R.C.Grady, *Obligation, Consent, and Locke's Right to Revolution*, "Canadian Journal of Political Science/ Revue canadienne de science politique" 1976, No. 2, Vol. 9, pp. 277–292; S.E. Barkan, *Political Trials and Resource Mobilization: Towards an Understanding of Social Movement Litigation*, "Social Forces" 1980, No. 3, Vol. 58, pp. 944–961; E.N. Muller, T.O. Jukam, *Discontent and Aggressive Political Participation*, "British Journal of Political Science" 1983, No. 2, Vol. 13, pp. 159–179; S. Zunes, *Nonviolent Action and Human Rights*, "PS: Political Science and Politics" 2000, No. 2, Vol. 33, pp. 181–187; J. Lowman, T. Palys, *Subject to the Law: Civil Disobedience, Research Ethics, and the Law of Privilege*, "Sociological Methodology" 2003, Vol. 33, pp. 381–389; J. Habermas, *Religious Tolerance: The Pacemaker for Cultural Rights*, "Philosophy" 2004, No. 307, Vol. 79, pp. 5–18; A. Fung, *Deliberation before the Revolution: Toward an Ethics of Deliberative Democracy in an Unjust World*, "Political Theory" 2005, No. 3, Vol. 33, pp. 397–419; D. Stolle, M. Hooghe, M. Micheletti, *Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a Form of Political Participation*, "International Political Science Review/Revue internationale de science politique" 2005, No. 3, Vol.26, pp. 245–269; J.S. Juris, *The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements*, "Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science" 2005, Vol. 597, pp. 189–208.

² Ibidem.

³ *Leksykon politologii* [Lexicon of Political Science], A. Antoszewski, R. Herbut (eds.), Wrocław 2000, pp. 338–339.

refusal to pay taxes,⁴ occupation of a civil facility, sit-ins. It must be conducted in the public interest, not private, and either to induce change or to retain the *status quo*. Protesting the existence of a particular law by breaking that law, thus any form of civil disobedience is illegal, and people involved should be aware of that and agree with the consequences such as punishment by jail or a fine. The idea of a protest is to draw to the attention of authorities the fact that there are some unfair regulations or some good laws are incorrectly enforced. The idea is not to undermine social order or to vote for anarchy. Civil disobedience is social conscience in action.

Civil disobedience has existed in life and culture since ancient times,⁵ today it is often depicted in popular culture. Music, literature, films, comic books and other forms of contemporary culture contain acts of resistance to reality and government. There are some movies where civil disobedience is the main theme, such as: *Gandhi*,⁶ *Malcolm X*,⁷ *A Force More Powerful*,⁸ *The Rosa Parks Story*,⁹ *Bloody Sunday*¹⁰ or *Freedom Riders*.¹¹ Those are biopics or documentaries presenting real stories and real people. But there are also films where peoples' actions are not so obviously categorized or civil disobedience is in the background. And mostly those are the subject of my paper.

⁴ Refusal to pay taxes by Henry Thoreau is a classic example of civil disobedience. Thoreau disagreed to pay a tax believing that money would be spent on war with Mexico and to sustain slavery. For more see: R. Adams, *Thoreau's Sources for „Resistance to Civil Government“*, „Studies in Philology“ 1945, No. 3, Vol. 42, pp. 640–653; Ch.H. Nichols (Jr.), *Thoreau on the Citizen and His Government*, „Phylon“ 1952, No. 1, Vol. 13, pp. 19–24; L.K. Jenco, *Thoreau's Critique of Democracy*, „The Review of Politics“ 2003, No. 3, Vol. 65, pp. 355–381; R. Lane, *Standing „Aloof“ from the State: Thoreau on Self-Government*, „The Review of Politics“ 2005, No. 2, Vol. 67, pp. 283–310.

⁵ Problem of a choice between obeying an order and following one's conscious is visible in Sophocles' *Antigone* or the trial of Socrates – sf.: M. Dyson, *The Structure of the Laws' Speech in Plato's Crito*, „The Classical Quarterly (New Series)“ 1978, No. 2, Vol. 28, pp. 427–436; D.M. Farrell, *Illegal Actions, Universal Maxims, and the Duty to Obey the Law: The Case for Civil Authority in the Crito*, „Political Theory“ 1978, No. 2, Vol. 6, pp. 173–189; G.D. Steadman, *The Unity of Plato's „Crito“*, „The Classical Journal“ 2006, No. 4, Vol. 101, pp. 361–382.

⁶ *Gandhi* (1982), dir. R. Attenborough.

⁷ *Malcolm X* (1992), dir. S. Lee.

⁸ *A Force More Powerful* (1999), dir. S. York.

⁹ *The Rosa Parks Story* (2002), dir. J. Dash.

¹⁰ *Bloody Sunday* (2002), dir. P. Greengrass.

¹¹ *Freedom Riders* (2010), dir. S. Nelson

2. *Robin of Sherwood*

Medieval stories of Robin Hood¹² present the main character as a much more villainous, violent and cruel person than the 20th century pop culture versions of the myth. Since the 18th century descriptions of Robin Hood have become more satirical and jolly, with its peak in the 19th and 20th centuries when the story is so romanticized that the survival rate of a villain would probably drop to zero if it was actually medieval England.¹³ One of the best, portrayals in my opinion, of this legend is given by Michael Praed in the 1980s television series *Robin of Sherwood* created by Richard Carpenter.¹⁴ There are many versions of Robin Hood's story presented on TV and in the theatres e.g.: *The Adventures of Robin Hood*,¹⁵ *Robin and Marian*,¹⁶ *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*¹⁷ and *Robin Hood*,¹⁸ but most of them lack the sort of medieval feeling and reality that R. Carpenter was able to create. He was also the first to introduce a Saracen among the men of the woods.¹⁹ The series, especially for someone who watched it in the 80s,

¹² Sf.: *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, S. Knight, T. Ohlgren (eds.), Michigan 1997.

¹³ A character presented in the films or literature during that period of time is usually a man of virtue, honor and sophisticated culture. It's hard to believe it would take "a gentleman" (the 20th century definition of a gentleman, mind you) to survive in the forest and among villains and outlaws in medieval England. One of the legends from the 16th century portrays Robin as a yeoman with privileged upbringing, which may be the basis for showing him as a gentleman, but it would still be manners of the medieval, not contemporary, ages. As noble and brave as he could have been the image presented in 19th and 20th centuries has very little to do with actual living conditions centuries back. Not to mention visible lack of historical correctness in some of the films. For example a scene in *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* with Kevin Costner (as Robin) sliding down the rope in white shirt in the 12th century forest is no stranger or further from reality than a feather in a hat and a clean shave of Erroll Flynn (as Robin) in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, but it definitely looks good enough on screen to gain public affection.

¹⁴ *Robin of Sherwood* (1984–1986), main creator R. Carpenter (screenplay), dir. R. Young, I. Sharp. Michael Praed played Robin in the first and second season of the series, and the third season's Robin was Jason Connery.

¹⁵ *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), dir. M. Curtiz, W. Keighley.

¹⁶ *Robin and Marian* (1976), dir. R. Lester.

¹⁷ *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* (1991), dir. K. Reynolds.

¹⁸ *Robin Hood* (2010), dir. R. Scott.

¹⁹ As R. Carpenter (main creator and scriptwriter) and I. Knight (director of the first series) explain, it was an odd idea to place a Muslim in medieval England, and decision of him joining the 'merry men' was even stranger, but it was a consequence of extraordinary

seems ageless which is an additional bonus to its underlying message. Yes, it is an entertainment show but some values of it seem to be more than just a medieval story with a moral that one should behave justly.

Carpenter's series shows a man not just "taking money from the rich and giving it to the poor", but a man standing against authority (the sheriff, nobles, friars, the king) to protect the poor and oppressed. Robin Hood collects money for the taxes demanded by the sheriff or steals the money from the nobles or clergy. Yes, very typically so. But he also stands up against the wrong and unjust behavior of the sheriff in the name of the hurt people even if it endangers him or his group. The speech given by Robin in the forest to convince his friends not to part ways but to form a group "fighting for justice" can be treated as a manifesto, declaration for the future, as he says: "(...) [I'm] awoken! (...) You were sleeping. We all were. (...) It's time we woke. It's time we stopped running! (...) „do what you're told and they leave you alone" – is this the spirit of England? Villages destroyed so the princes could hunt! The people bled to pay for foreign wars! No voice, no justice, no England! Well, it's time to fight back!"²⁰ and as he points out: "(...) Our friends who were killed, they'll never starve, be tortured or chained in the dark. They're here with us in Sherwood. And they always will be because they're free".²¹ Freedom and justice the two main reasons, two main goals. Robin, Will, John, Marion, Tuck, Much and others become outlaws out of their own free will, it's their choice, their goal is to prevent injustice, with full understanding of the consequences. Robin's behavior in this version of the myth might be seen as an archetype of civil disobedience.

Robin Hood's company in the *Robin of Sherwood* is a complex group. Will Scarlet²² is an anarchist, believing that all Normans should be wiped from the

sword skills and acting abilities of Mark Ryan (playing Nasir). Nasir was supposed to die in the first episode, but the impression he made on creators of the show was enough to keep him as a part of the group. Creators of the other films or series copied the idea of a Saracen among Robin Hood men without noticing how unreal it was for the 12th century society to keep such an alien alive – as R. Carpenter explains in an interview for the DVD issue – Sf.: *Audio Commentaries, Robin of Sherwood, Complete DVD 2011*. *Robin of Sherwood* is a tv series strongly influenced by magic and mythology, *sacrum* being part of the "real" world, therefore the Muslim running around the woods with swords is no stranger than a man with a head of a deer (Hern) or magical silver arrow. It seems legit there and makes it even more unconvincing and unexplained for American adaptations of the story to introduce a Muslim character into the plot.

²⁰ *Robin of Sherwood, Robin Hood and the Sorcerer, part 1*, season 1, episode 1.

²¹ *Robin of Sherwood, Robin Hood and the Sorcerer, part 2*, season 1, episode 2.

²² Played by Ray Winstone.

face of the earth, he presents the most radical point of view. Little John²³ is more of a socialist, loyal to his hooded leader, but he notices that established government cannot be trusted, that powerful people use weakness to get financial gain. He points it out to Robin evaluating Richard The Lionheart's behavior, he says that the king has drained the country of money, does not care for the people and was able to turn Robin Hood, the people's hope into a king's fool.²⁴ Rulers of England are portrayed as oppressive, unjust and vicious in the series. Sir Robert de Rainault in the rank of the sheriff of Nottingham,²⁵ the main arch enemy of Robin Hood, is a politician able to buy himself an office²⁶ or secure himself financial stability by marrying a girl he does not even fancy,²⁷ with a witty, cynical and power-thirsty mind. Robin and his men oppose everything Robert de Rainault stands for. They rebel against the political and social order of medieval England. They show the weakness of authority, put it to shame, ridicule it publicly and often break the law to achieve it. The hooded man does not do it for the fun, he wants things to change, he demands just treatment for the oppressed, he forces nobles to better conduct. Resistance to authority is the core of the Robin Hood character therefore people in power and their decisions are challenged and questioned publicly. Although righteous decisions and just behavior earns their respect. Robin Hood even believes that king Richard is able to end injustice if he comes back, that is until he comes back proving that other members of the band were right and nothing is going to change.²⁸ Robin Hood's goal is not to evade Normans from England, he does not want war, he is just trying to "wake up" the conscience of the rich and consciousness of the poor and stand up for those who cannot protect themselves.

3. *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*

German Resistance during the Second World War is considered to be the conscience of a nation. There are very few films showing that side of the Third

²³ Played by Clive Mantle.

²⁴ *Robin of Sherwood, The King's Fool*, season 1, episode 6.

²⁵ Played by Nickolas Grace.

²⁶ *Robin of Sherwood, The King's Fool*, season 1, episode 6.

²⁷ How else can one interpret the words by Robert de Rainault on his upcoming wedding day: "It's a wedding Gisburne, not a celebration" – *Robin of Sherwood, Alan a Dale*, season 1, episode 5.

²⁸ *Robin of Sherwood, The King's Fool*, season 1, episode 6.

Reich's history. The White Rose (Weiße Rose) was a non-violent, intellectual resistance group in Nazi Germany consisting of 7 members, students from the University of Munich and their philosophy professor. Six of them were arrested by the Gestapo and beheaded in 1943, the seventh member was executed in 1945. Many of the friends and supporters of the group were arrested and sentenced to prison. The last leaflet of White Rose was smuggled to England, edited and air-dropped in millions of copies over Germany.²⁹

Those incredible events are the subject of Marc Rothemund's film *Sophie Scholl – die letzten Tage* (*Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*).³⁰ The film shows the last days of Sophie Scholl's life. In February 1943 Sophie³¹ her brother Hans³² were caught while scattering the leaflets at Munich University and arrested. The White Rose resistance was non-violent, they tried to send an anti-militarist message. They believed that it is possible to make Germans see the other side of fascism, unpleasant and uncomfortable but true – murders, concentration camps, lack of freedom of speech, terror. During interrogation Sophie tells a Gestapo captain, Robert Mohr,³³ that unjust law shouldn't be followed, that law can change but conscience cannot. She says that law in Germany was protecting freedom until 1933, now the freedom is punished with prison, camp or a death sentence. In her opinion such a law is no longer law, it cannot be called order, cannot be followed. She stressed that they were trying to convince people to change their mind only by words.

Sophie and other members were accused of publishing leaflets at a time of war, calling for people to sabotage armaments, and to overthrow the National Socialist way of life. It was considered a crime, an insult to the Fuhrer, aiding the enemy and demoralizing German troops. Sophie, her brother and other members of White Rose were put into custody, found guilty by a court and

²⁹ More on the poem about the White Rose and the organization sf.: *Szósta ulotka Białej Róży z 18 lutego 1943* [The 6th Leaflet of the White Rose of 18 February 1943] and *Biała Róża – niemiecki ruch oporu* [The White Rose – German Resistance], translation into Polish I. Burszta, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 19–20.02.2005, No. 42.4758, p. 18; P. Krümmel, *Die ehrliche Hochstaplerin*, „Die Zeit”, 10.02.2005, No. 7, addit. „Zeit Berlinale“, p. 14

³⁰ *Sophie Scholl – die letzten Tage* (2005), dir. M. Rothemund. The film was awarded with two Silver Bears during 55th Berlinale, sf.: T. Sobolewski, *Świat spoważniał* [The World Got Serious], „Gazeta Wyborcza” 21.02.2005, No. 43.4759, p. 17. It was also nominated for Oscar.

³¹ Played by Julia Jentsch.

³² Played by Fabian Hinrichs.

³³ Played by Gerald Alexander Held.

sentenced to death. Sophie was interrogated and executed after just a couple of days, that was very fast proceedings in Germany, even during time of war. She was the youngest and one of the most famous members of The White Rose.

The movie is quite static. The interrogation is the main feature of the film showing ideas that motivated young people to take action and risk their lives. Discussion between Sophie and Mohr is one of the best examples of the civil disobedience theory in pop culture.

4. *Born on the 4th of July*

Born on the Fourth of July is an adaptation of the autobiography of Ron Kovic,³⁴ a Vietnam Veteran paralyzed during the war, who became a popular anti-war and pro-human rights political activist. Idealistic Marine is confronted with reality after being wounded and forced into a wheelchair. After years of a turbulent lifestyle he joins Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and becomes a peace activist speaking about the atrocities of war, and convincing people that war is immoral, senseless and a real horror. Kovic was arrested for protesting against the war that made him even more committed to peace and nonviolence.

Civil disobedience was part of pacifism all over the world. The most well known examples of this movement are anti-war protests in the USA. There are numerous media reports of the protests and different embodiments of those events in the mass culture that's why even people not interested in history or politics find those occurrences familiar. For example anti-Vietnam War protests were widely spread in the USA in the 1960s.³⁵ Similar were the mass demonstrations of 2004–2007 against the war in Iraq, especially those organized in January 2007 in Washington, D.C.³⁶

³⁴ Played by Tom Cruise.

³⁵ For more on the subject see: R.R. Tomes, *Apocalypse Then: American Intellectuals and the Vietnam War, 1954–1975*, New York 1998; R. Dickerson, *North to Canada: Men and Women against the Vietnam War*, Westport 1999; *Against the Vietnam War: Writings by Activists*, M.S. Robbins (ed.), Portland 2007.

³⁶ M. Ruane, F. Kunkle, *Thousands Protest Bush Policy*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/27/AR2007012700629.html> [access: 13.12.2010]; *Protestors Lay Siege to US Capitol, Smash Window at Military Recruiter*, <http://dc.indymedia.org/newswire/display/137573/index.php%3C/a> [access: 13.12. 2010]; *Radical Youth Contingent and Students for a Democratic Society March Overview*, <http://dc.indymedia.org/newswire/display/137584/index.php> [access: 13.12.2010]; W. Wash,

Protests taking place at the Capitol during the Vietnam war were presented not only in *Born on the 4th of July*,³⁷ but also in *Forrest Gump*³⁸ or *Hair*.³⁹

But not only huge actions are qualified as civil disobedience. Resistance can be found even in small steps taken by everyday people as long as they mean disagreeing to unfair or unjust laws, regulations, decisions. Such an example can be found in *Dead Poets Society*,⁴⁰ when students stand on their desks as a sign of protest when their lecturer is fired because of unconventional, yet effective and inspiring, methods of teaching. A pirate radio station's broadcasts in *Pump Up the Volume*⁴¹ turn from a diary and sarcastic view of everything that's wrong with American society into a call for mutiny against the unjust decisions of the school headmaster (it turns out that the principal is expelling "problem students" in order to keep federal funds) leading to uproar. Unconventional methods of curing conducted for the benefit of their patients and against a hospital's authority can also be a form of civil disobedience, as one can see in *Patch Adams*,⁴² a biopic of a doctor introducing innovative and effective methods of health care.

5. V for Vendetta

"V"⁴³ in *V for Vendetta*⁴⁴ is a terrorist fighting totalitarian authority. In film society it is ruled by the media and kept under surveillance. People isolate themselves, any act of disagreement or disobedience is punished. V wears a mask of Guy Fawkes, we never see his face, so he can be any one. Any of us. The film presents a fight, violent opposition, people dying, blood, suffering, victims. It is not a depiction of nonviolent resistance. It is an action movie glorifying revolution and tearing down the system in anarchy-like chaos. Yet, there is a scene at the end of the film where civil disobedience takes place. People gather, waiting for the fight to come, and everyone takes off the Guy Fawkes masks and stands in opposition

Times Correct Its Reporting on the Capitol Police and Pelosi?, <http://mediamatters.org/research/200702020019> [access: 13.12.2010].

³⁷ *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), dir. O. Stone.

³⁸ *Forrest Gump* (1994), dir. R. Zemeckis.

³⁹ *Hair* (1979), dir. M. Forman.

⁴⁰ *Dead Poets Society* (1989), dir. P. Weir.

⁴¹ *Pump Up the Volume* (1990), dir. A. Moyle.

⁴² *Patch Adams* (1998), dir. T. Shadyac.

⁴³ Played by Hugo Weaving.

⁴⁴ *V for Vendetta* (2005), dir. J. McTeigue.

to the police forces. No one moves, no one fights. This scene represents citizens standing up against government. Nonviolent civil disobedience. Resistance born from an act of terror. People able to resist after seeing there is someone strong enough to support them. They need support to get out of their homes, after that they no longer look back nor seek the caring shoulder. The mental change happened. It took a lot of bonfires and many lives, but they are there. And they are powerful without any other weapon than their free will.

V for Vendetta is a film version of a comic book,⁴⁵ showing the UK in the near-future after a nuclear war, run as a police state by a fascist party (Norsefire). In both comic and film V, an anarchist revolutionary, is dressed in a Guy Fawkes mask and undertakes a series of violent actions to bring down the government. V is on a personal vendetta, but later on he uses popularity gained through terror to convince the people to rule themselves.

Usually the film is a mirror version of reality, in the case of this film the opposite happened. The movie was inspiration for real people to resist law and government. Activism and protests against an Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) were the most visible acts of civil disobedience. The mask of Guy Fawkes was chosen by an Anonymous, Internet-based group, as their symbol,⁴⁶ and was used in 2012 protests against ACTA in Europe.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *V for Vendetta* (1982–1989) written by A. Moore, illustrated by D. Lloyd.

⁴⁶ J. Halliday, *Julian Assange Urges Supporters to Protect WikiLeaks*, website of “The Guardian”, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/dec/14/wikileaks-julian-assange-protect-from-attack> [access: 23.12.2010]; N. Carbone, *How Time Warner Profits from the ‘Anonymous’ Hackers*, website of “Time”, <http://newsfeed.time.com/2011/08/29/how-time-warner-profits-from-the-anonymous-hackers/#ixzz2C38KmQUG> [access: 12.11.2012]; T. Peng, C. Leckie, K. Ramamohanarao, *Detecting Distributed Denial of Service Attacks by Sharing Distributed Beliefs* [in:] *Information Security and Privacy: 8th Australasian Conference, ACISP 2003, Heidelberg 2003*, p. 214.

⁴⁷ E. Wojnarska-Krajewska, *Umowa handlowa dotycząca zwalczania obrotu towarami podrobionymi (tzw. ACTA) a prawo polskie* [Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement aka ACTA and Polish Law], „Zeszyty Prawnicze” [“Law Review”] 2012, No. 1; *Ochrona praw autorskich i praw pokrewnych* [Protection of the Copyrights], <http://www.mkidn.gov.pl/pages/strona-glowna/ministerstwo/ochrona-praw-autorskich-i-praw-pokrewnych.php> [access: 12.11.2012]; <http://prawo.vagla.pl/acta> [access: 12.11.2012]; <http://www.euronews.com/2012/02/11/activists-rally-to-give-acta-the-cold-shoulder/> [access: 12.11.2012].

6. *Santa Claus is Comin' to Town, Horton Hears a Who!*

Even animated movies for children present visions of civil disobedience, characters standing up to reality that is unjust, unfair or cruel. Totalitarian society is showed in *Antz*,⁴⁸ *Chicken Run*⁴⁹ or even some episodes of *Donald Duck*.⁵⁰ In *Antz* and *Chicken Run* the main characters are trying to break free from their world. They oppose it passively, do not do anything to change it, they take the easy way out and do everything to flee. But there are also examples of heroes who stand for what they believe even at the risk of losing their own life, health, freedom, comfort, friends, such characters can be found in *Santa Claus is Comin' to Town*⁵¹ and in *Horton Hears a Who!*⁵²

Santa Claus is Comin' to Town is a Christmas story. A toy maker, Kris Kringle, visits Little Sombertown where toys had been banned by the evil Burgermeister Meisterburger. A decree was enacted outlawing toys so children would work and not diminish productivity. Kringle refuses to follow the law and brings the children bags of toys, first he does it openly, but when he is chased by the Burgermeister's guards he finds new ways of delivery, including entering chimneys at night. His unyielding actions against unfair law conducted without violence is, in my opinion, a perfect example of civil disobedience.

Horton Hears a Who! is an adaptation of a 1954 book by Theodor Seuss Geisel, containing layered subtexts and messages. It is the story of an elephant, Horton, who finds a clover with a tiny dust speck pushed into it that turns out to be a small colony (Whoville) of small people (Whos) only Horton is able to hear. Horton needs to find a safer, more stable home, so the colony can survive. Jane the kangaroo and other citizens (especially active are Wickersham Brothers, the monkeys and Vlad Vladikoff, the vulture). They gather and pursue Horton to get rid of the speck by force. Although the elephant is deprived of the flower, caged

⁴⁸ *Antz* (1998), dir. E. Darnell, T. Johnson. Ant Z, the main character, on one hand criticizes unjust system, on the other is very selfish, do not care for others and is interested in saving his own life. Most revolutionary actions is caused by accidents or misjudgment. Amusing as it is, doesn't fully cover the ideology of civil disobedience.

⁴⁹ *Chicken Run* (2000), dir. P. Lord, N. Park. The film presents chicken farm of 1950s run in a manner of a prisoners of war camp what causes the "inmates" to attempt to escape. The movie is animated version of the classic World War Two escape movies.

⁵⁰ E.g.: *Donald Duck*, *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), *Donald Duck, The Ducktators* (1942).

⁵¹ *Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town* (1970), dir. J. Bass, A. Rankin Jr.

⁵² *Horton Hears a Who!* (2008), dir. J. Hayward, S. Martino.

and threaten to torture he refuses to deny existing Whoville and to submit to kangaroo's order. It is a classic children's story with a happy ending of animals hearing the Whos and a clover placed in a safe haven, so that nonviolent resistance is awarded. Horton's disobedience is politics, nicely presented in a contemporary children's film.

7. Summary

What is civil disobedience? Breaking the law to protect the law and its core values. It's the action of a social conscience and protection of freedom. It's transcendental and makes perfect movie material. Acts of resistance against law and government fill popular culture, especially at times of change. One may not accept civil disobedience, treat it as a crime, undermine its legal and moral basis, but cannot notice that nowadays this sort of resistance plays an important part in social and legal changes around the globe.