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THE ROLE OF PUBLIC (STATE) MEDIA IN THE MODERNISATION PROCESSES IN POST-WAR POLAND

Abstract

The article aims to outline the role that Telewizja Polska (Polish Television) and Polskie Radio (Polish Radio) played in the realisation of the state's modernisation ambitions and shaping the post-war intellectual climate. In particular, the analysis concerns educational and scientific programs as instruments of social policy and as carriers of the ideology of progress and rationalism.

By outlining the programming structure of Polish Radio and Polish Television at the time, this article focuses on the importance of the then state-owned public media in the pursuit of building a modern society in Poland, as well as the relevance of research on this phenomenon in the context of contemporary debates on the role of public media in the processes of education and modernisation.

Keywords: public media, education, modernisation, belief in science, Telewizja Polska, Polskie Radio, post-war society, ideology of progress

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Introduction

State media of the Polish People's Republic (PPR) are commonly thought of as tools of propaganda and indoctrination. This association is justified, as within the system of information monopoly characteristic of the Soviet satellite states, the media primarily served to legitimise government actions, promoting its ideological basis and constructing an official narrative of reality. The existence of such messaging is beyond dispute. However, the role of the PPR-era state media was more complex than as a simple tool for manipulating public opinion. At various times and depending on the changing political climate, the media, which were *de facto* state institutions, also played a significant part in education and dissemination of knowledge.

With limited access to alternative sources of information, electronic and print media collaborated with schools and universities, implementing programs aimed at promulgating scientific, technical, and cultural knowledge, thus contributing to the modernisation of local society.

The tasks and operational practices of Polish Television (TVP) and Polish Radio (PR) therefore went far beyond providing entertainment and general information. Both were deeply embedded within the ideological project of building a new society – a Socialist, rational society, based on the belief in the superiority of science and education as engines of ‘progress.’ Educational and cultural programs were intended to contribute to the processes of diminishing social inequalities, eliminating illiteracy, and shaping (rearing!?) a conscious citizen, both ideologically and intellectually. This was consistent with the Marxist theory, according to which culture and knowledge should be accessible to all social classes, not just the elites.

In this sense, state media messaging didn’t consist merely of neutral information carriers – it was a part of a broad social engineering project aimed at shaping a new type of citizenry, one that fit the ideal of a so-called socialist society. Drawing on the concepts of Soviet education commissar Anatoly Lunacharsky, one could say that the media of the Polish People’s Republic were intended to create *poputchikis* – at the very least, allies of the new Poland, and at best, actively engaged participants in the country’s modernisation process. They promoted belief in science as a tool for progress, but also emphasised the role of education as a means of equalising social opportunities and building a new community in which citizens were to be conscious of their role in economy and politics. They also stemmed from the belief that a higher level of education and science would enable competition with Western countries.

Already in the early days of the PPR, one could find attempts to combine propaganda projects with the idea of disseminating science and popularising knowledge, as well as mass education. Bolesław Bierut’s speech on November 16, 1947, delivered on the occasion of the launch of a new radio transmitter in Wrocław, perfectly captures this dualism – on one hand, it refers to the modernising role of the state, and on the other, it aligns itself with the rhetoric of class struggle:

There is a large discrepancy between the dynamics of economic achievements and the unfulfilled intellectual needs of the Recovered Territories, and therefore the need to eliminate all inequalities in human development. This task is neither simple nor easy; the cultural handicap of the great masses of the working people has its direct source in their economic handicap, in the difficult conditions of their material existence. This is the grimmest legacy of the Capitalist system, aggravated by the effects of the past war (Polish Film Chronicle, 48/47).

In subsequent decades, this rhetoric continued to evolve. In the 1960s, Stefan Żółkiewski, a leading cultural ideologist of the Polish People’s Republic, presented a different perspective on the media and their influence on social awareness. In his book *O kulturze Polski Ludowej* (‘On the Culture of the People’s Republic of

Poland’), he wrote: “Contemporary mass culture, disseminated through the technical means of mass communication, fosters the growth of the influence of both the bourgeois ideology and petty-bourgeois customs on the proletariat” (Żółkiewski, 1964, p. 35).

This position reflected the debate over the role of the media in the so-called socialist society at the time. On one hand, they were a tool for propaganda and modernisation, while on the other, their mass nature raised concerns about replicating patterns of Western, ‘capitalist’ culture, which could lead to an ‘ideological blurring’ of the socialist message.

Thus, analysing the role of state media in the Polish People’s Republic requires a perspective that goes beyond the simple paradigm of propaganda and indoctrination. Although subject to the Party’s ideological goals, the media simultaneously played a key role in shaping society through educational, popular science, and cultural programming, contributing to the dissemination of knowledge, development of intellectual aspirations, and modernisation of attitudes.

The article focuses on this very paradox – on the relationship between the propaganda nature of the PRL media and their actual functioning as educational and cultural tools, which, under certain conditions, could go beyond the original intentions of the political authorities.

Modernisation Theories and the Media

Daniel Bell, one of the key theorists of modernisation, emphasised the role of education, knowledge, and information as the primary drivers of social change. In his view, the modernisation process was associated with the transformation of society toward a knowledge- and information-based society, with the media playing the role of tools for shaping and distributing these resources. In his theory of post-industrial society, Bell recognised that education and technological innovations (including in the area of communication) are crucial for economic and social progress. In his view, the educational system not only prepares individuals for the labour market but also provides the foundation for the intellectual development of society. Higher quality of education fosters the development of critical thinking, which translates into a society’s ability to adapt to rapidly changing economic and technological realities. The technological progress, particularly tools of communication, enables the sharing of knowledge and information, which in turn fosters innovation and development of a high-quality output service sector. This change leads to a transformation of the economic structure, with services related to information and knowledge-processing playing the dominant role, rather than the traditional industrial sectors.

According to D. Bell (1973), media are not merely a means of communication but are becoming a strategic element in the construction of a so-called ‘knowledge

society'. Media fulfil a distributive function, enabling the rapid exchange of information at a global level and fostering both the development of an innovation-focused culture and globalisation of economic processes. In this way, modern communication technologies become a catalyst for social and economic change, integrating knowledge-based societies.

Daniel Lerner, in turn, in his 1964 work *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, focused on the role of the media as tools for social transformation in developing countries, particularly in the context of the Middle East and other regions with more traditional social structures. He argued that the media (chiefly radio and television) play a decisive role in the modernisation process by building what he termed 'empathy' – i.e. the ability of individuals to imagine other, more socially and technologically advanced models. This ability to empathise with other cultures contributes to increased aspirations and social mobilisation. The media play a key educational role here, providing information about new standards of living, social norms, and technologies, which directly influence changes in their audiences' mentalities. Media education enables the crossing of cultural and social barriers, which in turn accelerates the process of adapting traditional societies to the demands of the modern era. The media, by presenting Western models and alternative life patterns, contribute to social integration. D. Lerner emphasised that through shared media experiences, even societies with highly diverse ethnic and cultural structures can begin to form more cohesive and integrated communities.

Both approaches, those of D. Bell and D. Lerner, indicate that despite differences in geographical and cultural context, both theories consider media and education as the foundations of the modern world.

Similarly, Wilbur Schramm (1971) viewed mass media as 'a bridge to a wider world,' facilitating the transfer of new ideas through the process of urbanisation, as well as from the countries of the global North to those of the South.

The modernisation theories of D. Bell, D. Lerner, and W. Schramm, while focusing on slightly different aspects of the modernisation process, emphasise the inherent role of education, technology, and media as catalysts of social change. Their contributions remain relevant, especially in the context of the global challenges of digital transformation and globalisation, as well as in discussions about the role of media in the development of modern societies.

This means that content and forms of communication must take into account local cultural conditions. For example, even in secularised, modern European societies, there is a demand for content invoking national or religious identities. Samuel P. Huntington (2004) even noted that global modernisation has gone hand in hand with the resurgence of both religion and local identities, which contradicts the predictions of classical thinkers. From a neomodernisation perspective, the media must therefore balance promoting universal, modern values (such as individualism, democracy, and human rights) with respect for the cultural diversity of their audiences.

Contemporary research confirms that the role of media and education in social transformation has not changed; on the contrary, they have become even more indispensable in the age of the Internet and globalisation. Modern digital technologies enable not only the transmission of information but also interaction and co-creation of knowledge across societies.

Modernisation processes have had a significant impact on television, radio, and internet programming formats. In the initial phase of television and radio development in Europe, public monopolies dominated the media landscape, with programming focused on universal content for all social groups. This was consistent with the idea of providing society with a 'basic supply' of information and culture (the German concept of *Grundversorgung* for public broadcasters). Previously, these assumptions were reflected in the mission statements of public media. For example, the BBC, guided by the slogan 'inform, educate, and entertain', believed that radio and television would help modernise society by promoting education, secular values, and civic engagement.

The typical programming format thus encompassed news and educational programs, as well as television dramas and radio plays, all of which were intended to contribute to the modernisation of society (through education, promotion of secular culture, national integration). However, with the modernisation of the media market, especially after the emergence of the first commercial stations in the 1980s, utilised formats underwent a significant change. A clear polarisation emerged: on one end, educational and current affairs programmes, typical of the modernising mission of public media, and on the other, modern commercial broadcasts focused on mass entertainment.

The emergence of private broadcasters forced public media to modernise their programming. Competition with commercial channels offering low-brow entertainment forced public broadcasters to abandon their former patronising and elitist programming style in favour of more attractive and viewer-friendly content.

New approaches to the theory of modernisation are particularly important in the context of political transformation and integration with the European economic and political space in Poland.

The modernisation process has acquired specific characteristics, combining elements of national tradition with European standards of democracy and market economy. The influence of public media and educational institutions is crucial here, and their role is evolving in tandem with technological progress.

Polish Radio and Television as Tools for Modernisation in the 1950s, 60s and 70s

In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, both Polish Radio and Polish Television were key institutions responsible for educating and informing a society undergoing intense socio-economic changes. The aims of these institutions were consistent with the fundamental tenets of modernisation theory in at least three key areas:

1. **Education** – public media were a tool for disseminating knowledge, especially in the fields of science and technology. Educational programs supported industrialisation and economic modernisation.
2. **Social integration** – radio and television were fostering a shared language and national values.
3. **Mindset modernisation** – the media were shaping the image of modern society, promoting values related to urbanisation and industrialisation, as well as scientific and technological progress.

Polish Radio's and Television's actions focusing on education and public outreach in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s can be interpreted as an important element of the modernisation process that took place in Poland during that period. These institutions acted as means for educating, integrating, and transforming social consciousness. However, it is worth noting that this modernisation had a specific, state-driven nature and was linked to the dominant Marxist-Leninist ideology, which distinguished it from the spontaneous modernisation processes in other countries. This perspective allows a better understanding of the role of radio and television in the socio-economic transformation of Poland during the postwar period, and their significance in the context of the modernisation theory.

On the other hand, the experiences of other countries (Germany, France, Great Britain) show that such educational 'shock' leads to a massive increase in demand for higher-level goods and services. The influence of education 'academises' public life, radio and television programming, artistic patronage, entertainment forms, leisure, and even political party agendas. In turn, regional and local awareness (France, Germany), manifested in the emergence of regional governments and entire local social, cultural, and educational programmes, favours the decentralisation and subsequent diversification of cultural and educational centres.

These phenomena occurred in Poland much later, during the political transformation of the 1990s. During that period, the programming spectrum (most significantly in the case of television) expanded significantly. A completely different world emerged, starting with multi-channel television, then again, after the transition from analogue to digital technology, with the widespread adoption of the Internet and its globalisation, and finally, in the 21st century, with social media and streaming services, an interconnected media landscape.

Empirical basis of the article

Several sources and research methods were used to study the role of state-owned public media in the modernisation processes of post-war Poland.

Analysis of programming content

Educational and popular science programmes: a review of selected archival programmes such as *Radiowy Uniwersytet Ludowy* (People's Radio University), *Eureka*, *Sonda* (Probe), and *Wszechnica Radiowa* (Radio Academy) from 1945–1970, scripts and programme summaries made available via trade publications.

Reach and audience demographic data

Statistical yearbooks of the Polish People's Republic: data from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) regarding the dynamics of growth in the number of radio and television sets installed, along with literacy, education and urbanisation rates, allowed assessment of not only the reach but also the social selectivity of media influence.

Surveys: Public opinion research conducted throughout the Communist era by OBOP (Centre for Public Opinion Research), and, in its twilight, also by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre), particularly polls examining attitudes toward radio and television, trust in the media, and satisfaction with educational programs immediately after the transformation. Analysis of this data allows an assessment of the extent to which audiences have valued the media as a source of knowledge and perceive them as a factor in modernisation.

Institutional archives and strategic documents

Resolutions of the Radio and Television Committee, programming guidelines, Polish Radio Yearbooks, reports on the implementation of 'educational' and 'culture-building' goals, as well as Polish Radio and Polish Television development strategies. These allow us to reconstruct the government's official goals and expectations for the media, as well as the discrepancies between declared intentions and practical application.

Annual reports and internal bulletins: documents presenting the program structure, budget and staffing in individual editorial offices (e.g. Educational Editorial Office, Popular Science Editorial Office).

Qualitative research (interviews and media ethnography)

Interviews with creators and broadcasters: conversations with journalists, editors and hosts (e.g. with Maria Bobrowska and Eliza Bojarska, directors and producers of the Polish Radio Theatre) following their publications, which provided insight into the decision-making processes and the practicalities of production.

Informal conversations with contemporary audiences: the recollections of *Radio University* listeners and *Eureka* viewers have been found particularly valuable, especially of those recipients who, thanks to these programmes, gained access to knowledge which would otherwise remain unavailable to them.

Analysis of macroeconomic and social indicators

Rates of urbanisation, industrialisation and infrastructure development: comparison with the expansion of the network of TV transmitters and radio stations.

Educational indicators: percentage of population with secondary and higher education compared with the intensity of educational programmes.

Comparative studies

The *Grundversorgung* model (Germany), the BBC (Great Britain), and the ORTF (France): an analysis of similarities and differences in the implementation of their modernisation mission as well as the structure and scope of educational programming. This comparison allows us to place the Polish case in a broader European context and highlight the unique characteristics of the PPR's model.

Research methodology

Mixed approach: combining quantitative data (GUS statistics) with qualitative data (programme content analysis).

Source triangulation: collating official institutional documents with internal reports, archival materials, and accounts of contributors and audiences.

Diachronic analysis: distinguishing key phases (1945–1948, 1949–1956, 1956–1970, 1970–1980, the years after the enactment of martial law, and the transformation period) to examine the evolution of stated aims and programming forms.

Polish Radio

Even in the 1930s, radio developed its own distinctive, one-of-a-kind (one might even call it pro-social or melioric) style of cultural and educational programming. Postwar Polish Radio, regardless of its changing organisational structure and the

required accommodations for the new government, served an educational function, defined in the 1940s and 1950s as the dissemination of education, thus, in one way or another, strongly influencing the intellectual culture of Polish society at large. This culture includes, among other things, modes of thinking and understanding the world, attitudes toward scientific knowledge and scholars, the needs and motives for furthering one's education, the renewal of knowledge or, in general terms, self-development. Throughout its postwar history, Polish Radio has distinguished itself by offering cognitive, linguistic, and popular science programmes, addressed to a diverse range of listeners, from preschoolers to students of the Universities of the Third Age. Broadcasts providing musical education to preschool-age children, created by Maria Wieman, a music and singing teacher at a Żoliborz kindergarten of the Warsaw Housing Cooperative, together with a renowned actor and singer Andrzej Bogucki, broadcast at the time from the studio of the Polish Radio's central broadcasting station (at the time located on Warsaw's Myśliwiecka Street) have gone down in radio history.

Immediately after the war, whether willingly or not, radio served as, in a sense, a substitute or support for schools, universities, and other educational institutions. Later, across a variety of formats and series, it offered advisory programming, particularly in the areas of law, agriculture and horticulture, parenting, family issues, wellbeing, and medicine.

In postwar Polish Radio, programmes related to science were essentially educational, although the title of the first of these programmes, *Nauka przy głośniku* (Studying by a Loudspeaker), could be interpreted in two ways. In 1946, *Radiowy Uniwersytet Ludowy* (People's Radio University) began its broadcast, featuring lectures in various fields, from history, through natural sciences and sociology, to literature. Its positive reception prompted Polish Radio management, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, to establish the *Wszechnica Radiowa* (Radio Academy) in 1948, which was open to anyone with access to a radio set, regardless of education. Lectures were broadcast daily in the evenings and replayed the following mornings. Programmes touched upon a wide variety of areas: career counselling, occupational health and safety, combating work-related health issues, and so on (Grzelewska, 1999).

This project built upon the legacy of pre-war popular science programmes created within the Education Department established on the initiative of a historian, Professor Henryk Mościcki, who, while no longer appearing on the radio himself after 1945, still wrote for the weekly *Radio i świat* (Radio and the World) (Bojarska, 1995).

As part of the reckoning with Stalinism, the *Academy's* achievements were assessed at the end of 1957. The results were not positive, and the newly minted president of the Radio and Television Committee, Włodzimierz Sokorski (until that time a Stalinist Minister of Culture), even spoke of the unprofitability of the

entire enterprise, justifying its closure by claiming it was 'overloaded' with ideology (Grzelewska, 1999).

In 1950, a new organisational structure was being introduced for Polish Radio, including the creation of the Political and Social-Educational Programs Directorate, which provided for six editorial offices, including the Educational Editorial Office. This symbiosis, or proximity, of educational and political broadcasting was remarkably telling (*ibid.*).

The media certainly operated differently between 1945–1948 than in the 1949–1955 period, with even more changes introduced after 1956, in the 1970s, as well as during and after martial law.

Sokorski considered Polish Radio's leading achievements in the years 1955–1960 (directly preceding and following the Polish thaw) to be its youth programming (Grzelewska, 1999). At one point, these broadcasts were the speciality of the Wrocław branch, with its emblematic *Trybuna Młodych* (*Youth Tribune*), and, after 1956, of Studio 202, in which Andrzej Waligórski and, later, Ewa Szumańska played significant roles (Wiktorczyk, 1995).

Based on an analysis of contemporary historical radio plays aimed at that younger audience, Szpociński characterised the difference between the aforementioned phases of radio programming in postwar Poland through their understanding of the concept of 'social justice', a key ideological category advocated in the years 1951–1955 and 1958–1960 (Szpociński, 2006). Throughout the former period, this term was used in reference to a 'revolutionary spirit', while in the latter it was associated with 'social progress'; while in the years 1951–1955 'revolutionary patriotism' was associated with the pursuit of justice, the vision presented in 1958–1960 was less clear-cut, no longer associating, e.g. a lack of the revolutionary spirit with national treason. Furthermore, the latter period witnessed a phenomenon Szpociński termed 'cultural patriotism' (*ibid.*).

It's also worth noting that, while in the earlier period the main attribute of moral worth was one's involvement in the struggle on the side of the classes deemed to be oppressed, in the second period there was a clear shift away from such an antagonistic vision of the world of values. Therefore, it became less confrontational, judgments were less univocal, and the value system became very complex (*ibid.*).

In 1959, the Radio University (Uniwersytet Radiowy) was established, where knowledge was imparted in the form of talks and lectures on both existing channels: Station I and II, authored by renowned scholars, including Professors Tadeusz Kotarbiński, Kazimierz Michałowski, Witold Doroszewski, and Władysław Tatarkiewicz, although their texts were read by narrators. This situation changed when, in the mid-1960s, the Education Department was established and the Radio hired young journalists interested in popularising science. They introduced entirely new genres, such as magazines, including the memorable *Widnokrąg* (*Horizon*), *Ziemia – Człowiek – Wszechświat* (*Earth – Man – Universe*), *Alfa i Omega* (*Alpha and Omega*), *Radiowa encyklopedia aktualności* (*Radio Encyclopedia of Current*

Affairs), *Kronika współczesności* (Contemporary Chronicle), and *Słownik wyrazów ważnych* (Dictionary of Important Words) (Bojarska, 1995).

In 1976, the management of Polish Radio decided to launch a special, thematic station with an educational focus. Thus, 'Czwórka', Polish Radio's Program IV, was created. During its initial period of operation (until 2004), it broadcast, in various formats and genres, primarily popular science programming, aimed not only at students and teachers but also at a broader audience interested in learning about recent scientific breakthroughs and achievements, not limited to those of Polish scientists. Series such as *Radiowe portrety Polaków* (Poles' Radio Portraits), *Portrety uczonych* (Portraits of Scholars), *Ludzie nauki* (People of Science), and others showcased their subjects' personalities and accomplishments (ibid.).

Foreign languages were also taught. As early as 1946, Russian language classes had been launched, and Czech language classes were offered on several southern regional radio stations as well. Later on, English language courses would be introduced, too (Grzelewska, 1999).

Two main streams have emerged in Program IV's ventures. One based itself on direct contact with the listener, e.g. *Studio ekspertów* (Experts' Studio) or *Dziś pytanie, dziś odpowiedź* (Today's Question, Today's Answer), and the other featured single- or multi-part programmes broadcast in a magazine format.

In 2004, the format of the station, which had minimal listenership at the time, was changed to a youth-oriented one, with a large number of music programs spanning a variety of genres (hip-hop, electronic, alt-rock). The new station was named Radio BIS (English: Radio ENCORE).

Finally, it would be appropriate to mention here the programmes that, according to some, were quintessential to the Radio in general, and which tangibly influenced both the intellectual level and sensitivity of at least a certain portion of the medium's audience. I am thinking of the so-called literary reportages, created by such authors as Witold Zadrowski, Andrzej Mularczyk, Bronisław Wiernik, Jacek Stwora, Jerzy Janicki, Krystyna Melion, Krystyna Usarek; later on by Anna Semkowicz, Anna Sekudewicz, Janina Jankowska, Witold Ślusarski, Adam Wielowieyski; most recently by Irena Piłatowska and Katarzyna Michalak; but also of literary programming such as *Proszę mówić – słuchamy* (Please Speak – We Are Listening), *Parnasik* (Little Parnassus), the literary magazine *Quod libet, czyli co kto lubi* (As One Likes It), featuring renowned actors such as Alina Janowska, Danuta Szaflarska, Andrzej Szczepkowski and Wieńczysław Gliński, and *Anegdoty teatralne* (Theater Anecdotes) as narrated by the famed Jerzy Leszczyński.

Of course, the greatest contribution to shaping modern (and later also post-modern) attitudes was made by 'Trójka', or Polish Radio's Program III, established in 1958. It was initially intended as a high-brow literature and music channel, featuring original programming, music concerts, and so on by means of VHF waves. After it began operating in the Warsaw area (with rebroadcasts in Katowice and Opole), it was then transformed into a nationwide station in 1962 (Myśliński, 1995).

It would go on to receive a cult-classic status before being ruthlessly wracked, first in the years 2005–2008, and then 2016–2023.

During its golden age, the station was run by veteran radio hosts. Initially, this included Edward Fiszler, Jan Mietkowski and Ewa Ziegler, with Andrzej Turski, Wiktor Legowicz, Grzegorz Miecugow, Piotr Kaczkowski, and Magda Jethon joining ‘Trójka’ in later years.

Program III, intended as a ‘safety valve’ by the government, proposed a vastly different format from the two existing stations, targeting its programming at university students and young intellectuals. Better known as an original music station, it has never shied away from spoken word of the highest quality, providing coverage of artistic culture, humanities, history, arts, literature, and theatre.

Polish Television

The pioneering era of television in Poland, the 1950s, was centred around information and social journalism, first through *Wiadomości Dnia* (News of the Day), then the weekly *Panorama Świata* (Survey of the World), and finally *Dziennik Telewizyjny* (Television Journal), launched in January 1958 (Kurek, 1986).

The launch of *Dziennik* was, of course, a political decision, and it remained politicised throughout the Communist era, and even during the transformation, though under its new name, *Wiadomości* (The News). In the late 1950s, various magazine formats began to appear, containing a wide range of content, from purely political, propaganda-oriented programming, through culture-focused (*Kronika kulturalna* [Cultural Chronicle], *Pegaz* [Pegasus]), and entertainment series, to popular science shows (*Eureka*, from September 1956). The latter brought together and promoted the most distinguished academics, including Julian Krzyżanowski, Szczepan Pieniążek, Witold Doroszewski, Włodzimierz Zonn and Jan Żabiński (Kozieł, 2003).

The program *W połowie wieku* (Mid-Century) addressed similar subjects, discussing the current state of knowledge in technical and natural sciences. *Jak patrzeć na dzieło sztuki* (How to Look at a Work of Art), which featured Professors Jan Białostocki and Stanisław Lorenz, taught the evaluation of artworks based on an established canon, while *Jak to się stało?* (How Did It Happen?) with the participation of Professors Janusz Tazbir, Aleksander Gieysztor and Stefan Kieniewicz, among others, covered events from Polish history (ibid.).

In the 1960s, magazine-format shows associated with the dissemination of science consisted of *Eureka*, now with Jerzy Wunderlich, Ignacy Waniewicz, Rafał Skibiński, and *Klinika zdrowego człowieka* (Healthy Person’s Clinic), also by Wunderlich (ibid.).

Other popular science programmes aired on Polish television originated from *Eureka* as well: *Człowiek, Ziemia, Kosmos* (Man, Earth, Space) by Teodor Zubowicz,

Przyjemne z pożytecznym (Business with Pleasure) by Andrzej Mosz, and finally *Sonda* (Probe) (ibid.).

Content related to the broadly understood humanities or art most often appeared in *Pegaz*, where writers (Tadeusz Breza), filmmakers (Antoni Bohdziewicz) and art critics (Andrzej Oseka) appeared, but also in *Panorama Literacka* (Literary Survey) ran by Andrzej Drawicz and Roman Samsel, the *Klapy* (Clapboard) magazine by Grzegorz Dubowski, devoted to film, the *Portrety* (Portraits) series showcasing a wide breadth of artists (writers, painters, sculptors), and finally in the excellent *Spotkania z obrazkami* (Meetings with Pictures) by Aleksander Małachowski and Elżbieta Dryll (Michalski, 2012).

Paradoxically, in the 1960s television increasingly served educational purposes, popularising knowledge and science both through the magazine-format shows and educational films. These include *Magazyn Postępu Techniczne* (Technical Progress Magazine), *Wszechświat w którym żyjemy* (The Universe We Live In), *Historie z tej ziemi* (Stories from This Earth), and, as part of the *Wszechnica, Piórkem i węglem* (With Pen and Charcoal), created by Professor Wiktor Zin and based on the idea of editor Czesław Kruszelnicki from TVP Kraków. Finally, there was *Trust Mozgów Odpowiada* (The Brain Trust Answers), where eminent scientists answered viewers' questions and considered current civilizational issues. The then-very popular *Plebiscyt Archimedes* (Archimedes' Plebiscite) broadcast late at night (and at times spontaneously extended), aimed to 'pass judgment' on prominent historical figures, creators, and artists, as presented by expert scientists. A long and fascinating discussion between Professor Stefan Morawski and editor Zygmunt Kałużyński about the figure and work of Pablo Picasso has gone down in television history.

It is also worth mentioning the series of documentaries prepared by the duo of Lucyna Smolińska and Bolesław Sroka, such as *Wielcy znani i nieznan* (The Greats Known and Unknown), *W pracowniach polskich uczonych* (In the Workshops of Polish Scientists), etc. In the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, the 'second cultural system' (to borrow Professor Antonina Kłoskowska's term), that is, the supra-local cultural organisations and institutions of a higher order (cinemas, theatres, galleries, concert halls) shrank immeasurably (Kłoskowska, 1981). This was more a result of cultural and educational policies than any changes within culture itself. State patronage could no longer sustain these institutions, nor could they finance themselves. The situation worsened amidst the growing television monoculture, offering populist content to the masses. This was all the more facilitated by the fact that at that point for years (in fact throughout the entire period of the Polish People's Republic), the decommercial model of culture provided audiences with cultural goods almost free of charge, transforming them into indifferent consumers and passive clients of cultural and educational institutions.

In the 1970s, the above-mentioned pro-social or melioric style of programming was still present, although it began serving different purposes. Essentially, the series launched in the 1960s continued, but new ones were also introduced, including

travel-themed series like *Klub 6 kontynentów* (The 6 Continent Club) by the American returnee Ryszard Badowski and *Żołnierz wyklęty* (The Cursed Soldier) by Stanisław Szwarc-Bronikowski, later joined by Toni Halik and Elżbieta Dzikowska's *Pieprz i wanilia* (Pepper and Vanilla), as well as Hanna and Antoni Gucwiński's *Z kamerą wśród zwierząt* (Among the Animals with a Camera) and *Świat, który nie może zginąć* (The World That Cannot Perish).

Many historical programmes appeared at that time, for example, *Opowieść o bitwie pod Monte Cassino* (The Story of the Battle of Monte Cassino) featuring Melchior Wańkowicz or the controversial *Spotkania z generałem* (Meetings with the General) presenting the stories of General Zygmunt Berling.

Wanda Konarzewska's popular science series, *Fakty, opinie, hipotezy* (Facts, Opinions, Hypotheses), along with Studio 2's *Nie do wiary* (Unbelievable), have gone down in television history.

In 1977, *Sonda*, a successor to *Eureka*, began to air, created by young journalists Andrzej Kurek and Zdzisław Kamiński (both would later die tragically in a traffic accident). Conceived as a discussion between the hosts sparked by a chosen scientific problem or a new technological development, it was received as surprisingly new and fascinating.

It is also worth mentioning here the educational and popular science content broadcast in the 1970s on both the TVP Channel II and on Polish Radio as part of the lectures created by NURT (Nauczycielski Uniwersytet Radiowo-Telewizyjny, English: Teachers' Radio and Television University), the *Komputer dla wszystkich* (The Computer for Everyone) magazine, foreign language courses, as well as nature films and documentaries purchased primarily from the BBC, notably those by David Attenborough.

The first half of the 1980s destroyed these values and style in a virtually irreversible manner. Intrusive political propaganda, indoctrination, emphasis on the necessity of the introduction of martial law as the 'lesser evil', dissemination of the concept of a 'bad citizen' and a 'good state', the idea of order at the price of freedom. All the unapproved programme offerings on radio and television were to be compensated, in radio's case, by a new-generation of rock music, even featuring elements of social protest, and on television – with 'easy' shows capable of attracting mass audiences, such as *Isaura the Slave Girl*.

During this and later period, until the end of the Polish People's Republic, aside from the ongoing, oppressive propaganda (most notably in the sphere of artistic culture), programming policy was reduced to catering to the lowest common denominator. In the twilight of the Polish People's Republic, predictions by Andrzej Tyszka (1987), Andrzej Ziemilski (1987), Andrzej Siciński (1988), and Marcin Czerwiński (1985) among others, suggested that the liberal economic model, at least in the first phase of its development, would likely complete the 'total destruction' of the 'second cultural system' by reinforcing the television monoculture, unless some political compensation occurred, for example, in the form of the establishment of strong

local governments and their institutions, including cultural ones, along with significant reforms in the education system.

The trends toward a strengthening television monoculture were, paradoxically, reinforced in the 1990s by the compensatory offerings of radio, and especially television, forced by the ongoing pauperisation of society at large. It encouraged creators to 'descend' to cultural lows, producing populist, exclusively mollifying content. Faced with increasing competition from the private sector, public media began to offer more entertainment-oriented content, often devoid of any deeper educational dimension. Consequently, the liberalisation of the media system and the economic transformation limited the role of public media in shaping the intellectual and educational spheres.

Today, in the third decade of the 21st century, the situation has changed dramatically. Social media, streaming services, and on-demand content have transformed the way people consume media.

Media users, especially the younger and youngest ones, are increasingly turning to social and contextual media, augmented and virtual reality, as well as, more recently, various artificial intelligence tools and platforms, to access current information, educational programs, and various forms of entertainment.

As the media world enters a post-television era, public media have the opportunity to play a significant role in securing audience engagement, approaching audiences previously unreachable through digital means. The principles that constitute public service media, including the commitment to providing credible, accurate coverage based on high-quality journalism, remain relevant.

Conclusions

The functioning of public/state media in Poland between 1945 and 1989, viewed from a historical perspective, reveals their dual nature, as instruments both of education and modernisation, and of political propaganda. During the Communist era, public media played a crucial role in popularising knowledge and integrating society, contributing to the broader process of modernisation. At the same time, their activities were subordinate to the ideological goals of the state, which limited their autonomy.

The educational and science-promoting efforts of Polish Radio and Television in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s can be understood, but only to a certain extent, in the context of modernisation theory as formulated by sociologists such as Daniel Bell and Wilbur Schramm, drawing on the earlier work of Daniel Lerner, among others. The key assumptions of modernisation theory relate to the processes of transition from traditional to modern societies, in which mass media play a central role as a tool supporting this transition.

Programming of Polish Radio and Polish Television, primarily focused on science, knowledge, and culture, was intended to compensate for its propaganda-oriented informational and journalistic ventures. However, due to political conditions and ideological constraints, it could not ensure programming pluralism stemming from social and cultural diversity.

Meanwhile, ultimately, public broadcasters should foster and cultivate human creativity, imagination, and cultural pluralism. The fundamental values that define the meaning of educational programs are universal access to information and the right to education. These values condition the existence of others, such as commitment to democratization processes, respect for diversity, and acceptance of the principle of equal opportunities for all human beings.

The realisation of these values was made possible much later.

The most important and at the same time the most difficult task for public broadcasters of educational programming is the translation of these ideas and values into specific content, aimed at very demanding and, at the same time, very diverse audiences.

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