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Television Entertainment Shows in Romania **before and after the Revolution Moment in 1989**

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“You want this people to stop from laughing? To wean of laughter! Of lie, of ridiculous, of stupid, of theft, of your high-flown words. Well this nation keeps laughing for 2000 years, LAUGHS with or without anyone’s consent. And when it was needed, they already took the axe in their hands. And you want them to stop laughing, to stop loving, to start walking on the street with long faces just like yours of impotent saints. The Romanian people to stop laughing you say? To burn Caragiale¹ in the square, what should the Romanian people do? To sing psalms every day? To worship your master, Lăstrele, or however the hell they call him? Is this what you want? A grey and sad Romania? No play, no laughter...no joys... Come on archangels, shoot! What are you waiting for? Shoot! The bullet against laughter! Here you go!”²

¹ Ion Luca Caragiale (1852-1912) – playwright, poet, political commentator and journalist

² Toma Caragiu in the movie “Actorul și sălbaticii” – “The actor and the savages” (1975)

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1. Preface

Romania is often regarded as an island or oasis of Latinity in a realm of Slavic languages and countries in the region of the Balkans. As an East European country, it suffered a lot of changes through the dominations of the Turkish, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires but it was always ready to face the challenges and defend its riches, traditions, culture, borders and language. In the heart of the Balkan region, Romania has been caught between East and West, communism and democracy, obedience and revolt. Member of the European Union from 2007 and NATO from 2004, it has always recognized its tumultuous history as well as its qualities and flaws.

The events of 1989 were enthusiastically received around the world because the tyrannical regime collapsed under great revolutionary moments. A great feeling of starting new and making a better world was embraced. “The suffocating paralysis that had griped half a continent for half a century, and which had provoked an equal paralysis in the other half, would now be replaced by a new energy and dynamism. Everything, or at least everything good, was now possible.”³

Mass media, and in particularly television, played an important role in understanding societies. Mass media are “constitutive of the experience of modernity” because it presents social life and its interaction with aspects of the world outside, permitting a new level of knowledge. Their features present valuable evidence about communist societies, which had a different kind of juncture between politics and economics than the ones in the West. These differences can be seen clearly in the case of the mass media.⁴

In Romania, a period of a couple months after the revolution in 1989, the current public television was called The Free Romanian Television, marking the desire to transform the former state television in a “public television”, after the model of those existing in the Western democracies. However, after thirty years under a totalitarian communist regime, the transition towards an independent television was not an easy task. During the communist regime, in the Socialist Republic of Romania, television was governmental and party-oriented, an instrument of propaganda and ideological manipulation. The main functions of television were abusively deformed: information was partial and biased, with strong effects of misinformation; the mission

³ Colin Sparks, “Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media”, 1998, p. 1

⁴ Ibid., p. 16

of education had forms of indoctrination with ideological principles of the unique party; the entertainment also suffered through the censorship of the jokes and through promotion of bad taste.⁵

After the revolutionary events from December 1989, which led to the collapse of the communist regime and to the emergence of the first “timid” democratic institutions, the legislative void regarding the audiovisual public in Romania, was remedied through the enactment of Law 41 from 1994, through which the “radiotelevision” from the communist period was split in SRR (The Romanian Society of Broadcasting) and SRTV (The Romanian Society of Television), the two institutions following to divide their old common patrimony. It was only after another ten years, in 2004, when the public television went through a process of rebranding, trying to redefine its market position and its new identity of media society with four public TV stations and four regional TV studios.⁶

In the end, television is and should be just like Alex Șefanescu⁷ writes in Alexandra Orban’s book:

“I am dreaming of a television which has a paradoxical effect upon the public: to attract it, and equally to reject. First of all, of course, to attract. Television must be a non-stop show of the human existence. A super series with six billiard characters who plough the earth, get Nobel prizes, make love, take part in wars between brothers, paint angels, die of thirst in the desert, fly in cosmos. Everything that means something for the people, everything that is happy, painful, alarming or uplifting for them must find its place on the rectangle of luminescent glass.

The cultural shows could be one of the most powerful ways of seduction. In this moment, they are rather intimidating or bore and it is infinitely regrettable that this is happening. Literature, music, theatre, ballet were not invented by people to intimidate or to bore. Their original goal was to make communication possible, to install a feast atmosphere, to captivate. The cultural shows could be more captivating then the crime films.

⁵ I. Rad cited in Valentin Nicolau, “TVR. Mărire și decădere. Televiziunea publică în România și modele europene”, 2009, p. 34

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Romanian literary critic

The television that I dreamed about, has, however, the force to reject the viewer. Its message is: «I showed you what is happening inside the country and in the world. Have you seen what a big necessity of active people is, to raise children, to extinguish the fire, to build barrages, to fight with the terrorists or even to make films for television? Now, go and live the true life, do not watch the TV shows endlessly.»

Too many people sit still for hours, with corpse-like faces, in front of televisions. They sit like this not because the show is attractive, but because it fulfils the function of a drug. The ideal television is that which calls people in its magic darkness and in the same time, it drives them away, in the morning light of the action.”⁸

⁸ Alex Ștefănescu, “Televiziunea ideală” in Alexandra Orban, “Mărturii esențiale. Personalități emblematice ale culturii la TVR”, p 126-127

2. Summary

A crucial shift in the European society was brought with the collapse of communism in the late 1980s. The separation and conflict between East and West during the Cold War, was a thing of the past in post-war Europe and a crucial actor for this matter was the media. “Some argue that television was responsible for the rapid collapse of the Soviet-styled regimes in Eastern Europe by empowering the peoples of these societies to get out onto the streets and demonstrate.”⁹

It was a unique moment for the people in East Europe, realising that they were not segregated in their fight for freedom and initiating opposition against the communist regimes. Although these regimes supervised the flow of information coming into their countries once the technological developments intensified, still, Western television played an essential part. It showed the East European nations that there was room for more and better regarding their lifestyle, causing a destructive effect on political and social stability, which ultimately weakened communism.¹⁰

In consequence, television meant communication; it means even to this day the transmission of ideas, the public influence, and the challenge of certain emotions. In the end, informing and persuasion are the two keywords.¹¹ What differentiate it from radio and the written press and what resembles to a certain degree with web production, is the visual construction, the work with the motion picture accompanied by the surrounding sound, which gives strength to the message and a maximum power of persuasion.¹²

Entertainment is a branch, which according to some, is a good method of indoctrinating and according to others, just an area of relaxation, of fun and ideology-free zone. Most of the persons interviewed for this research stressed the fact that entertainment is still on every Romanian’s mind when thinking about television before 1989 with the comic sketches played by the titans of acting and the “lizards” (“șopârlițe” – an euphemistic term for a totally different meaning of a word or a phrase, usually understood by a large segment of the population) that were the Romanian people’s way of expressing on television their frustrations and interior battles through laughter and irony. In this way, entertainment can also be seen as a relevant actor for educating the public by creating an ability to decode the messages of the entertainment shows. Moreover,

⁹ Kevin Williams, “European Media Studies”, 2005, p. 98

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gerald Millerson cited in Nicolae Melinescu, “O viziune despre televiziune”, 2013, p.57

¹² Nicolae Melinescu, “O viziune despre televiziune”, 2013, p.121

entertainment provoked powerful and diverse reactions after 1989, when some experienced a cultural degradation and others a long-desired democratization.

With my thesis I would like to contribute to a better understanding of the different aspects that influenced the evolution of the television in Romania and the differences in the entertainment shows before and after the revolution moment, as well as the messages broadcast in these television entertainment shows.

3. Introduction

One of the most interesting and crucial aspects of being a human being is the ability to communicate. Communication is the key, as one may put it, because it plays an important role in our lives and determines our choices and the consequences that come with them. However, the realm of Communication implies numerous aspects and as I could see in the third semester of my Master's Programme, it is not an easy task to grasp it. Nonetheless, I decided for my Master Thesis, at the History Department of Roskilde University, to write about a segment in this vast subject, and that is Media and its quite important component: Television.

The worldwide development of media, especially the television sets and television distribution systems confirm at first sight the theories of contemporary media culture which pinpoint homogeneity. The increased uses of cable and satellite, from the middle of the 1980s, have amplified transnational television flows. "In 1990 there were more than 750 million television sets in over 160 countries, watched by over 2.5 billion people per day."¹³

Television plays in contemporary societies the role of the mediator between the different elements of the social body but also the role of the mirror of the social realities and of aspirations, sometimes of frustrations and anguishes. Situated in the centre of the communication universe, television gained rapidly the statute of a sociologic watch, pointing out the daily rhythms: the everyday meals are marked by the generic sound of specific shows, after a certain movie or talk-show it is time to go to bed etc. That is why a custom of any TV programme schedule is to "insert" the diverse shows in the different categories of viewer's custom. So, television should copy the viewer's everyday life, mimicking the physiological, psychological and social rhythms.¹⁴

The mirror-television reflects through the daily informative shows, the documentaries and the TV magazines and also through fiction, entertainment programmes and sport shows, the diverse faces of a multiform reality. That is why this relation between television and viewer includes an array of social phenomenon regarding history, lifestyle and collective memory. "For a viewer,

¹³ Jonathan Bignell, "Postmodern Media Culture", 2000, p. 167-168

¹⁴ Valentin Nicolau, "TVR. Mărire și decădere. Televiziunea publică în România și modele europene", 2009, p.17

even if it firstly represents a way of entertainment (the cheapest), television offers the privilege of being in resonance with his or her world and era.”¹⁵

“Television is still mainly a domestic technology, where the TV set is a piece of furniture in the home, and one of a number of different kinds of technological device (like the radio, microwave or stereo system) which are integrated into everyday life.” Bignell quotes Althusser (1971), pinpointing that television transfers its points of view upon the viewers on a subject as well as making them join an imaginary community who watch these subject matters at the same time. This ideology makes the viewers individual subjects, “subject to ideology and constituted as subjects by ideology as the unique destination to which signs are addressed.” The TV viewer is a meaning consumer as well as generator because it is he or she who watches television, produces meanings and decodes them. “Ideologically, television is coded as a provider of very diverse offerings to the individual subject, who is continually asked to shift subject-position in relation to the rapidly-changing semiotic fragments which he or she is asked to decode. The mythic meaning here is that TV is a gift rather than a commodity.”¹⁶

Being from Romania, a country that went through Communism and then changed its ways to Capitalism in a dramatic fashion, through a worldwide discussed popular revolution, I realized that it has a big history behind it and a much bigger story to tell, especially from the point of view of Television. So, for my thesis I will concentrate on the television phenomenon in Romania, having as the core event that stands at the base, the 1989 Revolution, which acted as a catalyser for the transition and the rapid changes in the country.

“The expansion of television technology and television viewership provides the evidence for sociological work on modernity to explore the consequences of new cultural forms on societies, for society, regarded as a separable and methodologically distinct whole, has been the standard object which such theories address.” Live television broadcasting of different and various events challenges the alternative understandings of space as one form of time overlaying onto another when broadcasts cross time zones. An ample array of discourses about culture - social relations, youth, gender, consumption – are seen through broadcasting and these permit a certain reflection on local cultural ways of behaviour, as well as supplying the means for the construction of identities, adopting or opposing those available from television.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 18

¹⁶ Jonathan Bignell, “Media Semiotics. An Introduction.”, 1997, p. 144-147

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 170

In addition, the events in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s have shown a desperate call for freedom and human rights after a long period of communist domination. The protests and demonstrations were in some parts peaceful and in other parts implied conflicts between enraged protesters and police along with the army and special services. Moreover, radio and television stations were seized so that information would not go either out or inside the countries. Romania is an example of great conflict which ended with the execution of the country's dictator.¹⁸

“All these upheavals reached their high point with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the symbol of the post-war divide between West and East Europe, in 1989. Such was the speed with which the old regimes fell apart that many argue that the media “played a fundamental role in the collapse of the communist regimes of eastern Europe.”¹⁹ The media, in particular television, determined the aftermath by rapid information and diminishing the strength of the communist regimes.²⁰

Williams quotes also Baines, saying that television is “one of the catalysts to change in Eastern Europe”; by broadcasting the street demonstrations, television speeded up the change across Eastern Europe. It generated a “role model on how to challenge the state apparatus”. “Romanians, for example, were emboldened to come out onto the streets as a result of seeing on their TV screens what was happening in Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia. The importance of television was emphasized by demonstrators in Romania, according to Alter and Baines in Williams's book, seizing the TV station to assist their efforts to organize the so-called revolution. The new regime “actually governed from the TV station”, and the pictures shown of military defectors, the trial and – after his execution – the body of former dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, and crowds standing up to the machine-gun fire are deemed crucial in mobilizing and maintaining popular support for change.” Moreover, radio stations such as Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and the BBC “beamed in reports of the tumultuous events elsewhere in Eastern Europe”, which gave Romanians hope.²¹

In the course of time, the transmission of pictures of “a superior lifestyle and higher standard of living across the wall” made television a destructive power “on the political superstructure of Eastern Europe”. The long periods of “doublespeak” on their television screens, made the East European public receptive to the images and reports from the West. BBC, as one of the foreign

¹⁸ Kevin Williams, “European Media Studies”, 2005, p. 98

¹⁹ Horvath (1997) quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 98

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98-99

²¹ Alter (1990) and Baines (1990) cited in *ibid.* p. 99

broadcasters, advised upon critical judgement for the Eastern European listeners regarding their society and the events taking place, thereby eroding the foundations of these societies.²²

After 1989, the progress of the media in Eastern Europe had a dramatic turn, being entirely different from the communist era. “Private ownership and market economics gave come to dominate the operation of media systems. Media freedom has been asserted in the passing of new laws and media practices have changed in the new environment. While these changes represent the consolidation of the anti-communist revolution, the contribution of the media to the construction of a democratic political culture remains problematic.”²³

Individual particularities do not exist for the new media structures, just cases of pale imitations from the West. Their voices and type of journalism did not materialize even though censorship ceased. Still, the centre in which media revolves around is politics and the new democracies are ruled by politicians who “use their power and influence to control anti-government publications and broadcast stations.” Entertainment becomes the most important content in the East European media “which ensures they are less able to play their part in the construction of democratic structures and a democratic political culture.” The majority of the post-communist media systems are, to a higher or lower degree, “free but not independent.”²⁴

²² J. Tusa (2001: 15016) cited in *ibid.*, p. 99

²³ Jakubowicz (2001: 59) cited in *ibid.*, p. 113-114

²⁴ *Ibid.*

3.1 Research question

The aim of my work is to examine four entertainment TV shows and find the messages of those programmes mirrored before the revolution and after it (if they are different, if they changed), focusing at the same time on the evolution of the television in Romania. I am interested in what type of messages or ideologies they broadcast, as well as aspects about censorship, values and relations between the technical and artistic teams.

So, with my Master's Thesis I like to answer the following research questions:

- What type of messages did the entertainment TV programs in Romania produce before and after the 1989 Revolution?
- What was the impact of the entertainment TV shows and their messages upon the Romanian society?
- Can it be considered that the Revolution moment really changed the Romanian citizen behaviour to interact with its own culture and the universal culture?

3.2 The outline of the thesis

With this thesis, I would like to identify the type of Romanian entertainment that was broadcast before and after the revolution moment, as well as its impact and messages which brought the country the long-desired consciousness of its own historicity and particularity.

I have two big parts that shape my thesis and they are first, the thematic literature and the second, the result of the research. I will start with the research questions and the hypothesis, followed by the methodology chapter. Then, it continues with a short history of Romania and then the chapter about the significance of the year 1989. Two chapters, one about television worldwide and the other about television in Romania, are followed by a chapter about the public national television in Romania. Additionally, the analysis starts with a chapter about entertainment and then I will be talking about the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research, meaning the visualisation of the entertainment shows but also the functions of entertainment, the types, the censor and the relations between staff. Then, the conclusion chapter synthesizes the results of the comparative analysis of the entertainment shows before and after the revolution moment, along with the interviews and documents.

4. Methodology and sources

The origin of every research is what the Greeks used to call “methods”. On the one hand, the term means “the path towards knowledge” and on the other hand, “the musing on the search for knowledge accumulation”. The search methods can be seen as “techniques and procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data”.²⁵

For answering the central research question of the thesis in the best possible way, I have applied a mixture of several different research methods. First of all, there is the traditional method of extracting important information from the written works provided by the Romanian National Television library with important Romanian writers who wrote about the history of the Romanian television. Access to the library was permitted through the persons at the Department of Communication at the Public Romanian Television (TVR). This is the most common method of a research, through the accession of the thematic literature which permits to understand the key documents about the general theme and those related to it.²⁶

Then, there is the primary material, the visualization of four television entertainment shows provided by the Romanian National Television archive (Department of Communication), with the help of Claudiu Lucaci, director of the News Department at TVR. The first show is black and white from 1973, the second one is the New Year’s show from 1985, the third one is also a New Year’s show from 1988 and the last is a Christmas show from 1994. Besides these, I also watched a number humorous sketches with famous Romanian comedians, some of them having cryptic messages and some having language, situation, character and name type of comedy.

The three periods, before, during and after the revolution in 1989, are crucial to this thesis for getting a sense of what was happening regarding entertainment, what did it mean, what functions did it have, what were the manifestations, who intervened and so on.

During the visualization of these shows, some questions were raised to them: is it entertainment?, is it humour?, what triggers laughter?, what type of comedy is it? situation, language, character or a name type of comedy?, is it a personal critique? (drunkenness, scurrility), is it a social critique?, how are the protagonists? are they famous people, are they

²⁵ Blaikie (2000:8) cited in Jonathan Grix, “Demistificarea cercetării postuniversitare. De la masterat la doctorat”, translated by Nicolae Melinescu, p. 40-41

²⁶ Ibid., p. 65

amateurs?, what are they wearing? is it triumphalism, careless or mediocre not to show luxury? and so on.

The archival sources have the intent of bringing back to life the “dead” documents in order to classify the events, the personalities and the specific politics. The people from the Romanian National Television (TVR) archive were extremely helpful and prepared regarding my theme, questions and goal. Of course that the number of entertainment shows and written works were enormous and a certain rigorous selection had to be made. Along with them, I tried to choose some of the most emblematic for that time, identifying afterwards what was specific for the period and comparing the shows, besides analyzing the books.²⁷

Since I made an analysis of the images I watched, the concept of “image” should be considered as well. It is actually a word with multiple meanings, coming from the Latin “imago, imaginis” which means “instead of”. The Greeks used “eikon” for “something that reproduces, represents, giving the present a certain reality”. The image can be seen as a physical support (functional, iconic) or mental (codified, imaginary). In the modern societies, the image means information which helps the individual in decision-making, it is propaganda, publicity, public relations. In this way, the image permits communication, information, entertainment, inducement, acting as reality itself.²⁸ Moreover, because I watched and analyzed the images, I also took in consideration the way the shows were filmed; whether it was used a long shot, medium shot, close-up, from what angles they were filmed or if the camera was static or it moved.²⁹

The third method incorporates the conduct and analysis of semi-structured interviews. The persons who were interviewed for this thesis consisted of Marina Almășan, a TV producer and presenter, who from 1990 has experienced with different entertainment shows, Dan Nanoveanu, director’s assistant, film editor, camera operator and director of photography before 1989, Eugen Dumitru, director’s assistant and producer also before the Revolution and another producer and presenter of entertainment shows, Elise Stan. They were interviewed in Romanian via a recording device at the Public Romanian Television (TVR) headquarters or through e-mail. These persons were recommended by Nicolae Melinescu (important Romanian journalist and producer at TVR) for their connection to the topic.

Everyone from the interviewee began their career under the guidance and high professional surveillance of great entertainment directors, who produced schools and formats which even

²⁷ Ibid., p. 102

²⁸ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 5-6

²⁹ Ibid., p. 93-96

today are used also by other television stations, namely Alexandru Bocaneț³⁰ and Tudor Vornicu³¹.

The interviews were semi-structured, beginning with some personal details and ending with the research questions; these are the questions asked:

- Name, past and present job positions
- Why did you choose to work in television?
- Why did you choose, from all the departments of television, entertainment? Did it attract you more than the news department or other types of show?
- What impact did it have on your activity in television, working in the area of entertainment shows?
- Can you give me some examples of entertainment TV shows before and after the revolution?
- How do you think the moment of revolution influenced the entertainment shows?
- Can you draw a comparison between what it was before 1989 and what followed regarding entertainment?
- What type of messages and human values do you think that the entertainment shows broadcast before 1989 and how did they change after?
- Could you evaluate the impact of television upon the Romanian society?
- Can you describe the “road” which an entertainment show follows, from the idea to broadcast?
- How were the ideological instructions given? Who and when intervened for alterations? How was censorship applied?
- Which were the relations between the team of creators, both at a technical level as well as artistically?

The semi-structured interview gives a certain freedom and in the same time depth, following an unspecific predetermined order of the questions. There is flexibility and sometimes offers a new path of exploration during the interview. The results of the interviews were later compared and analyzed along with the entertainment shows.³²

These methods were used in a qualitative research, interpreting the subjective experiences, meaning the people’s perspectives. So, the interviews, the archive exploration and the analysis of

³⁰ Romanian director (1944-1977)

³¹ Romanian television journalist, producer and director (1926-1989)

³² Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 96

other key documents are specific to this kind of research. All the collective data was interpreted in their social and cultural context over a certain time span. Through this research I was able to interact with the study object.³³

The hypothesis from which I started for my Master Thesis, is that the Romanian television and implicitly the entertainment programmes and shows changed after the Revolution in 1989. I got this idea mainly because every year, millions of Romanians and I experience a constant phenomenon on the Romanian television: the revolution is broadcast at the exact period, with the same images, same scenes and same people watching from the comfort of their own sofa a piece of history which eventually changed their country, their lives and which is still discussed even after all these years with the same fervour. This little grain of idea came also from an essay that I had to write for my Communication module and it involved Media, Globalization and Development. Books like “Globalization: the key concepts” (2007) by Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Media and Glocal Change. Rethinking Communication for Development” (2005) by Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte, “Understanding Cultural Globalization” (2007) by Paul Hopper and an extremely interesting article from Anne Jäckel with the title “Romania: from Tele-Revolution to Public Service Broadcasting, National Images and International Image” (2001), were my inspiration and the mind-opener that in fact, I wanted to write about Romania, my home country, because I can relate to it and I can bring something new to the table, for this small but powerful fragment of history which had its repercussions also on this Latin country or how we, Romanians, like to call it “an oasis of Latinity in a Slavic area”.

The major research assumption is that before the 1989 revolution, the Romanian television was under a strong communist regime which acted as puppeteer regarding the hours broadcast, the type of programmes, the propaganda and so on. However, even if after the Revolution, when capitalism brought the so called “freedom”, television became flooded with a lot of shows, commercials and how almost all the people I interviewed said, “non-values”.

³³ Ibid., p. 42-44

5. Romania - Short History

Even from the geography, one can tell that Romania, along the years, had crucial roles in history because of its position and its, what it seems like, endless fight towards unification and independence and towards maintaining its borders.

Starting from the beginning, there were two kin, Dacians and Getae in the north of the country and Thracians in the south (all of them coming from the Indo-European branch). The first kin was the one who dared to fight Rome. The hostilities began around the 1st century A.D. and culminated in their defeat and becoming a Roman colony. Then, the Slavic people spread across their territory and had huge influences upon the Romanian ancestors, as well as on the language. Christianity infiltrated in Dacia from the Roman time. A new wave of conquerors came and those were the Hungarians. They settled along the Carpathian Mountains, in the area called Transylvania.³⁴

Another important colonization was done by the Germans, who as well had sovereignty over this territory. The people outside this region, were in constant fight with the Russians, the Hungarians and the Byzantines. In the first years of the XIII century, a great power from Eurasia invades the area they are the Mongols led by Genghis-Han.³⁵

The next period is the birth of the first Romanian medieval states between XIII and XIV century. There were many fights with different kings who wanted to conquer the territory but they succeeded in staying semi-independent. The feudal age brought a Boyar regime until the XIX century. The appearance of the Turkish power meant a lot of struggle to stay independent and not become a “pashalic” (a kind of foreign administrative division of the Ottoman Empire without any local power). The interesting fact is that the Romanian area was never a pashalic; but instead an autonomous country with foreign rulers.³⁶

The Phanariot epoch (1711-1821) was characterized by an extreme fear from the Turkish side of the possibility Romanian territories had, in taking Austria’s or Russia’s side. This is also the period of wars between Russia, Austria and Turkey and most of them carried away on Romanian territory. The next phase is Romania facing modernity (XIX century towards the middle of XX

³⁴ Neagu Djuvara, “O scurtă istorie a românilor povestită celor tineri”, 2002, p. 4-8

³⁵ Ibid., p. 7-20

³⁶ Ibid., p. 23-76

century). At this time, France had an enormous influence on Romania, regarding language and also fashion. So, in the moment when Romania tried to grasp science, philosophy, law and the Western culture, things changed radically and brutally. The Russians imposed a liberal regime, especially when it came to trade.³⁷

Then came the Revolution in 1848, which was started by the young students who studied in Paris and came back as masons. In some parts of the country, the revolution was dismissed but in others, people started marching and impose a proclamation of changes and elections. Little by little, a new type of society came into being, as well as the first unification, where the same leader was chosen in two of the Romanian principalities. This came as a big surprise for Europe and it took a lot of time to acknowledge Alexandru Ioan Cuza as the true ruler. Cuza was eventually dethroned and in 1866 a new and foreign king became the ruler of Romanian principalities – Carol de Hohenzollern who was a relative of the king of Prussia and also of the emperor of France, Napoleon.³⁸

This meant a new phase for Romania at that time, becoming a monarchy and experiencing new developments in all areas. On the 9th of May 1877, Romania became independent after the war of independence, where the Romanian army fought bravely besides Russia against Turkey. In 1881, Carol I took his title as a king and Romania became equal to all the other monarchies in Europe. It is important to note that this was the moment when Romania had a cultural prosperity. However, a new war started in the Balkans in 1912 and then in 1914 the First World War. Romania entered the war, but soon was surrounded by the German and Austro-Hungarian powers as well as the Bolshevik revolution and it was forced to sign a truce in 1917.³⁹

Then, in 1918 the Grand Unification took place; it was a historic event since all the Romanian principalities were finally united and became a country. Then, the Second World War started and Romania was now leaded by the general Antonescu and had to be allied with Germany. However, in 1944 Romania had to surrender to the Soviets. Between 1945 and 1947, the communists took over the Romanian government and reigned until 1989. Nicolae Ceaușescu came to be the president of the country and decided to consolidate his dictatorial power as well as giving the impression that he tried to liberate Romania from the Soviet regime through his external politics with the general de Gaulle (the French President) and Mr. Richard Nixon (the President of the United States of America).⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., p. 76-90

³⁸ Ibid., p. 90-97

³⁹ Ibid., p. 92-102

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 121-123

6. The significance of 1989

Why is it necessary to go further in history with a chapter dedicated to the year 1989? Because it is needed to understand from where Romania and the mass-media started in 1989 and also why the country is not in the same line with the other countries, for the people who lived those unique moments from December 1989. Also because the Soviet occupation transformed profoundly the Romanian society after 1944, introduced new rules and eliminated the Romanian elite; those events influenced fundamentally the evolution of the Romanian society both in the communist period and after 1989.⁴¹

“[...] the echoes of 1989 have been of much wider significance. They have provoked intellectual, moral and spiritual crises around the world, and across the political spectrum. Their impact is far from exhausted. In all of those countries that experienced communist rule, political debate is still fundamentally oriented around the consequences of its collapse. The year 1989 was one of those turning points in world history, like 1917 and 1933, which demand serious consideration from everyone who makes any claim to think about the nature of human society as a whole, or about its major constituents.”⁴²

The oppositions' backbone came with the decline of the communist system, *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*⁴³ and Mikhail Gorbachev's refusal of intervening to stop the wave of democratisation; the defenders realized the existing order and the fact that they have to fight for their own survival without any help from the outside forces.⁴⁴

“Within two years, communist political rule had collapsed even in Russia. Gorbachev had been toppled, the Communist Party declared illegal, and the democrat Boris Yeltsin had taken power with promises to extend and speed up economic and social transformation. The old USSR was no more.” New independent and semi-independent states, which aimed at independence took over. The totalitarian ruling party ceased to exist, but other competing interests came into being such as geographical, ethnic and industrial. Instead of a centralised command economy, the long-desired free market initiated but that of the uncontrolled and chaotic kind.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 23

⁴² Colin Sparks, “Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media”, 1998, p. 4

⁴³ Political movements for transparency and reformation within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

⁴⁴ Colin Sparks, “Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media”, 1998, p. 2

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Democracy and media are tightly connected in the modern world, being an essential part for the Western societies (elections and free media). In the East and Central Europe these were absent and the shift from communism to the new order in the region was a difficult one because of the two systems completely antagonistic and this can be seen especially in the mass media. In the old system, one of the main flaw was the control of politicians over the media and not permitting the freedom of expression which was a fundamental aspect of democracy; after 1989, one could expect to see that the changes to mass media as crucial if the societies really embraced and became democracies. “The close relation between different kinds of media performance and the structure of political life in a given society means that the former will act as an important indicator of changes in the latter.”⁴⁶

According to Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956: 117) in Sparks’s book: “All in all, the system of propaganda and mass communication developed in the totalitarian systems is of crucial importance for the maintenance of the regime... In a very real sense, it dehumanizes the subjects of the regime by depriving them of a chance for independent thought and judgement”. However, mass media had a crucial part in the communist regimes as it spread the ideas, dissipated the propaganda, so had a direct political intervention and made them useful instruments for the totalitarian goals.⁴⁷

The audience was as well divided. In Western democracies, the central form of control of the mass media was through economic power, so the majority of mass audiences were formally free and able to exercise. Their subordination in society was primarily economic in form. In totalitarian societies, on the other hand, there were two forms of control: political and economic. So, its audience was under an oppressive structure, the population being disconnected from it.⁴⁸

Before 1989, the Central Committee of the Communist Party was the head of the media, controlling the news as well as the opinions in order to organize and mobilise the masses. Media were consequently militant and had an organising function, their goal being the spread of enthusiasm for building socialism and defend the motherland.⁴⁹

By the 1980s the propagandistic media were no longer accepted by the vast majority of communist societies. A sign of this was also in Romania where “the main expert commentator argued that the Ceausescu regime had instituted a media system that corresponded very closely

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 17

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 27

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 36

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 42-43

to the classical model of communist media”. Political control of the media was well-organized and more or less total and more of less compete. Television broadcasting was diminished because of the economic situation. However, this had not been like this all the time; at the beginning, from 1965 to 1971, political control had a more liberal approach towards mass media.⁵⁰

Sparks quotes Peter Gross, saying that media systems differed in the communist world. Some, according to the most expert observers, absorbed few of the characteristics of the classical Stalinist communist model. Romania is one of these, although it was relatively open to foreign radio and television signals. However, the situation was far from static. Earlier periods shows that Romania had a more liberal mass media. In the 1980s, Romania experienced the phenomenon of compression regarding its system, alongside the political repression: “After 1985, the domains of social, economic and political life were subjected to huge cuts in money and personnel. Romanian national radio (station) – which began to broadcast in 1928 – reduced by half its transmission time. The number of newspapers dropped from about one hundred to around forty. The worst situation was that of Romanian television, which nearly ceased to exist, broadcasting only two hours a day.” This compression marked the adjustment of the ideology regarding to the role of the media and the plan of paying the country’s debts, cutting down on food, electricity and other expenses, provoking a crisis in Romania.⁵¹

In the immediate aftermath of the events of 1989, it was widely agreed that what the world had witnessed was a series of revolutionary changes. As one observer put it: “Everyone in the West was clear...concerning the events of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe...there has been a revolution (or revolutions).”⁵² Almost overnight, an old and established order, which had survived all sorts of historical shocks, including war and armed revolt, was destroyed and replaced with a new and different one. Events of this pace and magnitude must, it seems, have been revolutions in the proper sense of the term. As one journalist put it: “Nobody hesitated to call what happened in Romania a revolution. After all, it really looked like one: angry crowds in the street, tanks, government buildings in flames, the dictator put up against a wall and shot.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Peter Gross (1990), (1996: 9) quoted in *ibid.*, p. 56

⁵¹ Marinescu (1995: 82) quoted in *ibid.*, p. 62-64

⁵² Kumar (1992: 309) quoted in *ibid.*, p. 71

⁵³ Ash (1990: 20) quoted in *ibid.*, p. 71-72

7. The Emergence of the Idea of Television - in the world

Media represents the technical equipment that allows people to communicate the expression of their thoughts, no matter of the form of the finality of this expression. This definition comes from Francis Balle⁵⁴. Talking about expression, it borrows today different forms: texts, sounds, graphics, data, images – fixed or animated – mute or with sound. The signification of the communicational flux differs: information, building (education), entertainment, cultural activity, artistic creation. The technical equipment permits the restoration of diverse types of messages, immediately or discrepant, towards a single person or to a number of them, dispersed or together, because of the signals recording, which are the bearers of these messages, signals written on a autonomous support and transmitted, one way or double, to the destination.⁵⁵

Mass-Media is divided into three categories: the autonomous means – books, newspapers, video-cassettes etc.; to decode them some equipments are necessary: computers, tape recorders etc. Then there are the diffusion means, inaugurated by Marconi in 1896. Transmitters of terrestrial relay permit the broadcast, on diverse technical ways, of radio and television shows. The third are the communication means which include every possibilities that allow the distance instauration and both ways of an either relation of dialogue between two persons or between groups or of a relation between a side or a group on one side, and a machine on the other side, seizing programmes or services.⁵⁶

The early ideas regarding television appeared as far back as 1875 and appealed to the principle of simultaneous transmission of each image element through an individual channel. The idea of television was first publicly expressed by two British scientists, Ayrtton and Perry. In the years 1875-1880, the first photo-electric cells were produced, which transformed the light into electricity. Ayrtton and Perry discovered that a line of these cells could register variations in intensity of an image; a series of lenses could concentrate on each cell the light from each portion of the image, and the more the cell was exposed to light, the more it generated a powerful current. If the cell current could be used to light up a line of light bulbs in a place, then the image could be reproduced. Although Ayrtton and Perry presented their system in 1880, it

⁵⁴ French professor of Political Sciences, researcher and philosopher

⁵⁵ Neagu Udrouiu, “Piloții de formula unu”, 2009, p. 7

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 8

could not be functional because the electric currents generated by the photo-cells were too weak to light up the light bulbs and they did not know any other way to make them powerful.⁵⁷

The word “television” appeared in 1900 during a conference held within the Universal Exposition in Paris. Actually, from then on one could also talk about the image treatment, referring to Thomas Edison’s lamp which assured the transformation electric current-light and the use of the first photoelectric cells sensitive to the light, to reconvert it in electric current.⁵⁸

Television came for the information amateur with two different techniques put together: sound and image. Thomas Edison invented the kinescope in 1889 and with its help, in 1903, the first action movie was planned. The motion picture with sound appeared in “Warner Brothers” in 1926. The colour motion picture came out in 1935. From those years, the habit of filming present topics began.⁵⁹

The functional television system started in 1906 with an electronic tube, conceived by the American Lee de Forest to amplify weak signals and permitted the Scottish inventor John Logie Bard to build functional television systems. As a result, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) started an experimental activity of television in 1932. Other important discoveries were made, one of which was the iconoscope, invented by the American of Russian origin V. K. Zworykin. In the year 1941, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted, after a year of debates in the National Television System Committee (NTSC), the standard of the black and white television. Then, FCC approved the NTSC system in colour on December 17th 1953 and from January 22nd 1954 it became operative. In less than 50 years of experience, television started to dominate the audio-visual landscape; Percy Tannenbaum, the American scientist even entitled his study, in a humorous way, “If a tree falls in the forest, and it is not recorded on television, did the tree really fall?”. Briefly said, television is a channel of communication which undertook from the movie the experience of image use and from the radio the experience of sound use.⁶⁰

The beginnings of imagine broadcasting for television are related to the use of the film camera from cinemas. The procedure was experimented in France in 1954 and exploited beginning with

⁵⁷ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 56-57

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 14

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 25

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 57-58

1956. After 1978-1980, the TV evolutions incorporate the portable video device, with magnetoscopes and cassettes used by particulars.⁶¹

According to Ion Stavre, the origins of the globalization of the mass-media date back on the 80s, during Ronald Reagan's presidency. In the year 1984, a historical decision was made by the American administration regarding certain domains deregulation: the activity of the cable companies, the telecommunication monopoly owned by AT&T, the monopoly owned by IBM and the market of the audio-visual. It was an economic and political decision as the digital technology was expanding and the free press was used as a spearhead confronting the communist regime. Stavre quotes Eli Noam, saying that "the year 1984 has a special resonance in literature, being synonym with the total mind control, because of the novel "1984" of the writer George Orwell." The deregulation of the audio-visual market brought the appearance of numerous radio and television channels. Quickly, these confronted with the necessity of producing shows in order to cover the channel grids, as well as bigger financial necessities.⁶²

This mass-media evolution accelerated every year, from a national level to a global one, so that the global media market to be controlled by nine big multimedia groups, which concentrate every form of press, of production and transmission of the mass cultural works: newspapers, magazines, radio, television, production and transmission of music and movies, computer games and internet.⁶³

⁶¹ Neagu Udrouiu, "Piloții de formula unu", 2009, p. 11

⁶² Ion Stavre, "Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.", 2011, p. 14

⁶³ Ibid.

8. The Emergence of the Idea of Television - in Romania

“Through their extended surface of penetration, the radio and the television have important tasks to spread the politics of the party into masses, in educating them in the patriotic spirit and that of the international socialist, in promoting the values of our national culture and of universal culture. Radio-television should accomplish a continuous qualitative enrichment and improvement of the shows, a larger variety of themes, which will regard every aspect of social life, as well as the improvement of the presentation techniques. It should manifest an increased exigency in elaborating the programmes, presenting literature, theatre, cinematography masterpieces with a profound social content, entertainment shows and musical shows of high artistic standard, making its contribution to the enlargement of the political and cultural horizon of the masses, the building of the aesthetic taste and the satisfaction of their request for beauty.”⁶⁴ (Nicolae Ceaușescu’s speech at the New Year’s radio and television transmission in 1972)

Shortly after World War I, television stirred up an immense attention in many countries around the world, scientists having all their attention on it and succeeding, in a short time, to overcome the experimental phase of the new invention, taking the tasks of information and culture. Parallel with the preoccupation for television in the foreign press, the Romanian scientific magazines inserted articles and information about “Radio-vision”, “Radio-television”, or “Television”. The first television reference of a Romanian writer belongs to Mihail Sadoveanu, Romanian novelist, journalist and political figure, who, in the article “Radiofonie” from 1926, after he described his first impressions about the radio auditions, he noted: “soon we will have next to the radio apparatus, the machine that will show us the images and the movement. The work is done in the laboratory. Tomorrow we will have it in front of us in this room. The images, as well as the sounds, are also immortal in relation to infinity in time and space.”⁶⁵

In the year 1925, in the Laboratory of Acoustic and Optic of the Bucharest University, some experiments of electric transmission of drawings at very small distances were taking place. Under the leadership of Professor Constantin Miculescu, the laboratory had modern equipment, which made possible such experiments. Moreover, the laboratory’s as well as the University’s Electro-Technical Institute libraries had the newest books and foreign magazines which dealt

⁶⁴ Petre Codrea, “Radioteleviziunea Română. Contribuții la cunoașterea Radioteleviziunii române”, 1972, Preface

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 85

thoroughly with the problems of television. In the laboratories from abroad, they were trying to shorten the duration of the broadcast. This also became the objective of the Romanian researchers. Starting from the experiments of the French E. Belin who had tried to broadcast a point in movement, Professor Constantin Musceleanu's assistant George D. Cristescu presented on the 18th of May 1928 in a lecture room at the Optic Laboratory of the University, the procedures of transmission of images and describing the existent devices.⁶⁶

“This will be the future: We sit in our room, on our comfortable couches or sofas. Suddenly the loudspeaker sounds: “Attention, please, to the television! The New York Metropolitan Opera on radio frequency!” We turn off the light. In front of us, a milk-white panel lightens easily. Magical reflexes are formed on this tiny screen. Dark stripes move on this magic mirror. The shades are underlined clearer and clearer. Tones and weak chords of a far-away orchestra can be heard more and more distinctively and strike through the speaker. On the shiny screen of the television, appear small shapes which start to move. We look at them, thunder-struck. Then, the shapes turn into humans, who live, talk, laugh and sing. And then we enter in the fantasy domain... This will be the future.”⁶⁷

Between the years 1930 and 1937, some attempts of image transmission were made at the Acoustic and Optic Laboratory and the Electro-Technical Institute of the Bucharest University, similar to those of the European scientists. On November 1937, The Faculty of Sciences from Bucharest made a deal with the firm Philips from the Netherlands, to have the first transmission of a television show. During the fall of 1938, there are presented many other experimental television shows by Philips. The Romanian press tried to be up to date with this new technology and to try the experiments done by the other European researchers.⁶⁸

The television progress makes Tudor Arghezi⁶⁹ write: “...as the movie is looking for its voices, radio is looking for its images... It is not far the moment when all the shows that we hear will be accompanied in everyone's house by a show of faces, landscapes and scenery. In a fraction of a second, the movie will get close to the radio, the radio will turn towards the movie and we will have parallel with the talking movie, the filmed music...”⁷⁰

Driven by the desire to make the first step towards the introduction of television, nine Romanian engineers designed and realized an experimental television transmitter, working from 1955 on

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 86

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 87

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 90

⁶⁹ Romanian writer

⁷⁰ Petre Codrea, “Radioteleviziunea Română. Contribuții la cunoașterea Radioteleviziunii române”, p. 88-89

Channel 1. The installation was capable of transmitting motion pictures movies. The experimental shows of the first Romanian television station took place twice a week and were meant to attract the attention of a larger mass of people towards this new and excellent method of information, education and enlightenment.⁷¹

“We are in an ocean of light, in an ocean of beams, wonderful, full of mystery, keepers of things that happen. These beams travel with amazing speed – 300.000 km/second – in every borderless regions of the world; and there, they reproduce us, portray us and everything that is here, just as we are.”⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 91

⁷² I. C. Vissarion, Romanian writer, (1932) quoted in *ibid.*, p. 88

9. The Romanian National Television – TVR

The state television was inaugurated on 31st of December 1956, when it took place the first transmission of the National Studio of Television, in Bucharest, on 2, Molière Street. The transmitter, placed in the tower of the House of the Free Press building (formerly “Casa Scânteii”), had a transmitting power of 22 kW, in a D standard and was broadcasting on Channel 2. This is the moment when the Romanian Television was born, the only existing television institution in Romania until after the Revolution in December 1989, when the first commercial, private television institutions came into being.⁷³

The year 1956 marks the end of an experimental period of the television in Romania and the start of the professional television stage. In the first years of activity, the Romanian Television developed quickly because of the massive interest of the people towards this new technique, but also because of the interest of the state to use a new way of communication to influence the public opinion and to indoctrinate the people. At the end of the year 1965, the volume of the broadcast shows exceeded 1600 hours per year, and the percentage of covered regions and number of subscribers exceeded 40% and respectively, 500.000. Under these circumstances, the state government decided to build in Bucharest a modern Television Centre, whose foundations were set during 1966-1968, on 191, Calea Dorobanților. At that time, this Television Centre was one of the most modern centres of medium capacity from Europe.⁷⁴

The new technical conditions permitted from 1968 the beginning of transmission for the second programme of the Romania Television. At the beginning of the 80s, the volume of the programmes broadcast reached 100 hours per week, out of which 65 hours for the first channel and 35 channels on the second channel. The covered area of the population with television programmes reached almost 97% for the first programme and almost 15% for programme two. The root of this fast development of the television was the political interests of the state, translated for the public through the desire of enlightenment and education of the masses. Television was considered the most important and efficient force from the ideological front of the communist party. Because of this matter, the television programmes were strictly controlled the whole period when the state was its only “manager”. However, towards the end of the 60s and the beginning of 70s, when a certain “ideological openness” manifested, the talent and the

⁷³ Nicolae Stanciu, “Managementul televiziunii”, 2001, p. 41

⁷⁴ Ibid.

ability of some personalities from the Romanian Television made possible the realisation of some shows of great success, which kept their existence for years in the national television programmes and even today in the viewer's memory.⁷⁵

The third stage of television development in Romania is the appearance of colour television. By the end of the 70s, there were three competitive colour television systems: NTSC (American), PAL (German) and SECAM (French). Because of the Soviet Union interest and the political influences, all the ex-communist countries chose SECAM, contrary to the professional decision of the other European countries, which were in favour of PAL, being superior from a technical and economic point of view. This is the most eloquent example of the involvement of the political factors in the decisions of the professional management of the television. The state, which was the owner of all televisions from the ex-socialist countries, dictates its political decision against the specialists' opinions, which in most of the cases, did not have the dare to openly express themselves. These kind of decisions have often unpleasant consequences, with important negative economic aftermath. Luckily, Romania succeeded in avoiding the decision imposed by the political factors, becoming the only country from this part of Europe to benefit of the best colour television system. Because of this, a lot of admiration from the specialists from other European countries awakened, precisely because they knew the background "fights" for colour television, as well as the tough situation in Romania, imposed by a more severe dictatorship than in other countries.⁷⁶

On 23rd of August 1983, the first broadcast of colour television took place, at Aviatorilor Square, completed with colour images from the studios. During the period 1983-1985, the broadcast of experimental colour shows on the national television continued and in the year 1985 the broadcast of the regular shows with PAL system started. The receivers launched on the market were capable of receiving both SECAM shows broadcast in the neighbouring countries and PAL shows broadcast by the Romanian Television so there were few who knew that in Romania it was used a system other than the one announced publicly by the country's government when the President of France came to visit. The success of these measures came not only from the capacity of taking some risks, but also the ability to attract in sustaining the solutions of the most important technical factors. Even if the support was tacit and probably would have been abandoned and unacknowledged in a case of danger, these have the merit that they did not oppose and supported the measures, in which, as specialists, they believed in. Starting with the year 1985 and until 1991, huge efforts were made to steadily replace the equipments for the

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 42

⁷⁶ Ibid.

black and white television with equipments for the colour television. The strategy “all or nothing”, tried in other institutions but with no success, was replaced with the strategy “small steps”, which led in a few years to the generalization of colour shows. One part of the investments which were not able to be accomplished in the first stage, were done between 1990-1991, after the Romanian Television had passed successfully a difficult exam privileged by the live broadcast, for the first time in the world, of an elaborated revolution. A special event, after 1989, which emphasized the national character of the Romanian Television, is the setting up of the local television studios in Iași, Cluj, Timișoara and Craiova (cities in Romania).⁷⁷

What did the Romanian viewer watch before the revolution moment? In the 1970s there were children shows, mainly cartoons of 7-8 minutes, broadcast before the evening newscast. Any grown-up around 50 years old remembers without any hesitation the famous cartoon from that period called “Mihaela”; it was as a preparation to go to bed. There was also on Sunday at noon “Woody, the Woodpecker” and for pupils there was “Dennis the Menace”, on Thursday during the evening. “Laurel and Hardy” was also on the programme, every Saturday at quarter past five in the afternoon because that was the time the children woke up. The adults had also their share of shows. On a Saturday evening there were TV shows such as “Kojak” and “A Boss in New York” which tried to fill in the empty space that “The Saint” left behind, and after him “Mannix” and “The Long, Hot Summer”. On a Sunday afternoon there was “Bewitched” and two hours after, “The Onedine Line”, the British TV show which could keep you in front of the television on an ugly weather, as my father would say. The “better” shows were on Monday, between the newscast, “Paliser Family” for example, also a BBC production, with a great cinematographic accuracy. As their competition, there were the Shakespeare screenings.⁷⁸

What about the television after the 90s? From the first moments one could see that the television could absorb everything. There were many aggressions from various directions towards it. The older faces retired from the limelight and new faces and new names appeared in the empty spaces and sometimes also new ideas. A lot of valuable things appeared, but also fake things, interviews with people that all of the sudden were leaders of opinion. There were hired however a lot of young talented people.⁷⁹ There were shows like “Divertis Show” (comic sketches), “De la egal la egal, amical” (“Friendly, from Equal to Equal”), a talk-show with personalities and mini musical recitals, “Prezentul comic” (“The Comic Present”), a television cabaret and so on.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 43

⁷⁸ Neagu Udroui, “Piloții de formula unu”, 2009, p. 195

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 197

According to Udriou, in a movement without rules like this one, television was obliged to bear the transition which was not pleasant at all and the only winners were the viewers. Months and years, the internal wars hindered the institution to realize what was it supposed to do. The internal fight went well with the external aggressiveness, inhibitory and demolishing. Starting from the 22nd of December 1989, television was led from the streets. Those were the days in which every person who reached the microphone, had important official news to tell for the country. Beside the voices one used to listen, one discovered faces and demands which did not fit even to the television station of the block of flats they lived in. The lack of rules fuelled the amateurism and the arbitrary. Just as the minister of culture said: “When there are new times, we need new people”.⁸⁰

It followed a period of accepted syncretism, as Udriou emphasizes. The peak was reached through the election time. Actually, during the weeks after it, the government sent to the national station a new team, thought to be the modernizers conceptually the shows and to imprint a natural flow towards Europe, to the television. What they actually succeed was an inexhaustible rush after all who meant something in the institution until then and their review. The control functions were taken by the newcomers and others just served them. The lack of specific experience, lacking also the managerial aspect, the television bosses had to accept their incapacity to work and their indecency of their relations with the others. They departed, leaving behind wounds and ineffectiveness.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 197

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 198

10. The Romanian Press - Monitor for TVR

“The thing that offers uniqueness to the European media market from the last decades is the its dual structure. Although the media private sector is larger than its public competitor, regarding the incomes and the number of channels, the public sector still owns an important position, measured in market share.”⁸²

“The public television service always confronted with a series of conceptual and contextual disadvantages. On the one hand, the difficulties regarding the public radio system service made this concept to be interpreted in many ways. On the other hand, the change of the function context of the public television service always affected the form, the nature and the objectives of this media institution, positioning it in the society and on the mass-media scene in different ways.”⁸³

As an existent source for this topic is the written press because it regards events from the recent history. However, most of these articles about the Romanian Television institution published in the written press mirrored biased attitudes, components to the fight for control over TVR: “The public space devoted to the Romanian press (post-communist) was dominated by two discourses: that of the journalists (depending on conjuncture and partisan) and that of the intellectuals (elitist, normative, founded on impressions and not on empirical data); in this field, the voice of the scientific community was more than significant. Seldom the post-communist mass-media were studied for themselves.”⁸⁴

The written press remains the main source of information about the tumultuous history of the public television in the post-communist period; the recent history was not written and neither of the television. The presence of the public television (also known as either “the television of the people”, “the national television”, “the state television” or “free”, “servile” or “the slave of politics” etc.) in the written press remained a constant, a “national obsession”, and today, after the twenty years since the events in December 1989.⁸⁵

⁸² The special position of the public televisions in the European Union quoted in Valentin Nicolau, “TVR. Mărire și decădere. Televiziunea publică în România și modele europene”, 2009, p. 9

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 58

⁸⁵ Ibid.

The written press had always found an important subject in monitoring the public television, which because it is public, it turns into everyone's problem. Along with the passing of the time and the consolidation of the private press groups, a big share of the critical articles towards TVR were generated by these patronage's interests and regarded an objective that remained present: diminishing the market share (correlated directly with the cashing from publicity) of the public television and the taking-over of the lost percentages by TVR by the big private players from the television market. All of the post-revolution period, the newspapers were full editorials and vehement "opinions" pointed against the attitudes and the behaviour of the administration and of the employees of the former public television. After the short period of "national consensus" from December 1989, the protests pointed against the television concretized, in all this analysed period (1990-2008), in contesting the institution administration, the accusations marking the employee's unprofessionalism, the bad quality shows, the political servility, the information manipulation, the misinformation of the viewers, going up to radical solutions, regarding its abolition. Even these kind of pertinent evaluations support paradox themes, if it regards the unprofessionalism of the employees from TVR, that TVR which was the source for expert staff for all the particular televisions.⁸⁶

The Romanian press from the beginning of the 90s was marked by the burden of a "heritage" which contained a period of approximately a hundred seventy years of censorship (of many types) almost continuously, which made the journalism practiced in Romania of that period to reach, sometimes, the international high professional standards of the moment. This "heritage" results from three large time periods: 1. 1821-1918, when the first issues appeared; 2. 1920s, when the press and journalism reached their highest development, freedom and semi-professionalism; 3. the communism years, 1947-1989, when the press stopped reaching the general professional parameters recognized in the free world.⁸⁷

In 1970, the communist party bragged with a monopoly regarding the press: 472 issues (including some in minorities languages) among which 57 daily newspapers; 47 radio stations which broadcast 40.329 hours of shows; the Romanian Television with its two channels, which broadcast 4.642 hours of shows, using 180 transmitters. The reorganization of the mass-media, following the Law of the press from 1974, brought the sharpen of the control of the party on the press and the reduction of the number of issues: a lot of newspapers and magazines were fused, their editorial line was modified and censorship was emphasized. Consequently, a lot of layoffs were made of the editors who were not loyal to the party. The organization and the function of

⁸⁶ Ibid.. p. 59

⁸⁷ Ibid.. p. 66

the radio and of television were defined through the Decree nr. 473/1977. In this way it reached a system with a single centre of uniform communication, the same as in the socialist bearing. At the end of the 80s, the number of the issues lowered to 36; there were only nine radio stations that broadcast and the television (Channel 1) had only a three hour programme per day. The radio and television readers and audience abandoned vastly the native press: just 22% of the viewers still follow regularly the Romanian Television and 43% of the adult population reads regularly the Romanian newspapers. The radio attracts, however, 69% of the population.⁸⁸

It can be said that the Romanian journalism disappeared completely as a profession at the end of the seventies. The communist press defined itself through censorship, manipulation of information, misinformation, pseudo-journalism and the promotion of a meta-reality. The written and audiovisual journalism was eliminated. The Romanians got instead “a regime of information extremely limited, pre-digested, unauthentic, repetitive”, meant to convince, to encourage, to threaten, to divert the attention and to dissimulate. The ignorance of the events and the ideas, distortion or their invention were in focus.⁸⁹

In Romania, during the communist period, a separated journalism from the official journalism of Marxist-Leninist root did not develop, so it had four major consequences: a. the lack of a native, unbiased press had a negative influence on the formation of a democratic conscience, of an organization of a coherent and articulated dissident movement to lead to a post-communist society; b. the so-called “free” press, starting from December 1989, served firstly as a tribune of expression of accumulated frustrations, a mean of national and individual catharsis, a space of gossip broadcast. “In the first months of freedom, mass-media became a gigantic psychiatric office, where Romanians could for the first time express their anger against the oppressors and tell their sufferings and humiliations...” Because of this, media succeed in neither serving as a forum for constructive discussion of some contemporary problems and solutions, nor as a channel of correct information of the public regarding the events of the present; c. as a reflex of journalism practiced in communism, after December 1989, the press often manifested a biased activism for a political group or another; d. the public, used only with the communist press, was not a consumer with rationality, did not know how to react through press of because of it; it did not have trust in the journalists, who for forty three years served the only party.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 66-67

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 67

⁹⁰ Ibid.

11. Why entertainment?

Nowadays we are bombed with news. It is a supplier's and a consumer's sin. We want to be in touch, to know all the recent events because some of them affect us directly, our lifestyle, our everyday life or they contain a novelty that we discuss in our circle of friends⁹¹. However, one might say that one was beginning to feel that a certain level of saturation regarding news was reached and people are turning to other ways of information, and that is entertainment. Moreover, entertainment means relaxation, escape from every day pressures, emotional discharge and obtaining of cultural and aesthetic satisfactions.⁹²

Previous research on TV entertainment shows in Romania before and after the revolution is inexistent. That is why the only ways to have an insight of what happened in that period was through visualization of entertainment TV shows and interviews. Being the primary material, they will answer my research question "What type of messages did the entertainment TV shows in Romania produced before and after the 1989 Revolution?", also following the impact of these entertainment shows and their messages upon the Romanian society and implicitly, the evolution of television. The three periods, before, during and after the revolution in 1989, are crucial to this thesis for getting a sense what was happening regarding entertainment, what did it meant, what functions did it have, what were the manifestations, who intervened and so on.

The entertainment function has a social perspective. The answer to the need of the man for relief, disconnection was taken into consideration from a long time ago. It is about the phenomenon of the spectacle, the entertainment. Entertainment means diversity, convenience, accessible and cheap. By cutting down this sector of television only brought the anger of the people. Nicolae Ceaușescu was one of the dictators who "cut" the playful dimension of the human nature and the catharsis function of the artistic creation of the show. Entertainment can be the shining and spiritual show, the live broadcast the of the Oscars awards, the broadcast of an Olympic finals. The artistic message of the entertainment shows has a constant flow.⁹³

The resulted product, the message, becomes a spectacle which influences the intellectual capacity and the rationality but also the emotional part, moving and affecting, provoking

⁹¹ Nicolae Melinescu, "O viziune despre televiziune", 2013, p.80.

⁹² Ion Stavre, "Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europeanizării societății românești.", 2011, p. 51

⁹³ Ion Bucheru, "Fenomenul televiziune. Limbajul imaginii, Publicistică, Producție, Programare TV.", 1997, p. 101-102

approval, indignation, compassion, repulsion and so on. When all the elements of the audiovisual message support the word, a “miracle” happens as the message is considered the “terrible child” of communication. Through the synthesis between logic, rhetoric, journalism, the actor’s art, the image’s art, the sound, the music, the message becomes a spectacle. In this way, the information is doubled by the characteristic of any show: the persuasion force through the direct emotional impact. The main role of television regards less the domain of communication and more the assurance of the social connection in the individualist mainstream society.⁹⁴

The four entertainment TV shows provided by the National Television archive, as said in the methodology and sources chapter, consist of a black and white show from 1973, “Gala lunilor – Toamna” (“The Gala Month – Autumn”), the New Year’s show from 1985 (“Revelion 1985”), another New Year’s show from 1988 (“Prolog Revelion 1988”) and a Christmas show from 1994, “Gala vedetelor – Crăciun 1994” (“The Stars Gala – Christmas 1994”). Besides these, there are some humorous sketches with famous Romanian comedians, some of them having cryptic messages and some having language, situation, character and name type of comedy in the New Year’s show in 1988.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 25-26

11.1 The creation of an entertainment show - from idea to broadcast

According to Elise Stan, TV producer and interviewee, to create an entertainment show, one has to respect three main parts: the pre-production stage, the production stage and the post-production stage. First it starts from an idea, either a spontaneous one or having a theme in the mind and then conceiving the idea, as well as thinking if it will be accepted or not, where will it be broadcast and so on. Then, depending on the idea, the cast that will serve the theme is thought upon (never the other way round). After it is decided which role is given to each person, what artistic act has everyone to present, the television crew is set. The appointment of the technical means and the studio at the programme of the production is made, as well as the lights, the set and there are some forms to be filled out where it is asked for whatever is needed regarding technical or artistic equipment.

Afterwards, the production stage enters with the writing of a script, with every detail and every step that is taken in the show, line by line. Elise emphasizes that some things need to be left unscripted so that it can show also the natural and the spontaneous. Then, the actual filming starts or the live show. The producer and the director take care that everything unfolds as it needs, especially the image, the part that is being filmed, but also the sound and the lights. Plus, the set director takes care of the flow of the artists. However, the primordial attention is towards the presenter, who is the face and the spokesperson and in case of any error, the producer needs to intervene and communicate it through the earpiece.

The post-production stage is next, where the editing is made. There is also a post-processing of the sound (sometimes the sound is not well intercepted, one may need more laughter, applause etc.) and to add texts (a text is written in the sound booth and later imprinted) or to add a musical illustration. After the show is ended, there are three cards that need to be filled in: the show card, the F1 card (all the titles of songs), the F2 card (sketches, the literary part). Also, as extra, one needs to ask for credit titles, a logo and so on; also, the promotion of the show is needed so the Promo department makes a promotion spot to broadcast. It all ends with the show going to the Broadcast Secretary and from there the cassette goes to Ingest where they put the show into a server and from there the show is broadcast electronically.

12. Analysis

12.1 “Gala Lunilor – Toamna” (The Month Gala – Autumn)

The first TV entertainment show is from 1973 and it is called “Gala Lunilor - Toamna”. It is part of the series “Gala lunilor” (The Month Gala”) which includes mainstream music, ballet, composers, choreography, actors, directors, pantomime and comic sketches, having as the theme a month of the year or a season, just like here: autumn. The artistic editor is Alexandru Bocăneț, choreography: Cornel Patrichi⁹⁵ and setting: Doina Levinta⁹⁶.

The image is black and white and the whole set is arranged with these non-colours in such a way to attract the viewer through contrast, shapes and few props like scaffolds and chairs. From the presenter to the dancer, everybody is dressed elegantly, with tuxedos, top hats, white scarves and in many segments the instrumental version of the song “Autumn Leaves” by Nat King Cole is played by the orchestra in relation to the theme of the show.

Then, the musical sketches are either dancers from the ballet or sung through poetry by actors dressed in trench coats, and at one point, the scene appears as a re-enactment from the movie “Casablanca” with the pianist in the bar and the main male character singing melancholically. These alternate with songs with satirical texts such as “Marabu” sung by Corina Chiriac⁹⁷ taking after the international hit “Mama lou”, tunes from opera and operetta, party songs as well as a thematic poetry collage and segments of traditional Romanian dances and songs.

The dramatized humorous sketch is entitled “The man who does not laugh” and involves three actors which impersonates the photographer, the assistant and the customer who came to take the picture. The customer would not smile and the photographer and the assistant keep trying to make him smile through different methods, especially psychologically; however, the customer says that he smiles on the inside because he once smiled and he gave up. He believes that smiling is not aesthetic and has an opposite reaction: when he feels pain, he smiles and when he is in good humour, he is sad. That is why the assistant steps on his foot and makes him laugh and the photographer finally takes the picture. The sketch ends with the customer getting the taste of it

⁹⁵ Romanian choreographer

⁹⁶ Romanian designer

⁹⁷ Romanian singer, composer and TV presenter

and asking for another one, but this one done with “sepia” effect. Other sketches in the show are called happy moments and include jokes.

There is also a sketch about the fable “The Grasshopper and the Ant” by Jean de la Fontaine done with an actor reciting the fable combined with dances by the ballet dressed as grasshoppers and ants with music resembling “Hit the Road Jack” by Ray Charles. The final moment belongs to the dancers who are on coaches and dance with top hats and elegant dresses and then on a ship, with sailor jackets. It is an upgraded version of the fable, musical and choreographic as well as another moment entitled “A history of the public transportation” in a choreographic and pantomimic style. It then ends with the orchestra and the credit lines.⁹⁸

The public is imaginary, with applauses on tape. There are different types of dancing, with costumes specific to the age and a setting with props such as rocking chairs, balloons, tables and so on. The image was used in different ways, there were long shots, where the viewer can see the whole human body, in this was emphasizing the setting, the background, the context of the character, medium shots, where the person is seen from the waist up, being able to gesticulate and make not so ample moves and even medium close shots, especially for the dialogues between the characters, seeing them from the chest up. The filming was done also in “plonjee” (plunge), with the camera above the character, showing the viewers a certain superiority on the person filmed.⁹⁹

Eugen Dumitru emphasizes that in this period, the array of humoristic subjects in the entertainment shows of the Romanian Television (so the years with a normal programme of 10-12 hours) was relatively scarce. The law was to never make fun of the party’s politics and the “beloved leaders”, although the jokes with various imagined activists after “Bulă”¹⁰⁰ prototype circulated freely in the comic folklore of the big cities. The more vulgar or with different connotation of subjects were likewise rejected. Otherwise, one could approach any theme, preferably of mainstream interest. However, if the themes were not that generous, the character portraits and especially the stylistic ways (especially pro-quo and travesty) helped the anthological humoristic materials, like the sketches “C-aşa-i în tenis” – “This is the way to deal in tennis” or “Dracu’ l-a pus” – “Devil convinced him”, played by Toma Caragiu¹⁰¹ or “Nea Mărin, juveții și marțienii” – “The old man Marin, the Juvets (people from a Romanian province)

⁹⁸ The Romanian National Television archive, Department of Communication.

⁹⁹ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 93-95

¹⁰⁰ Character used often in jokes

¹⁰¹ Romanian theatre, television and film actor (1925-1977)

and the Martians”, a sketch with the great actors very appreciated by the Romanians Amza Pellea¹⁰², Draga Olteanu¹⁰³, Dem Rădulescu¹⁰⁴ and Dumitru Furdui¹⁰⁵.

“Gala lunilor – Toamna” is a complex entertainment show, with music, humour and ballet. Laughter is provoked through the musical and comic sketches; there are situation and language types of comedy and with no social critique. The performers are famous actors and singers dressed elegantly, showing a certain kind of luxury and prosperity. 1973 is still a year when television had some sort of freedom.

¹⁰² Romanian theatre and film actor (1931-1983)

¹⁰³ Romanian comedy, theatre, television and film actress

¹⁰⁴ Romanian theatre, television and film actor (1931-2000)

¹⁰⁵ Romanian actor (1936-1998)

12.2 “Revelion 1985” (New Year’s show 1985)

The second entertainment TV show is the New Year’s show from 1985. It has patriotic songs, anecdotes, dances and other fragments with the country and Nicolae Ceaușescu.

The image is in colour and everyone has festive gowns. The set is extremely shiny, with disco balls, stars and bright colours like gold and orange. The intro is made of humorous sketches regarding football, parties, children, pets, fishing, friendship and spouses. It is made of small segments of jokes. Then there are songs and dances and another sketch with an actress who also sings and plays the role of a housewife who imagines herself as being a soprano at the opera, a rich lady with furs, a dancer at the disco and a dancer of traditional Romanian songs. In the end she says that she has only one more costume to dress and that is being herself, the real actress. The last segment of the show is a patriotic song with an orchestra, different singers (opera and mainstream), conductors, children with teachers and people dressed in worker outfits as well as traditional costumes. They are singing about the communist party, the country, praising Nicolae Ceaușescu and showing images with him, holding children, shaking hands with people in demonstrations, on different constructions sites, applauding him and emphasizing his humanness.¹⁰⁶

The image was used also in different ways; long shots, emphasizing the setting, the background, medium shots, especially for the orchestra and even medium close shots, especially for the sketches, seeing them from the chest up. The filming was done also in “plonjee” (plunges), with the camera above the characters, showing the entire set, capturing the colours, singers and the clothes.¹⁰⁷

According to Elise Stan, there were three stages before 1989; the first was until the Cultural Chinese Revolution (1971), then after this revolution when the songs in foreign languages became forbidden, the women were not allowed anymore to appear in pants and many other restrictions, and the third is the darkest period, when the television programme was reduced to two hours, 99% of it being a party propaganda and 1% was entertainment which was almost inexistent. On television there were only two shows – kaleidoscope is their name, meaning informative shows (a little bit of everything, an array of different domains) on Saturday and

¹⁰⁶ The Romanian National Television archive, Department of Communication.

¹⁰⁷ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 93-95

Sunday, the movie (“Telecinemateca”) from Thursday night and the folklore show on Monday night. Beside these, there were only propaganda shows where in the forefront stood the worker with his accomplishments in the work field or with what happened at the factory, but everything paying great respect to the “great son of the country” namely the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu. Another show was called “Reflector” – “Spotlight” and was interesting because it had critical shades towards some irregularities in society or job wise; however this was not an entertainment show but an investigation type of show.

Eugen Dumitru, who first worked at the radio station and then in television, emphasizes that first of all, before the revolution, the audience was different; he calls the viewers “cultivated public” that nowadays are on the verge to disappear. For him, the news world was only about the presidential couple Ceaușescu and the strong pressure of having a mass culture, with no barriers and homogenised values, transforming everything in a “dense and grey paste”, he made the move towards entertainment, where the ideology infiltrated harder and where the great directors tried to bring back the smiles on the face of Romanians who were pressured by worries and needs.

He believes that the entertainment shows were characterized by an intellectual presence before the revolution moment, just as the critic and the radio and television moderator, Iosif Sava says, entertainment was a an effortless and perishable genre, but the Romanian entertainment, besides its basic function to entertain, to make the viewer feel good, had the intellectual charge which unfortunately, had perished from today’s entertainment shows.

Valeriu Lazarov, TV producer, makes a characterization of the public; he says that the public is the one that decides because it is not homogeneous. The lack of homogeneity regards the different level of culture, education and family tradition. The television public is eclectic and a show addresses an intellectual but also a worker. To form a personality does not depend only on school but also on life, being itself an independent school. It is the possibility that in front of an injustice, there is the same intensity of indignation from the part of the university professor as well as the worker or in front of a dramatic situation, the two get the same level of emotion. Thus, as Valeriu stresses, those who make television have an obsession to find a way, a balance to not leave anybody out, which is really hard.¹⁰⁸

“Revelion 1985” is an entertainment shows or one of the few in that time with more focus on socialism and its achievements and goals but also having music, short comic sketches and a

¹⁰⁸ Alexandra Orban, “Mărturii esențiale. Personalități emblematice ale culturii la TVR”, 2011, p. 368

musical performance with an actress representing also the humour and the folklore. Laughter is only provoked through the comic and musical sketches but the duration is short. The stress is put on the patriotic song and the images with Nicolae Ceaușescu, portrayed as a saviour and glorified through his actions. Being a New Year's show, the clothing is elegant with the exception of the people who join the orchestra and the singers dressed in working outfits to represent the common man as well as sending the message that this is how everybody should be: work hard, obey and make the country a prosperous one.

12.3 “Prolog Revelion 1988” (New Year’s Prologue 1988)

The third entertainment show is the New Year’s show from 1988 that includes ballet, folk songs, musicians, composers, singers, opera songs. It is a prologue specific to the New Year’s shows before 1990, with a whole presentation of the musical and ballet body. “Hora Unirii” – “The Union Dance” is the central motif, adapted to the socialist realities. The images consist of the general view of the performers.

The show starts with “Hora Unirii”, a traditional dance in form of a circle, where everyone holds hands and dances around. On the background there is the map of the country and people are dressed in traditional costumes, army clothes, worker clothes and as mine diggers. After this segment, a choir of men and women dressed elegantly sing with an orchestra a communist song about “the most beloved son of the country, a true communist”, Nicolae Ceaușescu, having in the background the Romanian flag and socialist symbols. There is also a traditional Romanian moment with folk music and celebrities from this area, representing each region of the country. After this moment there are fireworks, songs and dances and images with snow and different ballet acts with classical music in the background in front of an institute of the army where different events take place, called Casa Centrala a Armatei (The Central House of the Army).¹⁰⁹

“Prolog Revelion 1988” is lacking what entertainment meant in the other shows. The musical segments with the ballet and the folklore songs can be regarded as entertainment but humour is not present in this show. It is a rather serious show with performers from the opera dressed elegantly and people in working clothes. The focus is on the socialistic symbols in the background, the dictator and patriotism.

The images show long shots, emphasizing the setting, medium shots, for the orchestra and medium close shots, especially for the dictator. The filming was done also in “plonjee” (plunge), with the camera above the characters, showing the entire set, capturing the singers and the clothes.¹¹⁰

The two New Year’s shows have plenty of similarities. Just as Eugen Dumitru points out, these shows for New Year were the only chance for the Romanian people to party and enjoy the night

¹⁰⁹The Romanian National Television archive, Department of Communication.

¹¹⁰ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 93-95

between the years. In his opinion, as well as Elise Stan's opinion, entertainment was the only sector of television where ideology did not pierce so easily in order to dictate the party directives to some professional producers who were trying really hard to put a smile on the worried and tormented faces of the people.

In the Romanian Popular Republic, the party and the state leaders realized the great impact of the new form of media – television, as means of propaganda. In 1955, “The Activity Report of the Central Committee of the Romanian Labour Party”, already established the tasks of the future “Romanian television”: “In the domain of the radiophonic transmission it is necessary that the system to be completed with new stations, which will permit transmissions at a national level. The radio system will be extended and starting with 1956, will start functioning a television station.” Hence, “the appearance of television in Romania occurred in the conditions of the communist regime, whose general conception about the press and about mass-media was without a doubt, one of totalitarian essence.”¹¹¹

In over thirty years of communist regime, the Romanian Television was a governmental television, totally subordinated to the political and ideological factor. Without any appeal, “the unique party” decided in every domain, establishing the members of a football team, the “rational” quantity of sugar in a cake recipe, the daily ratio of food for every person, the density of the seeding on the grain fields, but also intervening with brutality in the intimate life of the people (the forbidden of abortion). Likewise, the communist party dictated the character and the content of the television shows, which represented, alongside the other press institutions, an excellent mean of indoctrination, for the build-up of the “new man” – maker of “communism, the golden dream of mankind”. In all the former communist countries, like in every state with totalitarian regime, television served as an instrument of propaganda for the only existing political party. It can be said that “in East Europe and other geographical areas, where totalitarian regimes existed, the main functions of the TV stations were deformed: information was partial, with strong accents of misinformation, the educational and cultural side often had the forms of ideological indoctrination and the function of entertainment was, likewise, limited.”¹¹²

Apart from the oppressions caused by the fact that it must function in a totalitarian regime, the Romanian Television had to endure, in the years of “the satanic decade” (1980-1989), the terror of the dictatorship imposed by Ceaușescu. The Romanian Television was constrained to take part of the lies and the manipulation that was held, being obliged to distort reality. Invoking the

¹¹¹ Valentin Nicolau, “TVR. Mărire și decădere. Televiziunea publică în România și modele europene”, 2009, p.67-68

¹¹² Ibid., p. 68

imperatives of “the cut back plan of energy”, between 1985 and 1989, the TVR programme was drastically reduced, to only two hours of daily broadcast (between 20.00 and 22.00), from which the biggest part was dedicated to the cult of personality of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena. Exception were the Saturdays (with a programme from 13.00 to 15.00 and then from 19.00 to 22.30) and Sundays (same programme as Saturday but with shows for children, at noon, between 11.30 and 12.30). The two hours of programme during the working days of the week were mainly ideological propaganda shows and “dusted” entertainment shows: 19.53 - The State Hymn “Trei culori” (“Three colours”); 19.57 - The Democracy Front and the Socialist Unity Hymn (“It Is Written Unification on the Flag”); 19.59.30 – The opening of the programme; 20.00 - News; 20.20 – Special programmes dedicated to Ceaușescu (documentaries or musical shows); 21.00 – An opera show or a socialist film; 21.50 – News; 21.58 – The closing of the programme (“Hora Unirii” – “The Union Dance”).¹¹³

Towards the end of the eighties, foreign words began to be excluded from the publications and radio and television shows’ vocabulary. It followed the elimination of foreign shows. From year to year, the subscriptions to different foreign publications became scarce; movies, television shows, publications or any other product of Western economy was prohibited, to not shadow the “grand accomplishments” of the Romanian economy.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 69-70

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 70

12.4 “Gala Vedetelor – Craciun 1994” (The Stars Gala – Christmas 1994)

The last entertainment show is the Christmas show from 1994, called “Gala vedetelor” (“The Stars Gala”). It has a lot of varieties, from pantomime to music to sketches and dances. This entertainment show was broadcast on Christmas evening with carols, mainstream Romanian music interpreted by famous singers, humour, ballet and animated presentation.

It starts with images of Santa Clause and an intro with jokes by a comedian, also the presenter of this show, talking about political matters with a humorous twist: “this year Bosnia will give presents with munitions”, “cigarettes in Belfast light up with grenades”, “in Russia there is a government full of Chechen people”, “Clinton sees a man dressed in Santa and asks: Isn’t this Arafat?”. There is a live audience, with a very simple background. This moment is followed by a Christmas song in English and small interviews with different singers followed by their performances. Then, the presenter tells another joke, about two hunters at the North Pole, one telling the other that he was once chased by a bear and eventually he had to climb up a palm tree; however, the other hunter pointed that there are no palm trees here but the only reaction of the other hunter’s was: “What was I supposed to do?”. Another joke involves two men, a director and a doorman; the director points out that on the other street he can see to the right his wife and to the left his mistress but the doorman responds that for him is vice versa. Then comes another Christmas song in English and an interview with a singer, this time a little bit longer and discussing topics like privatization, the factory (of dreams) and the revival of the Romanian music, getting closer to the international one. Some other sketches are with the presenter dressed as a clown and making fun of himself, telling absurd stories; there are other jokes about Michael Jackson and Madonna and ending with a comment that nowadays on TV, they broadcast whatever people want to see.¹¹⁵

“Gala vedetelor – Crăciun 1994” – “The Stars Gala-Christmas 1994” is a modern entertainment show with a lot of performances, active presenter, many comic sketches and renditions of foreign songs and dances. This is a different kind of shows in comparison to the other shows from 1973, 1985 and 1988. The most important aspect is that politics is used in the comic sketches; humour is different as other countries’ leaders and governments are used in order to provoke laughter, as

¹¹⁵ The Romanian National Television archive, Department of Communication.

well as some kind of dark humour. It has a language, situation and character type of comedy, as well as a personal and social critique. This is accompanied by songs and dances that have foreign influences likewise the clothing which is modern, unmatched, each one with their own style.

The show has long shots and medium shots. However, the setting is not given too much importance, using close-ups for the presenter and the singers. The filming was done also in “plonjee” (plunges), with the camera above the characters. The camera also used “travelling”, in order to follow that character’s activity, the presenter, creating a certain dynamic. There were also the techniques of “zoom in” and “zoom out”, for emphasizing a character surrounded by other characters or around the setting or just a single detail at the end of the movement, creating also the dynamic, specific for the entertainment shows.¹¹⁶

Eugen Dumitru says that after the revolution, a lot of negativity came in television. It replaced the subtle humour with the vulgar humour, the funny, common sense line with the taste for grotesque, the fine irony with vulgarity and the artistic emotion with the preference for “sinner shows” for obscenity. Just as in music, part of the television entertainment, things are worse according to Eugen. The diverse “sharks” (the record labels) produced a “mist of noises” launched on the market by the excess of productions created on quantitative criteria and not qualitative. Eugen wonders how one can distinguish between non-value and talent; his opinion is that it needs a shock therapy, having humour as a cognitive filter. This means to activate the critical sense in such a way to reflect between value and embarrassment with the guns of intelligence and with a smile on the face, helped in this matter by specialists in music and literary stylistic (for the text analysis), which will analyze the so-called productions from four points of view: voice-composition-text-image, applying from time to time irony and sarcasm.

After the revolution, there was an extreme fight for survival of the man in the jungle of the “wild capitalism” or the period of transition which brought an alienation of the man towards the others. Just as Eugen says, people are tired of the black and cynic humour that took over entertainment shows, with fake applauses and laughter in the background; they need to revive the tonic humour, of good quality but as he writes: “They laugh of us, we laugh of them and everybody laughs of us!”.

Dan Nanoveanu emphasizes on the visual story which has a beginning and an end, quality and depth. After 1989, the depth was only at the surface so that the viewer has not time to analyze it. It was a need for substance but it was not there. Everything was minimal because they did not

¹¹⁶ Ion Stavre, “Comunicare audiovizuală. Aspecte ale europenizării societății românești.”, 2011, p. 93-95

know what to do or what to add. However, the goal was to go deeper in the image. So, according to Dan, viewers represent a big part of these shows. He quotes Hitchcock, saying “I only do half of the movie, the other half is done by the viewers”.

One of the big changes produced by the revolution was the communication transformation which is in connection with the visual and cultural education. Then, in the 70s, for example one could smoke on television but now one cannot; or then one had to be in forefront, with the face towards the camera but now you can sit also with the back at the camera. So, after '89 one could do basically everything on television, there are only a few channels which kept the classical such as CNN and BBC. Another change is the difference between structure and taste. In the 70s, there was only one who decided what was broadcast and he was Ceausescu. Whatever he liked, it was on television but after the revolution, other channels began to appear so now there are many to choose from.

Starting from December 1989, when the Romanian people were given suddenly the chance of free speech, after a almost half of century, until May 1992 when the Audio-visual Law appeared, the first regulation which legislated pluralism in audio-visual, the conquered freedoms were often abused.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 60

12.5 “Revelion 1988” – Sketches (New Year’s Show 1988 – Sketches)

“Alexandra Orban: Do Romanians still laugh today? Do they still have the force to enjoy the joke, to produce it? And where to is the Romanian humour going?

Dan Mihăescu: The insinuation, allusion and the “lizard” disappeared – a term that we invented, Grigore Pop and I in a monolog of Toma Caragiu...

Alexandra Orban: ...”the lizard”...

Dan Mihăescu: Yes, and this is how it stayed. You were talking about expressions which circulate. Of course. “Șocul justifică mijloacele” (“The shock justifies the means”), “C-așa-i în tenis” (“This is the way to deal in tennis”) – these already circulate and are signs of a humoristic force. Where to the humour? In the direction that we assist. I do not know if it is the best but the things went down a lot, a thing that saddens me. The brigades won. Whatever did not succeed during communism, whatever Ceausescu did not succeed, who for every New Year’s asked for brigades, now, if you look at these groups which make shows are, in majority, brigades. Student brigades, at a culture house level. I am not saying that there are not also people who deserve respect...”¹¹⁸

The other shows watched are from 1988 and consist of different humoristic sketches, segments of short jokes, long sketches with multiple topics such as hiding from the police a pig because it was considered bribe, the “business” relations between certain people from government with certain ladies who obtain different deals and money but the poor people get nothing; other sketches contain play upon words and a name and character type of comedy, as well as sketches about avarice, deceit, going to the doctor and comic twists on famous songs from that period.¹¹⁹

Examples of short sketches consist of: a lady revisits the shoe shop and to the salesman’s surprise, she purchased two right shoes; an actor invites his friend to the opening of his play and to the question “does it have something good and new?”, the actor replies “what is new is not good and what is good is not new”; a woman says that she has a great voice and that she should go to the opera but his neighbour, horrified, say that she should go, only if she has a ticket.

¹¹⁸ Alexandra Orban, “Mărturii esențiale. Personalități emblematice ale culturii la TVR”, 2011, p. 386

¹¹⁹ The Romanian National Television archive, Department of Communication

These are only a few from the sketches, where people were dressed normally, showing the everyday life, and regular citizens. They portray in a comic way certain events, problems, some also adding codes to some of the jokes. For example the sketch about the politician mesmerized by certain ladies ends the play with: “do you want the government to fall?” - “yes, let it fall!”. In a sketch about abusing politicians, this kind of line has a certain message, especially for the year 1988, just a year before the revolution moment.

Even the sketch with the man caught by the police with illegal “food” represents the struggle of Romanians with rules and restraints on food, electricity, foreign merchandise and so on. Hiding, in this case, a pig from the police was a “normal” thing to do in order to survive. The sketch, of course humorous, has also a message of government attack, of a fight against the crisis in the country. The end of the sketch brings everybody to reality as the man is caught, making him declare that the truck was unlucky.

The sketches with the play upon words are extremely well done, reaching their comic goal as well as the name and other types of misunderstandings such as a telephone call to the post office in order to write a telegram to a loved one but by dictating through the phone, it ends in a humorous chaos because “still a better metaphor was a box of candies”.

The musical sketches involve a comic mockery of the famous singers back in the day as well as their songs which are sung in a different tune and setting. There are also instrumentals from the movie “Singing in the rain”, specifically “Make them laugh”.

There is a reason behind that fact that the archive provided for visualization, entertainment shows for New Year because as Eugen Dumitru says, they were the only chance to party, enjoy the New Year and have a small grain of faith. After 1989, he continues, the entertainment shows are dominated by bad taste, aggressive vulgarity and lack of interest for the authentic artistic values. Moreover, he points out that he learned a lot of his colleagues, especially the infiltration of different “lizards” (cryptic messages) in the sketches. This “underground procedure” was a delight to the people back home, who made them burst with laughter.

Marina Almășan says that entertainment means first of all humour. She believes that before there were no messages sent through entertainment but it made the viewer laugh with strict limits. There were no socialist values sent but good times. Marina concludes that the period before the 1980s, the shows were extremely good and even now television feeds from that archive.

Dan Nanoveanu emphasizes that before '89, however, there were the best actors and sketches from the cultural area on television and that director Bocăneț knew how to bring the best in everyone, the cultural-human qualities were appreciated although there were different ways of expression. He believes that the comic sketches were no more than communist commands which left from time to time “pearls” or “lizards” to let the Romanian people think they are in control and that the people who controlled the shows did not pay attention to it. Of course that the political comic moment sells really well but as Dan thinks, in Romania there became to be more of a political circus whose goal is to attract followers.

Elise Stan points out that the message of entertainment had as its goal the country, the party and the “beloved leader”, Ceausescu. According to her, the entertainment shows, before and after '89, were not concerned with transmitting human values, but to amuse the viewers. They did not promote human values but moments of relaxation. Regarding the sketches with the “lizards”, she says that reading between the lines brought an interior revolt but a reserved one, defeated by fear. There was a dual language and not only in these sketches but also in the poems dedicated to the leader.

“Alexandra Orban: It is definitely necessary another type of humour than the one today. A chronicler wrote: “television, the cemetery for the humorists?” Maybe if these shows would not be programmed during rush hour, in prime-time, if it would not ask from them for a general audience, the humorists would select in time through a presence influenced just by the value of the texts. And necessarily by the ratings.

Dan Mihăescu: I do not understand why we do not make humour with great artists? There are also young artists whom we need to open a door. [...] If you do not let them, if they do not appear, if you do not make them known, do not give them scores to play, they die: What would Toma (Caragiu) be without the monologues from television? Surely he was a titan, but even more you are responsible to offer a material with whom to stand out. Any lady who shows her belly button is a megastar, VIP, is everything for everybody, except having a talent.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Alexandra Orban, “Mărturii esențiale. Personalități emblematice ale culturii la TVR”, 2011, p. 388

12.6 Censorship

Each Monday of every week an editorial meeting was held in which the summaries of the most important shows of the entertainment department, of over a month, were established. These shows were “Albumul duminical” – “The Sunday Album” broadcast on Sundays at noon and “Întalnirea cu satira si umorul” – “Meeting with satire and humour”, broadcast on Saturdays night from 21.00; for example if they were in the 29th of April- 5th of May week, the proposed summaries were broadcast in the 27th May- 2nd of June week.

In these meetings, the themes of the shows were established as well as the casts, which were set and nobody could change anything except if one of the stars was abroad or a singer passed away. This was a strict rule because the summaries, once approved hierarchical by the editor-in-chief and then by the General Secretary of RTVR, ended up on table of a secretary from the Central Committee (CC) propaganda section. Here was the man who decided everything, meaning he accepted, cut, modified subjects, after he consulted with the chief of number 2 Office, a true Goebbels of “the golden age”, Elena Ceaușescu, says Eugen Dumitru. Once the projects (summaries) were accepted, and turned back to the editorial office with all the modifications, the expense estimate was set. To this, a paper with the technical necessary for the production of the shows was added (days of filming in the studio, the technical team, the stage sketch etc.) as well as a synopsis containing the days of filming (outside), as well as the locations in which the filming took place.

Regarding the collaborator’s casts, those nominated in the summaries approved by the section of propaganda of the CC, there were no problems. In that period, TVR was the only public station in Romania so it did not have any competition with other commercial stations. However, in the area of entertainment, the broadcasting space was limited so even though there a big waiting line, the famous artists were preferred, meaning that the debuts were rare. Eugen continues that on the filming set there was extremely crowded and that sometimes people waited in line; some got connections so they went in front of the line because as Eugen says, the political representatives for Elena Ceaușescu let the impression that she is a music connoisseur so she gave access to singers that she liked.

Once the filming calendar was set, in approximately 2-3 days (when it was about entertainment shows which were presented at international TV contests, it was in 7-10 days of filming), things

moved along smoothly. Then, after the filming was over, the show montage began, under the strict observation of the members of the propaganda sector of the CC, with 2-3 days before broadcast. It was done like this as the observations and modifications to be considered and maybe reassemble the show. However, such cases were rare, as the censorship rules were many, vigilant and biased.

Regarding censorship, Elise points out that the people who watched all the shows before being broadcast were called “clear heads” and the process was always done at the eleventh floor at TVR institute. If they had objections, the people in charge had to take care and correct or to reassemble the scenes. There was also a list of words which one could not say on television and these “clear heads” either gave direct indications or watched the shows with the editor-in-chief and they gave him the indications. Then, there was an editorial meeting at that start of every week so these things were communicated to the employees. For the important shows as the anniversary of Ceaușescu, things were planned and discussed before; a meeting of twenty people coming from the Central Committee and the Propaganda Commission from the Central Committee as well as the director and the editor-in-chief was set and they watched afterwards the show at the twelfth floor in TVR and then the corrections were made.

Elise remembers a time when they were not satisfied with an image that had a person wearing a cap, meaning a lack of respect towards Ceaușescu so the only way was to either cut it with the scissor or remove the entire image from the show. There were also days when one worked for months and the “clear heads” said that everything is done badly and must be redone. However, she says that at the entertainment department, the situation was better because one had time to go on the field, choose the place and so on. Plus, they got to make fun and laugh about the problems of the system.

However, Valeriu Lazarov points out that it was more surprising and confusing to find out that in other communist countries there was a sort of intellectual and artistic freedom. He says that in Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary, the shows were much more daring. The Romanian television did not have access to the Western productions but just to those from Eastern Europe. He continues saying that he envied his colleagues from the other countries because one could see that there was less censorship on the screen, “less dense thinking”. Valeriu recalls when in 1957 he was given the chance to make a transmission for New Year and although he was not experienced, this opened his path towards entertainment. He then made his first 20 minutes movie on a 35 mm film. There he realized that they gave him an enormous crane, a camera,

lights, props and did not know what to do with them. He got help and the movie turned out to be “good, not bad”.¹²¹

Valeriu worked with a gentleman called Ion Barna, a professional when it came to movies, who directed also a movie with great American influences, with special effects and with people dancing on the piano’s keys. Everyone was amazed. However, those from the Central Committee did not like the movie because it was “decadent, American, made from a bourgeois perspective”. Of course that they praised Valeriu’s movie. This was a beginner’s movie, without anything too special, with no explosion of imagination; but it was correct, it was in a Romanian style. They acclaimed him and criticised Barna and this was Valeriu’s chance.¹²²

Even his relation with Tudor Vornicu had a strong influence on him. He admits that he was young then and he did not know all the political side scenes and Vornicu’s reactions. Valeriu made a movie at the seaside with Nic Gherghinescu as a cameraman and Radu Anagnoste as co-script writer. The movie was with Dick Rivers, a French singer, friend with Johnny Hollyday. He was making a show which was called “Our guest” and they brought from abroad the singers who accepted a small amount of money that was paid then. They thought the movie was daring and well-made. It featured also images of the socialist Romania, landscapes, and factories. Valeriu thought that with this there will certainly no use of censorship. The movie was watched in TVR, everyone was enthusiastic but as Vornicu entered the room when the last song was played, he did not say anything, remained standing, and when everyone was enthusiastic, said: “Enjoy, enjoy, but this movie will never be broadcast.” Everyone thought he was joking but he continued emphasizing the way Dick Rivers was dressed; his jackets were “Mao” style, changing three or four times these kind of jackets. Plus he had sideburns, making the movie not to be broadcast in the end because in that time the friendship with Mao and China were fundamental, having a common ideology. As a sign of protest, Valeriu said that he started growing sideburns.¹²³

Another example is when he had to make a show with another singer from France, Nicole. He asked for a setting with musical noted in the background but soon realized is very obedient and common. He felt ashamed for asking such a setting so he took pipes, tractor wheels, tubes so they can counterbalance the obedience of the setting. Of course that Tudor Vornicu came to the set and ordered to remove everything. Valeriu decided in that moment that he did not belong there and he felt that his ideas were oppressed, so he wrote on a piece of paper his resignation. He later found out that nobody wanted to take his place and that a man who was not really

¹²¹Ibid., p. 358-359

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 360

experienced in music did the show, removing all the wheels. After a few days, Vornicu came to Valeriu, ripped his resignation, threw it in the garbage bin and said: “Now at work!”¹²⁴

In another interview with Ovidiu Dumitru, TV producer, text editor and scriptwriter, Alexandra Orban asks about Alexandru Bocaneţ and his style of making a show. Ovidiu says that he had problems with his kind of editing as Dumitru Popescu, a high member of the Central Committee, nicknamed God, who watched the shows and always said: “again Bocanisms?”; However, he did not cut anything but Tudor Vornicu came in to help as he whispered some things in Dumitru Popescu’s ear, making him paying less attention to the screen. But how Ovidiu points out, one could see that Mr. Popescu liked it. “He was brilliant. And he gave us that milligram of charm and that tittle of smile which attract even today the new generations of viewers. Everything was and still is today, in every shows in which we brought back to the public, an avalanche of good taste, of music written by big composers just as a chronicler wrote.”¹²⁵ Medeea Marinescu, actress, talks about him in a fragment and recalls a show for New Year’s in 1968, which had a great success because the viewers watched a different kind of show, with quality humour, no vulgarity, with a light shade of parody and good music. He was sort of the pioneer of today’s video clip and brought an innovation on the screen which did not spare him of the power of censorship but raised him on the steps of glory towards the public and the art people. “Andu (Bocăneţ) thought with the means of television. It is really hard to learn the orthography of television. On a piece of paper you put dots, commas, on television it is good to put them on image.”¹²⁶

“Dan Mihăescu: The humour, especially in our country, is difficult. For years it was under the sword of censorship. Especially for humour, it operated ferociously. What is happening with Toma (Caragiu)? Especially between 1968 and 1969, it opened apparently a little window towards freedom, I would not say of expression. In television you could still talk about some things. Of course with the permission from the police, from the press department, but still there was a sort of relaxation. And then I saw with Grigore Pop in Ploiesti, a good actor, Toma Caragiu. We realised he had the satiric force necessary for some critical materials. This is how we started with him. “Don’t you have someone somewhere?” and “The little lizard” were his firsts texts. We were not wrong. Toma had that formidable force to put in every word an

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 361

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 374

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 377

explosive load, with the help of a movement of the eyebrow, a certain grin of the mouth, with a look...»¹²⁷

Elise Stan started producing entertainment shows from 2007; before the revolution and up until 2007, she was musical editor and produced folklore shows. She believes that the revolution did not influence the shows and that the Romanian people had, have and will always have humour; they have always known how to make the best of everything. Of course that a certain liberation and openness appeared because before, the moments were extremely considered and supervised. The shows are not censored politically anymore, except a professional censorship from each side. She stresses the fact that a small amount of self censorship still has to exist, especially from the professionals part, because otherwise the vulgar and the lack of decency will prevail, two things that are broadcast a lot in the last years on radio and television. This started to change the optic of the viewer and it brought a lot of confusion to distinct from good and bad. Revolution came and everybody was happy about it, democracy came, there was no more censorship and from year to year more and more channels appeared. However, the lack of censorship brought also the appearance of non-values and hypocrisies.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 382-383

12.7 The relations between the Technical and Artistic Teams

Eugen Dumitru emphasizes that before '89, there was a great spirit when it came to teamwork; however, the producer in this kind of team was only one, usually the director, because at that time they were organized after the French model. For the French for example, the producer was Jean Cristophe Averty (director); in Romania, Alexandru Bocăneț (director as well) was assimilated as producer because he did everything from A to Z, forming around him an editorial team, exceptional in Eugen's opinion, formed by Ovidiu Dumitru (text editor and scriptwriter), Titus Munteanu (musical editor), Doina Levintza (scriptwriter), Ovidiu Druga (director of photography). Another producer who was not a director but skilled with a special talent of manager, was Tudor Vornicu, who gathered around him a group of professionals, each and every one with the specific of their work: Carmen Dumitrescu, Cornelia Rădulescu or Rodica Rarău for coverage, Ileana Pop, Silvia Ciurescu or Ana Potra for entertainment editors, Florentina Satmari, the folk music, romance songs and feast songs specialist.

So up until 1989, there was no producer in the list of jobs for TVR; as Eugen says, the producer was "a boss" or many more from "Warner Bros", "Colombia" or other companies which produced films, their names appearing on the credit titles. In other words, the producer was the one with the money and who dictated the rules of the game to assure the realization of a production, be it also a television one. In TVR the one who started with the idea and eventually had a production was the producer, the maker of that show.

The way this producer built his or her relations inside his or her team meant a lot for the success of the show but also the fame of this producer. For example, as Eugen continues, everybody knew that Tudor Vornicu was producing every Saturday, the series of shows "De la A la infinit" ("From A to Infinity") and later "La sfârșit de săptămână" ("At the end of the week"). Ioana Bogdan, Eugen Dumitru, Gheorghe E. Marin and Doru Dumitrescu were making, each one, each week from a month, "Albumul duminical" ("The Sunday Album") and inside it, every week, Marian Traian was making the segment "Un zâmbet pe 16 mm" ("A smile on 16 mm") and Dan Mihaescu, Grigore Pop, Octavian Sava on one side and Tutus Munteanu, Ovidiu Dumitru and Marian Traian on the other side, produced the varieties shows from Saturday nights. Eugen ends by saying that working in these kind of groups of professionals led by exceptional producers, one could not feel but well and able to pass the hardship of the times created by one of the most tough types of politics.

The relations between the artistic and the technical team, according to Elise, was exceptional because of the same discontents. They were just as a family in TVR and nobody left work until they finished their work. Everything was really well planned and organized; the operator was on the filming set and the cameraman came to the editing to pick and choose the best scenes. After the revolution, however, the envy and the conflicts appeared and between the technical staff and the editorial one there were tensions. Elise stresses one thing out: when she started in TVR, the first thing she ever learned was that the show comes first; it must enter at a certain hour and certain day. It is the fruit of a collective work.

Before 1999, every editor had its own show so the responsibility was his or her own of the product they created. Afterwards, the stress was put on teamwork and on the broadcast production from the projects auction. Elise has the only team who survived from then and still work and create shows in the present time.

13. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to present the evolution of the Romanian television, having as a catalyst the revolution, a crucial moment symbolising the end of communism and beginning of capitalism, in fact the dramatic change of a way of life, going through some of the entertainment shows in order to compare and analyze their structures, messages, the type of humour and the way censorship was applied.

With the help of the interviews, the entertainment shows and the written works, I was able to investigate the topic, write about the findings and now produce an outcome of the work. Through this time span, before and after 1989, I was able to see the “change over time” of the Mass Media, specifically of the television. Drawing the picture of this change through the television entertainment shows could not have been possible without the persons with whom I had the interviews that gave me an insight of the reality they experienced and observing how the shows in the three periods – 1970s, 1980s and 1990s – differ but also reflect the political, economic and socio-human situations at that time.

I would like to start with the most obvious conclusion, that one can notice that even though the television entertainment shows have basically the same format, with a presenter, music, dance and comic moments, there are some differences such as the introduction in the 1980s of communist songs, where everybody had to take part and sing the hymn dedicated to the party and the dictator. From the show in 1973, where entertainment meant only fun, amusement and enjoyment, to the shows in 1985 and 1988, where the communist theme took the whole stage, it is a great leap. One can see the communist print in the 1980s which grew even stronger through the broadcast of only two hours per day, clothing wise and also regarding jokes, being limited and with certain topics. In the history of entertainment shows and television there were only few sketches done by a famous Romanian comedian, which dogged the censorship, meaning that the message broadcast was cryptic, only for the people at home to sense the real message behind the joke. From the 1994 show, one can observe that the Western influences were prominent via the English songs, the political jokes and, generally speaking, the strive to be similar to the West, to the international media.

Another conclusion is that after 1989, television gained its freedom which was actually a two edged sword. As Dan Nanoveanu pinpoints during the interview, the Romanian television

became extremely influenced by the foreign programmes, by superficiality, shock qualities and brainwash. The revolution is seen as a cultural and economic drama because nobody knew what democracy really meant. The government took advantage and due to this, the level of patriotism is now really low in comparison to the one in communism. An example can be the comparison between American and Romanian movies; the Americans always used the power of the image as propaganda, making the level of patriotism extremely high but in Romania the situation is different. The Romanian people will always poke fun at images as these because the state was always the one who stole from them; it represents the fake, the lie and must be avoided and ignored. As Dan says, “we must remake TVR the way it was 40 years ago”, as a credible and respectable institution, to express reality as it is in order for the viewers to make a mind of their own. To broadcast what the client wants is a two way street but one cannot sell what the other does not want to buy. However, education through osmosis is essential as what one sees, that is how one is going to act. Every person interviewed stressed the need for bringing back the basic and eternal values, the true values and not the commercial ones.

The show from 1994 clearly transmits that things changed and a massive foreign print was showing. However, once the revolution and the passing of time proved that the Romanian traditions were forgotten or rejected. The shows for the young generations had carols in English but not in Romanian. Elise Stan, for example, is a fighter for the Romanian traditions which in television tend to be lost. She always tried to make shows for the young, for example introducing to the Romanian people the Romanian event of Valentine’s Day called “Dragobete”; so, there were people in TVR who realized the necessity to attract more and more people after 1989 and to have shows dedicated to Romanian events in order to promote traditions and authentic Romanian feasts. As the show in 1994 and Elise pinpoints, the Christian human values that Romania had before 1989, disappeared after the revolution, making them unimportant through a lack of respect and making everyone think that they deserve everything and can do everything because it is democracy. The outcome was that the television impact was colossal but also negative. Channels appeared where one could only buy the broadcasting space and can do whatever they want. The impact upon the ordinary individual was big as people still remained with the idea that whatever one sees on television, it means that it is true and exceptional. Those who appeared on television were the opinion makers without even them knowing it and influencing greatly on the viewer at home. Once this started, the mentality changed with it. More than once where the times when young people were asked “What do you want to be when you grow up?” and the answer was “a TV star”.

Some say that professionalism is a keyword for television and should have a comeback instead of the importance of the ratings. If television broadcasts intellectual shows and the teams from TVR have a high professional quality, the public will adapt to it. For the public television, as Ana Blandiana, a famous Romanian poet says, the values should remain values, with a high morality and professional level.¹²⁸ What is even more important is that before 1989, this competence came from self-taught people even from the beginning in 1956. TVR had no school, there were no professors. The meaning of television or film production was unknown but the studio with the huge equipments from the Soviet Union had talented people, intelligent and open to new approaches.¹²⁹

Another conclusion from the entertainment shows and the interviews is that TVR was before the revolution, mainly educational and after it, became more commercial. Every act of culture was an act of communication. However, the matter concerns also the perception speed. Even in the shows, one could see the different visual education and cultural background. Back in the 1960s-1970s, just one piece of news was 6 minutes long and after 1990s it was reduced to 1 minute. It is the same regarding the shows: an episode of “Enterprise” watched today will only bring laughter to the nowadays viewer and a scene from “Transformers” will bring a lot of confusion for the older people.

Moreover, the impact of television upon society, especially in Romania, resembled Alvin Toffler’s¹³⁰ premonitions in his works “The Future Shock” (1970) and Marshal McLuhan’s¹³¹ “Gutenberg Galaxy” (1962). From total censorship to total freedom, from frustrations to excess, from 2 hours of broadcast to 24 hours of live or recorded shows. This shock came with the revolution moment in 1989, when the political power, the economic power and the media power experienced their rebirth under the freedom flag; also, the period to adapt was almost inexistent and the Western television was mainly copied and not filtered and produced regarding the needs of the people. The catalyst moment of 1989 brought along an acute sense of freedom, but also a certain kind of beauty which has no secrets and atrophies the senses. However, mass-media had the most spectacular evolution in Romania after 1989, because being underdeveloped, they absorbed a great number of people with no experience in the domain. Even with this, the impact made also a lot of people, who could not deal or did not want to deal with the changes, to retire,

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 58

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 368

¹³⁰ American writer and futurist

¹³¹ Canadian philosopher of communication theory

as Eugen Dumitru says: “And I, when I realized the effects of this phenomenon, I retired and started reading the books that I did not have time to cover in my young age...”

The messages broadcast during the entertainment shows were mainly of fun and good time. The persons interviewed clearly said that the shows’ goal was only to provoke laughter in order for the viewers to forget about their problems and the harsh times of the communism. Every interviewee emphasized that censorship and indoctrination entered much harder in the entertainment department. In comparison to the other departments, those working in this sector had a more relaxed environment, being able to broadcast also the sketches with the so-called “lizards” to the amusement of the viewers. There are also other opinions, such as Dan Nanoveanu’s as he stresses the fact that these “lizards” were actually of political meaning in order to make the Romanian people believe that they are in control. Even if that were the case, nobody talked about the socialist versus the capitalist messages and values regarding entertainment. The bottom line is that there was one message and that was of making people laugh and feel good and that the values changed after 1989, aiming at Western values and rights, changing with them the Romanian human values which are mostly considered to be the great persons, actors, directors who contributed to a better Romania and a better situation to live in.

The appearance of a study dedicated to the public television in Romania and specifically to a comparative analysis of the television entertainment shows before and after the revolution moment in 1989, within the Öresund Master Programme of European Studies, offers a deeper insight and understanding of a bibliography that is extremely poor regarding the phenomena of the Romanian audiovisual and also to the large number of studies and ample debates from the Western scientific area dedicated to this problem.

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Archives

The Romanian National Television archive, Department of Communication:

- a. „Gala Lunilor – Toamna“, Date: 26th of January 1973, Duration: 66 minutes, Producer: TVR, Editors: Alexandru Bocăneț, Ovidiu Dumitru, Copyright: Entertainment and musical varieties.
- b. “Revelion 1985” – fragments, Producer: TVR
- c. “Prolog Revelion 1988”, 31st of December 1987, Duration: 22.16 minutes, Producer: TVR, Copyright: musical show.
- d. “Revelion 1988” – sketches in the shows “Ocolul Revelionului in 80 de anecdote” – “Around the New Year in 80 anecdotes”, Producer: TVR.
- e. “Gala vedetelor – Crăciun 1994”, Date; 25th of December 1994, Duration: 107 minutes and 3 seconds, Producer: TVR, Editor: Titus Munteanu.

Personal Interviews

Almășan, Marina, TV presenter and producer (2013, April 19th). Personal face-to-face interview.

Dumitru, Eugen, director’s assistant and producer (2013, April 19th and 29th). Personal e-mail interview.

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Stan, Elise, TV presenter and producer (2013, April 23rd). Personal face-to-face interview.

Reflections on dissemination

This master's thesis presents a historical overview of the development of television in Romania, focusing on the television entertainment shows before and after the revolution moment in 1989. It deals with a topic that has not been explored a lot before and can be of interest to people working with a variety of issues such as public television broadcasting, communication studies, sociology, humanities or journalism. For an audience from abroad, this thesis with its research, analysis and conclusions, would provide the information necessary for understanding a country or a piece of its history and why, how and what was the evolution of change regarding media, television and entertainment shows. Then, I believe that the thesis is relevant for today's society and history because in order to understand the future, one must look in the past. Also, the aim of the thesis is to bring light in a sector of television that was never analyzed or discussed in depth; entertainment gives a certain perspective that the news department cannot give. The future readers from different study domains would notice the political aspect of those times, but also the socio-human aspect through the interviews carried during the research, as well as the entertainment shows which provide the fundamental proof of the messages and values broadcast before and after 1989.