



*Made in Poland:  
media transformation after 1989*

Adam Szynol  
Institute of Journalism  
and Social Communication  
University of Wrocław

# How to discredit the biggest achievements?

- Everybody knows about the collapse of Berlin Wall in November 1989



- But it was Solidarity, the biggest European trade union movement, which started the socio-political breakthrough all over the CEE countries and resulted in the avalanche/domino effect



# Short-term effects - 1989

- # Round Table talks between Solidarity and the former regime (Feb-April 1989)
- ## Launching independent daily – *Gazeta Wyborcza* – 8th of May 1989
- ## First partly free elections – 4th of June 1989
- ## New government – towards democracy & free market economy
- 

[illegible]

# Long-term effects

- Stifled inflation – new economic circumstances
- Media law changes
  - 8th of March 1990 – Bill on self-government - resulted in a couple of thousand new local newspapers being launched
  - 22nd of March 1990 – Bill on RSW liquidation – de-monopolisation of the press and further privatisation
  - 11th of April 1990 – dissolution of the censorship office
  - 29th of December 1992 – Bill on radio & TV broadcasting
- Under the the last one, the NBC (National Broadcasting Council) was established
- In 1997 NBC was included in the new Constitution:  
*The NBC's mission is to guard freedom of speech, the right of access to information, and public interest* (5 members = 2 the Sejm + 2 President + 1 Senate)

# Polish media system – TV & Radio

- Modus operandi of TV:
  - Satellite TV - 35%
  - Cable TV – 31%
  - DVB-T – 34%
- Public TV (Polish Television – 12 channels + 16 reg. div.)
- Polsat since 5.12.1992 (24 channels)
- TVN since 3.10.1997 (9 channels)
- Great Four (TVP1, TVP2, Polsat, TVN) >40% viewership
  
- Radio is 6 times smaller than TV market
- Public Radio (4 channels + 17 reg. div.)
- Radio RMF (Bauer)
- Radio Zet (Lagardere)
- Great Four (RMF,Zet,PR1,PR3) 39% against 16% listenership

# Polish media system – press & online

- After 1990 most of the titles were privatised
- Big amount of the press was taken over by the foreign companies, e.g. VGP – regional dailies
- Foreign investors were mainly interested in glossy magazines, exc. Axel Springer
- Currently 19 publishing groups (9 foreign), 185 titles (138 foreign, 76% of the market)
- Internet reaches 75.8% of the population (71% broadband)
- Almost every media entity has its online representation
- Paywalls have not been successful yet
- While watching TV, 70% of Internet users resort to other screens (48% mobiles, 43% laptops), 5% use their TV sets just as monitors

# Big change in Europe

- Economic slump in 2008
- Less liberal, more conservative or even national/ist



- Middle East conflict and migration crisis
- Poland: Presidential and parliamentary elections resulted in right, conservative switch
- Significant polarisation in the society and in the media



# Latest amendments and plans

- On the turn of 2016 the new gov. introduced amendments in media law concerning public media (TVP & PR) and since then:
  - Previous managers & boards were dismissed as well as the leading journalists and editors
  - New managers and boards were nominated by the minister of State Treasury, without the clearly specified term of office
  - NBC is bypassed
- In the second half of 2016 there will be National Media Council (instead of public media), with 6 years term of office, established by the Sejm, Senate and the President
  - The National Media Council will appoint new managers and boards
  - New license fee will be introduced and paid according to the electricity bill (~3€/month) – suspended due to EU reg.

# Conclusions

- Poland is among the countries with the fragile democracy
- Transformation of the media system was carried out on the remnants of the previous system
- Politicians still tend to have an influence on them, but ...
- There are some values, such as freedom and independence which Poles will fight for in case of a major threat



Lech Wałęsa (on Twitter):

*There is no such a wall which  
we, Poles, cannot jump over*

Thank you for your attention



[adam.szynol@wp.pl](mailto:adam.szynol@wp.pl)