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Cinema and TV films produced by Polish ‘party film units’ in 1975-1991 – abstract of the PhD thesis

The aim of the dissertation is to analyze functioning of ‘Iluzjon’, ‘Profil’ and ‘Kraków’ film units which were managed by influential Polish United Workers’ Party (PZPR) activists. These companies, which were described by their directors as ‘party’, were managed by Czesław Petelski (‘Iluzjon’), Bohdan Poręba (‘Profil’) and Ryszard Filipiński (‘Kraków’). The thematic scope of the research, however, is wider – it covers issues of state cultural policy in the second half of the 1970s and 1980s, the impact of politics and historical events on the functioning of film culture and the aforementioned units, and the position of ‘party units’ in the film industry and their assessments by those supervising them Przedsiębiorstwo Realizacji Filmów „Zespoły Filmowe” (Film Production Company ‘Film Units’) and Central Board of Cinematography.

The research will cover the years 1975-1991 – the last period of Polish People’s Republic as well as the first years after the political and economic transformation. This time framework is defined by the two significant events. 1975 is the year of *Kazimierz Wielki* (directed by Petelski and his wife, Ewa) release date, which was widely believed to be the apotheosis of Edward Gierek and his politics, as well as starting point of „Profil” Film Unit. In 1991 “Profil” film company produced its last three films: *Latające maszyny kontra Pan Samochodzik* (dir. Janusz Kidawa), *Szwedzi w Warszawie* (dir. Włodzimierz Gołaszewski) and *Siwa legenda* (dir. Bohdan Poręba).

In the period between these two crucial dates all the three film units underwent several changes stemming from political events. In 1981, as a result of voting in Polish Filmmakers Association, ‘Iluzjon’, ‘Profil’ and ‘Kraków’ were closed down. This decision was opposed by their artistic directors both in press and within the party units. The two of them – ‘Iluzjon’ and ‘Profil’ – were re-established soon after the introduction of the martial law, in February 1982. The analyzed film units produced several dozen films that addressed different topics, used most of genre conventions and presented various artistic quality during the whole period of their functioning. Apart from films that were directly politically engaged, these film units produced also films that were highly successful at the time of their release. This dissertation does not aim to demonstrate the outstanding artistic quality of these works but instead goes beyond the

aesthetic paradigm of research. It offers an alternative perspective on the film unit's activity and focuses on the creative actions preceding the screening of a film work 'on a big screen'.

The aim of the PhD is to fill the gap in research on the culture of film production in the Polish People's Republic and to answer the following research questions: What was the thematic content policy of the analysed film production companies? What were the themes developed by films produced by these companies? Did the film production companies in question produce only films that were in line with the hitherto cultural and historic policy? Were films produced by 'Iluzjon', 'Profil' and 'Kraków' considered as problematic by the state censorship and, if so, what were the authors of these films accused of? How did the political situation (particularly during the period of the Carnival of Solidarity) influence the functioning of these film companies? What was the film community's approach to the 'party film units'? How were the films produced by them received by film critics?

In my dissertation I would like to verify the following research hypotheses: The films produced by the 'party film units' followed the cultural policy of Polish United Workers' Party. Their authors worked towards defending the communist state doctrine and in times of the most severe crises they strived for 'saving' this ideology. In historical films the directors and screenwriters fulfilled the requirements of the hitherto historical policy and frequently they went as far as to falsify or conceal the inconvenient facts. These authors often worked with the same team of most important filmmakers and actors who (at least declaratively) shared the official political beliefs.

The dissertation is, apart from the stages involving an analysis of films in question, based on archival and library query. Amongst documents that are analysed are protocols from pre-release screenings, screenplay reviews, film press articles, financial and economic statements and reports as well as evaluations of film units, made by committees appointed by the Central Board of Cinematography.