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**The “Kronika” and “Wir” Film Studios Against the Background of
the Polish Documentary Film After 1989**

Abstract

The dissertation presents the history of the two institutions involved in the production of documentary films – “Kronika” Film Studio and “Wir” Film Studio, on the broadly outlined background Polish documentary film after 1989. The main goal of the project was to extract and examine the achievements of aforementioned studios, which so far have been overlooked in the recent scientific studies. Their example allows us to verify the general statements about the condition of the Polish cinema after 1989. The discussion of the economic context such as market and regulation of the film industry, as well as the realities of teamwork, completes the whole picture. It reflects the conditions in which producers of documentaries and newsreels were fighting to survive in the market of free media. For this purpose, I give a thorough analysis of the relevant legislation and financial reports, in order to show that the specific economic situation and sources of funding in case of “Kronika” and “Wir” had a direct impact on the quantity and the character of their documentary films and archival notations. Furthermore, my reflections on the execution of their particular film projects illustrate the survival strategies of the institutions that focused on the production of non-commercial films. Having discussed the circumstances of the fall of the “Wir” Film Studio and various stages of commercialization and privatization of “Kronika” Film Studio, the conclusion can be drawn as regards the effect of the Law on Cinematography from 2005. The legislation, which gives Polish cinematography revolutionary solutions in the area of financing the film production and introduces clearer rules of the game for the film producers, actually contains provisions unfavorable for the institutions remaining under the supervision of the state.

The present PhD thesis consists of four chapters. In the introductory part I focus on outlining selected theories of the pioneers and the classics of documentary film, whose echoes are still present in the views of contemporary film directors. After the theoretical introduction I move on to the specifics of a television documentary. My research on Polish documentary film covers mainly the years 1989 - 2012. However, the period preceding the political transformation has drawn my research interest as well. In retrospect, I could trace the

evolution and the specifics of the Polish documentary film and differentiate the stages of various prevailing trends and generations of documentary filmmakers. In search of my own formula to present the continuity of the tradition of "the Polish school of documentary" I create the concept of recurring pattern, which I call "historyczna sztanca" ("historical template"), which may help to understand the phenomena before the breakthrough of 1989, as well as the evolution of the Polish documentary film during the political transformation. Referring to such notions as "the school of Karabasz", "the school of Łoziński", "the school of Fidyk" and "national style", I try to demonstrate that the contemporary achievements of documentary filmmakers are strongly linked to the latest Polish history. Creating my own concept of "the world yet unwatched", that reflects the documentary of the 90s, I try to show the achievement of "Kronika" and "Wir" in light of cultural, political and regulatory matters related to the condition and functioning of Polish cinematography. In resolving the question of the quantity of documentary films produced in the years 1944 - 2012, I present the results of my own research, drawn up in graphic form. The charts show that in the first years after the 1989 there was a collapse of the film production in Poland, however, "Kronika" and "Wir" were the most active in that period. The leading area of my interest turns to biographical documentaries, which I analyze in the context of the hypermedia potential. Having analyzed the examples of digital repositories, virtual film archives and practical application of the VOD system ("Video on Demand") in the promotion of Polish documentary film on the Internet, I make an attempt to reveal the reasons why "Kronika" and "Wir" were standing behind the production of such a considerable amount of biographical films about representatives from the world of culture, ordinary people, freedom fighters and historical figures. For this purpose I also investigate whether we can speak of a new biographical documentary formula in the 21st century. In the summary and conclusions I present the other clues of interpretation in form of suggested topics that can be taken up in order to follow up and deepen the research work initiated by me. Hereby, I point out that the historical documentary films may be read as a source of new mythology in phase of "passage", especially in the liminal stage (according to the typology of the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep concerning the rites of "passage"). I put forward social potential of the films that are far from the model of the documentaries labelled "fighting". In the final conclusions I point to the need and desirability of taking concrete steps in order to save "Kronika", because this is the only Studio on the Polish market for documentaries that ensures maintain the continuity of archival notations and the tradition of the Polish Newsreel.