

Polish media studies between past and future. The role of the Press Research Centre (OBP) in Cracow



Interview with Prof. Dr. Walery Pisarek, on 55 years of academic activity, the mass media and journalism in communism, political transformation and democracy

As a person born in the groundbreaking year 1989, I recognize academic activity and the way of media working in a democracy, while you began your academic career in a completely different reality. You started your academic life in 1958 and you were a director of the Press Research Centre (OBP) for over 31 years, between 1969 and 2000. It was a period of development of this scientific institution, which was highly appreciated not only in Poland but also in the world. How it was possible to improve the OBP and conduct research in that time?

I would reverse this question and ask: Why today, in contemporary Poland, neither has an institution succeeded in developing further, nor another institution been created, which would have had such a role, on such a scale and in such a range as the OBP in the 1960s, 1970s and possibly 1980s? I do not think that today there are not reasonable and high quality research or studies that are as good as the previous one. The development of science has resulted in new methods, techniques and research tools or improved old ones, thanks to which, certainly a lot of research conducted in contemporary Poland greatly exceeds this, which at least in some areas has been done before.

Let's get back to your question about the determinants of creative development of the Press Research Centre before 1989. In this context, I begin by reminding that the authorities, i.e. the ruling party in the People's Republic of Poland was not monolithic. A threat to any current ruling faction were presumptive competitors. If there was someone with political ambitions at the head of the Press Research Centre or in his leadership, it is certain that neither he nor the OBP would have survived the next change in authority structure. People with political ambitions did not work in the OBP. There were also no closer links or sharper antagonism with competing factions within the party.

I got the position of head of the OBP after the tragic death of Irena Tetelowska and Zenon Klemensiewicz in a plane crash on 2nd April 1969. Irena Tetelowska

was not only the director of the OBP, but also the main creator of the institution's conception. Professor Zenon Klemensiewicz was the Chairman of the Scientific Council. When they died, it emerged that I was the only person with a scientific degree in the whole of the OBP, therefore I had to take care of its further existence whilst waiting for a presumptive new director. This period of my temporary work as a director lasted more than two years, and ended with the fall of Gomulka's authorities in the aftermath of the Polish bloody protests in 1970 on the Baltic Coast, after which Gierek took over the Party leadership. In the early seventies — and in accordance with the principle that what was not acceptable during Gomulka's period became acceptable in Gierek's period — I was appointed director of the Press Research Centre. The OBP was already a significant nationwide institution subordinated to the Central Committee [of the Communist Party]. In the opinion of Irena Tetelowska it was not enough. From the beginning, she wanted to create one of the most important centres of media study in the world.

My predecessors, i.e. Ignacy Krasicki and Irena Tetelowska, took care of good international relationships. They enjoyed good relations with the Department of Journalism at the Universities of Moscow and Prague, where the International Organization of Journalists had its headquarters. The OBP had maintained since its very beginning, close contacts with UNESCO in Paris. This organization began then to implement the program of using the media for the social, economic and cultural growth of developing countries. For several years, Lausanne in Switzerland was an important center of mass media studies in the West. During the presidency of Jacques Bourquin, it played the role of headquarters of the International Association for Mass Communication Research (currently the International Association for Media and Communication Research). In June 1966, Jaques Bourquin honored with his participation the tenth jubilee of the OBP. Other presidents of IAMC also visited Cracow, such as Jacques Kayser (as deputy of Fernand Terrou), Raymond Nixon, Jacques Bourquin, and James Halloran.

In fact, in the sixties, the relationships with Lausanne and the IAMCR were for the OBP less important than with Paris and especially with Moscow. Good relations with the Department of Journalism at the University of Lomonosov were so important because, according to the unwritten rule, all that was approved by the Soviets should not be criticized in Poland. Good relations with the Moscow Department of Journalism, which for over half a century was directed by Yassen Zassursky, were also important because in the seventies and eighties [the twentieth century] the Press Research Centre had some bloomers from time to time. They relied on leaks of research results which were unfavorable to the authorities and which went to the West, including Radio Free Europe. Friendly relations with Moscow and Leningrad also protected us against criticism from the most orthodox faculties of journalism in other communist countries.

We were oriented neither towards honors and positions, nor to earnings. It was not indifferent to the existence and development of the OBP. But the fact that we

had patrons among the most prominent Polish scholars was incomparably more important. From the very beginning of the OBP, Irena Tetelowska took care of friendly cooperation and assistance of such prominent Polish scholars as philosopher Roman Ingarden, and linguist Zenon Klemensiewicz, who was President of department of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków and also Vice-President of the Polish Academy of Science, ethnologist Kazimierz Dobrowolski, sociologists Jan Szczepański and Paweł Rybicki, psychologist Włodzimierz Szewczuk, historians Adam Przyboś and Marian Tyrowicz and literary scholar Henryk Markiewicz. This strategy, without a doubt, helped to create and to develop the OBP in the form in which it survived to the III Republic of Poland.

Which areas of research were conducted in the Press Research Centre?

At the beginning, history of media was a traditional area for Polish media studies, which later on was not the most important topic of research in the OBP. Admittedly in 1961 in the tri-centenary of the Polish press, we published *Mercuriusz Polski* [the first Polish newspaper] edited by Adam Przyboś, but we could not compete in this area with Pracownia Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego [Laboratory of History of Polish Periodicals] of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, which started its activity in 1959. Later, they edited the four-volume *Historia prasy polskiej* [History of the Polish Press] and some excellent studies dedicated to radio. There were some main subjects of research conducted by the OBP, such as readership of newspapers and magazines and also reception of media correlative to opinion polls (both in a sociological and psychological context). The reason for the very strong position of the OBP was its own nationwide network of trained interviewers, allowing the conducting of surveys of opinion and media activity of people in Poland in large, sometimes a few thousand, representative national samples. The language as one of the main tools of communication was also an object of studies. Language guides for journalists, style books and the first frequency dictionary of the Polish language in the press were the results of these. Editorial working organizations, forms of press distribution and economic issues of media activity were also important objects of research. For example, we were interested in proportion of revenues and expenses of producing newspapers in Poland in comparison to countries with a free market economy. Pracownia Prawna [Laboratory of Legal Affairs] was also very active. There was no press law in that time in The People's Republic of Poland. Instead, there were a lot of different detailed acts, directions, dispositions, instructions, directives etc. which directly or indirectly regulated the functioning of public communication. We have edited a weighty set of these documents in one volume, entitled *Prawo o prasie* [Law on the press]. Over the course of time, it emerged that there was no research area which was interested in some aspect of the media and was outside of the research interests of the OBP.

According to Irena Tetelowska's concept of communication process, both individual and institutional, it consists of three phases (sender, message and recipient), which correspond to three of its functions: intentional, potential and real done (we want to say something, say something, that something is received by someone). This three-phase process should be entirely included in studies using methods from different disciplines. Irena Tetelowska was a pioneer regarding content analysis of the press in Poland. When she died, I tried to continue her efforts to standardize this method of studying the most material phase of the communication process.

However, I not always was her disciple. Contrary to her opinion, I believed that each scholar who wants to work at the OBP must — although he came as a sociologist, a psychologist, a lawyer, an economist and a linguist — feel as researcher of the communication process and completed presumptive shortcomings in basic knowledge in this field. When I became director of the OBP, I broke with its structural division of labs according to scientific disciplines: psychology, sociology, etc. Instead of them we established three big laboratories: Pracownia Badań Nadawcy [Laboratory of Communicators Research], Pracownia Analiz Zawartości Mediów [Laboratory of Content Analysis of Media] i Pracownia Badań Odbioru [Laboratory of Reception Research]. These laboratories had to cooperate in research of the entire process and its conditions, not only one of the phases.

It is essential to a scientific institution to have a very good library and documentation unit in order to work fruitfully not just temporarily, but for decades. The Press Research Centre fairly quickly received such a library. The oldest part was from the prewar period: there were fragments of the book collection of the Instytut Wiedzy o Prasie [The Institute of Media Knowledge] in Warsaw created by Stanisław Jarkowski. This Institute functioned for a year or two after the war as the Polski Instytut Prasoznawczy [Polish Institute of Press] in Warsaw. The library which remained was handed over to the Press Research Centre. It was a great favor for the OBP, though the received literature was not very up to date. Good international relationships satisfy the need for new literature. Thanks to them we received books and magazines from many countries. Besides, we also had funding from the RSW [monopolistic publishing house which was active during the communist period and founded by the ruling party — PB] to buy the latest literature, which enriched our library more abundantly than university libraries. Thanks to that we subscribed to major magazines dedicated to media studies, such as the *Journal of Communication*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Journalism Quarterly*, *Publizistik* and we systematically reviewed them in our *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* [Media Research Issues]. Incidentally, the situation changed after the takeover of the OBP by the University, when they ran out of funds for books and magazines. That's when experience has taught me that economic confines are much more intense than political constraints. One can overcome political constraints, but not really economic confines.

The OBP not only had a great library and documentation unit, but also hugely, for those times, a base of bibliography and documentation. For over twenty years

(1965–1987) all long articles dedicated to media, published even in dailies, were registered, encapsulated, compiled and published by the Press Research Centre *Polska bibliografia adnotowana wiedzy o środkach komunikowania masowego* [Polish annotated bibliography of knowledge about mass communication]. It was created and edited by Sylwester Dziki. We will introduce it to the Internet, because for researchers interested in media in the period of the People's Republic of Poland it is a very valuable source of references.

In 1976 our *Encyklopedia wiedzy o prasie* [Encyclopedia of knowledge about the press] appeared. It is still sometimes cited not only in master's or bachelor's theses, but also in scientific journals and not only in Polish literature. At that time we acknowledged also that in order to make interaction easier between media experts not only in Poland or Europe we needed a "Who's Who" in the study of mass communication in the world. After three or four years, the material was finished. Originally we published it in quite a coarse form (but imaginatively, because of the star sign!) in Poland as *Word Directory of Mass Communication Researchers*. The new edition completed by us entitled *Who's Who in Mass Communication* was published by the renowned West German publishing house K.G. Saur. It surely bolstered the prestige of the publication and the Press Research Centre.

Furthermore Tetelowska was just before her tragic death (in 1969) elected chairperson of the bibliographical section of the International Association for Mass Communication Research. She enunciated the project of current bibliography all important publications from around the world. This project charmed the Presidium of the IAMCR. Thereupon we actually started to draw up this bibliography, but in a slightly different form in collaboration with UNESCO. And in the framework of the IAMCR we edited the *World Bibliography of Mass Communication Bibliographies*.

It is worth noting, that the OBP also functioned as a publishing house with a few book series (inter alia two series of "Biblioteka Wiedzy o Prasie" [Knowledge of the Press Library] and "Biblioteka Dziennikarza" [Journalists Library] and own small printing unit, which reproduced results of studies and field research in the series "Materiały OBP" [PRC's Materials], "Raporty OBP" [PRC's Reports] and "Express Prasoznawczy" [Press Research Express]. We also had our own electronic computational unit, which before the arrival of personal computers, satisfied the needs of the OBP and also the needs of other institutions.

How was cooperation with research centers and scholars from the West? I know that many of them have published their articles in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* [Media Research Issues]. Was cooperation with researchers from the communist countries in Central Europe similar with western scholars?

Cooperation with scholars from the West was very good and very favorable for us, because notwithstanding exchange of publications, institutions in the West were accustomed to fact that they should help poor scholars and research centers behind

the Iron Curtain by providing them with books and periodicals. We enjoyed this with great appreciation. In Paris the most valuable contact was UNESCO and especially the Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies, with its directors, firstly John Willings and then Alan Hancock. We had very good relations with the Institute of French Press at the Sorbonne and its director, Francis Balle; our friend Professor Jerzy Mond also worked there, and then his daughter, Alexandra Viatteau. For over twenty years, especially during the presidency of James Halloran, we maintained close contacts with the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester in Great Britain, which for several years was the abode of the IAMCR. Friendly relations with Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis personalized cooperation between the OBP and universities in Tampere and Helsinki in Finland. In Western Germany we had cooperation with media research centres in Bremen (Elger Blühm and his Deutsche Presseforschung), Dortmund (Institut für Zeitungsforschung run by Kurt Koszyk, then Hans Bohrmann), Bochum (Sektion Journalistik(!)), Hamburg (Hans-Bredow-Institut), Munich (Otto B. Roegele and W.A. Mahle), Münster (W.B. Lerg), Nuremberg (Franz Ronneberger, then Winfried Schulz), and especially with the University of Mainz, where Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann reigned supreme (we made use of her friendship when she was also director and owner of the Institute in Allensbach), and after her Hans Mathias Kepplinger. At the end of the seventies, multilateral cooperation bound the OBP with academic institutes of media research in Spain: in Barcelona (Manuel Pares Maicas) and Madrid (Antonio Garcia Gutierrez).

In the first decade of its existence, the Press Research Centre had closer relations with the French-speaking world. Even the IAMCR appeared in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* [Media Research Issues] and other publications by the Press Research Centre under the name AIERI (Association Internationale des Études et Recherches sur l'Information), probably because Krasicki and Tetelowska were mostly French-speaking. Only in the seventies did the English language dominate regarding our foreign contacts.

We cooperated with the Annenberg School of Communication in Philadelphia. Scholars from the United States came to Kraków; visited us inter alia I. de Sola Pool, Alex Edelstein and Herbert Schiller, whose book *The Mind Managers* we published in Polish, entitled *Sternicy świadomości*. Also researchers from the Press Research Centre resided as exhibitioners at American universities. One of them was Tomasz Goban Klas, who was scientific secretary of the OBP and thanks to the stay in the U.S. wrote a great book about press for minorities in the United States.

I must add to this the relations with the countries of the Eastern Bloc. We had not particularly friendly relations with Leipzig, to be exact with the part of management of the Faculty of Journalism at this university, but on the other hand, we had the most visitors from there. Instead we had very good relations with the Faculty of Journalism at Charles University in Prague and also with Bratislava, where there was not only the Faculty of Journalism at Comenius University, but also very

active on a national scale an institution similar to our Press Research Centre. It was maintained by journalists *Novinársky študijný ústav*, which published the quarterly *Otázky Žurnalistiky*. We had closeness with this institution and organized joint conferences in the frontier zone. At the end of the seventies the international profession of media researchers activated in Budapest with four institutions: a school of journalism, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the University and research center of radio and television (Tamás Szecskő).

We had formal or informal contracts relevant to exchange publications and scholars with the majority of media research institutions in Leipzig, Prague, Bratislava, Budapest and also Belgrade, Sofia, and Bucharest. Scholars from the OBP traveled to these research institutions with short-term working visits. Relations with media research institutions in the socialist countries were so idyllic until 1981. In the eighties, we were treated with suspicion, especially by the institutions in countries where journalism was a more politicized profession and science than in Poland. Everything that happened in Poland in the years 1980–1981, the so-called “revolution or rather counter-revolution of Solidarity,” was observed with dismay. People were afraid of manifest contact with us, probably because they did not want to expose themselves to criticism from disposers. Sometimes we published the texts of Czech and Slovak “dissidents” in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*. In the eighties, we had very limited cooperation in the RWPG (The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) countries and compensated that by cooperation with research institutions in Western countries, and especially with UNESCO. It was in the eighties when we signed a contract with UNESCO to run courses for journalists from developing countries. Units of UNESCO organized recruitment of candidates and transport to Poland. We had to organize an educational and cultural program, provide lecturers and instructors, and accommodation. Classes in English were held in Krakow, Warsaw and Kazimierz on the Vistula River. We had students from three continents: Africa, South America and Asia (including China, Vietnam, North Korea and India).

What was the uniqueness and phenomenon of the OBP in the Soviet bloc at that time?

There was no such institution, besides Bratislava, which was not related to the radio, television or educational centre for journalists in any of the socialist countries. In the sixties, even the existence of a research institute dedicated to mass communication was exceptional. Usage of the term mass communication was something suspect. In the mid-seventies (!), when we started publishing the bilingual (English-Russian) *Bibliography of Mass Communication Research* we needed a Russian title. The Dean of the Faculty of Journalism of MGU proposed the title *Bibliografija issledovaniji massowoj informaciji i propagandy*. This remained so, until the beginning of the eighties.

I should also recall UNESCO's idea, which derived from the historic conference "Communication and Society" in Montreal in 1969. It assumed that the whole world should be divided into regions and from each of them should be chosen one existing (or create a new) institute, which would be entrusted the preparation of the current annotated bibliography of mass communication research from around the region in one of the languages of the world. A bibliography prepared in this way would be later sent out from one region to the other around the world. The status of regional centers of documentation in this global network COMNET included among others: AMIC (for South-East Asia), CIESPAL (for Latin America), NORDICOM (for Scandinavian countries), IFPSI and BIBLIOCOM (for French-speaking countries), IBERCOM (for Spanish-speaking countries of Europe and Africa). A regional documentation center for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe played CECOM (brought to life in 1974), which was located in the OBP in Krakow. Today presumably of all the COMNET centers only NORDICOM remains in Europe.

You ask me, what was the uniqueness of the OBP in the Soviet bloc? Well, among other things, it was the only institution which had the ambition to compile documentation on mass communication research from the entire region, not just the country in which it was located. Moreover, only the OBP proclaimed that it is difficult for the modern media to function without the systematic research of the collection and the processing of their creation. It was then exceptional at least in this part of Europe.

Poland is the only country in this part of Europe which can boast a scientific journal published since 1957. At the beginning under the name *Biuletyn Prasoznawczy* [Journalistic Newsletter], then *Prasa Współczesna i Dawna* [Contemporary and Old Press] and since 1959 under the current title of *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*. You were not only director of the OBP, but also chief editor of this title in the years 1991–2012. How was it possible to publish this magazine in terms of censorship and maintain a high level? Were there attempts to politically interfere and how did the editorial board deal with this problem?

As I mentioned, there was also the quite good *Otázky Žurnalistiky* in Bratislava. It was the only journal in this part of Europe apart from ours. As regards *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, Paweł Dubiel was responsible for our quarterly after the death of Irena Tetelowska and most of all he deserves to take the credit for its level in the period 1969–1990. *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* was not as good and systematically edited either before or after his tenure. There were elaborate parts of information and reviews, not only tracts and the articles. We had a good understanding of what is published in Poland and in the world in our research area, and we tried to publish everything which in our opinion Polish media researchers should know.

Censorship was not a very acute problem for scientific journals. Serious scientific journals did not encounter what had happened with mass newspapers. The greater the volume, the more carefully worked out was censorship. In any case,

it was rather Dubiel and not the OBP who had clashes with censorship. We were alert to what censorship could face and what not. Papers which for any reason were unprintable were not published in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, but in uncensored publications “for internal use,” like in “Materiały OBP” (OBP’s Materials) and “Raporty OBP” (OBP’s Reports).

In the case of *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* problems with censorship started only in the eighties. Theoretically there was a law which allowed marking in a journal which censorship intervened in a given place, but there was an unwritten agreement that the journals published by the RSW [a monopolistic publishing house which was active during the communist period and founded by the party] would not have indicated this, because it can be badly estimated — as if the party censored itself. Despite that, it was different in at least one regard. Dubiel and the author of the article (Zbigniew Bajka) insisted and led to censorship intervention.

We eschewed publication in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* some critical articles in the sixties and seventies. Though we could use results of research conducted earlier, when due to occurring cyclical crises, criticism of what was before became acceptable. As a result we could construct a report critically evaluating mass communication in Poland in the past decade. Of course, everyone knew where the boundaries were, which for the good of the cause should not be exceeded.

Censorship was not as terrible for us, firstly because we were able to publish internal materials uncensored, and secondly, because our publications were not as thoroughly analyzed by the censors as articles published in mass press.

Who wrote to this quarterly? Where did the authors come from, allowing for the fact that the profession of Polish media researcher before 1989 was rare?

Articles were written by not only media researchers, but also representatives from other disciplines, who were interested in press, radio, television, advertisement or propaganda. A good example was professor Andrzej Tyszka, who as a sociologist studied the image of sports journalists in the press. We noticed that he took this topic in *Studia Socjologiczne* [Sociological Studies], thereupon we offered him to write about it in other perspective for us. In *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* wrote people, who were not media researchers, but were engaged in research of various aspects of the press. Furthermore there were also ambitious journalists, like foreign correspondents, who described the press in other countries. Foreign authors were another group of people who wrote in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*. We printed a list of “foreign associates” from the West and East on the back of the title page. Among them were Aleksandr Bierieżnoj, Vladimir Holina, Władimir Kielnik, Ewgienij Kornilow, Ewgienij Prochorow, Karl-Heinz Röhr and Stefan Stanczew on the one hand, Roger Clausse, Shelton Gunaratne, James D. Hal-loran, William Melody, Karl E. Rosengren, Herbert Schiller, Benno Signitzer or Tapio Varis on the other.

What was most valuable in *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*?

Probably not the same for everyone. Presumably *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* provided above all credible literature and articles cited in the bibliography serving not only as ornaments, in the case of people who wrote master's theses or doctoral dissertations in the field of mass communication study. The review was probably the most valuable part of *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* for academics. The majority of researchers on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain had difficulties in obtaining books and foreign journals, therefore, reviews thrived and there were many researchers interested in them, especially that reviews were published shortly after the publication of the books. The maximum delay for foreign books was a year or possibly two. For books published in Poland, the year of publication usually coincided with the year of review.

How was the reception and reach of the quarterly in Poland and abroad?

I will not say that *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* was in demand, because this of course would not be true. Notwithstanding it spread with a circulation of at least four or five times greater than today, despite the fact that today the number of potential readers is bigger than then. *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* sought to be known in the profession of media researchers in Poland and abroad. Indeed it was in the more ambitious university libraries in Europe.

The quarterly was addressed to people who were involved in writing about media and media studies. *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* always took care to maintain the continuity, present progress and development of interest in media in Poland and in the world. This idea has been preserved to this day.

Is the legacy of communism still an influence on modern media in this region of Europe? What positive and negative trends and aspects of media functioning after 1989 do you discern?

In my opinion the best time for Polish journalists was 1981. For me as an observer of the media it is obvious. Regular journalists in Poland had never felt so comfortable as between November 1980 and December 1981. In those days journalist — not an editor — decided what would be published to a greater degree than ever. In some editorial offices even journalists decided who would be the editor-in-chief. When I compare the current situation of journalists and the situation before 1989, I come to the conclusion that journalists in Poland probably never after 1956, even in the omnipotence of censorship do not feel so utterly powerless in relation to their own text as now. Nowadays editorial boards do not reckon with a journalist's opinion. They feel the owner and administrator of a text written by a journalist within the scope of employment, though there are probably some glorious exceptions. It causes discomfort in a journalist, who is sometimes excessively in love with his or

her own text. It still obtains what was written in press law after the experience of martial law, ergo a journalist is obliged to carry out a general editorial program line in his activities. Anything contrary to this line constitutes a breach of the duty of employees. It aimed to discipline journalists after Solidarity's experience. Many changes have already been introduced in press law, but this notation remains undisturbed, which gratifies publishers. To my mind it is discouraging for many journalists. So I often tell my students that they should be prepared for a situation in which they will begin work in some editorial board and simultaneously they will commit themselves to adherence to the editorial program line, not only in texts created in this editorial.

This change in the situation of journalist, which is inauspicious in my opinion, entails peculiar discomfort, but there is also one huge comfort for journalists. This is the ability to say: "In that case, thank you for the work in this newspaper, I will go somewhere else." Of course it is arguable that today it is hard to get a full time job in an editorial, a more permanent employment contract and the economic situation of many newspapers and magazines is uncertain. Some people consider that the possibility of resigning with regard to one's beliefs is illusory, albeit there are some cases when journalists turn down work, due to the change in the position of editor-in-chief, because they expect him to introduce an editorial program line, with which they will not identify. After that they try to get job in other newspapers or establish their own. I consider as the most important achievement of journalists after 1989 this opportunity which is not only theoretical, but is also at least in some way possible in fact, despite all of these restrictions which I noted at the beginning.

Formerly both journalists and editors-in-chief were assessed to which extent they appeal to their superiors. Therefore a lot of journalists, newspapers and management of editorials depended mainly on how a particular editorial met the expectations by the trustee of a policy. Nowadays the publisher absolves a newspaper for a lot of things, as long as it is connected with increasing readership and increasing catchiness for advertisers — it is called the commercialization of current editorial policy of the media. This commercialization undoubtedly is contributing to the decline of quality of some newspapers and magazines. There is need to appeal to more people so that we have a larger readership, and the number of people who are more fastidious is less than people who are not too fastidious, that is, those with less ambitious reading interests. It has lead to a decline in the intellectual level of newspapers. It also contributes to assimilating in the number of serious newspapers, magazines or their columns to gossip portals. Everybody is aware of this. Editors of ten approve, implement or plug this policy in their newspapers and magazines.

Negative appearance is also softening the frontier between journalism and public relations. Editorial policy approving presence materials, which were made and delivered by public relations units of various institutions is not only defended but also validated. Defenders of these practices argue that everybody should be pleased,

because thanks to this, newspapers have materials premised on data which is elusive for the journalist.

We also observe a huge transfer of the audience from traditional media to the internet. I certify this with dismay, based not only on observations but also on research, that even journalism students do not read the daily press. The fact that they do not read does not surprise anyone, but they also have nothing against working for these dailies after or during studies. Nowadays there is the beginning of the exodus from television. Few students watch television news, which back then was watched on a daily basis. Everything has moved to the Internet and computer-tablet- mobile phone communication. Is it good or bad? It is difficult to tell exactly, but it is new, and all new things should be observed with uncertainty to see if they will have positive or negative results.

The content of newspapers, which is interesting only in large countries like Germany, France or the United States is no longer surprising, but still raises protest. Almost no attention is paid to the closest neighboring countries, except situations when there are some scandals. So it was recently in the case of Czech Republic. For a long time we haven't had any information about this country and it only appeared when there was a corruption/sex scandal.

Many people and linguists complain about the deformation of language because of SMS communication or E-mail communication, which deforms language both graphically and stylistically. Everybody complains and it is consistent with the general tendency to criticize language in media. I also often succumb to this tendency. Contemporaneously I recognize the fact that never before in the history of Poland so many young people wrote and read (!) as they write and read (!) as they do now.

The public domain has become free and open to everyone with the introduction of democracy in Poland and Central Europe. Internet users willingly enjoy developing citizen journalism. How do you evaluate the development of new, amateur forms of journalism — do they develop journalism, lower standards of this profession or maybe we should look at them in another way?

As I said, the factor which destroys journalism is commercialization. It kills journalistic ethos. I belong to the generation which believed (it does not mean that it always ran in this way) that you should write about important things because of the belief of the rightness, truthfulness and with the need to write about it in this way.

So-called citizen journalism creates the possibility of individual and honest evaluation of reality and interpreting the world by one's own beliefs, not because of getting money in lieu of a presentation or commendation for something. What is needed is the difference between "genuine journalist" and advertiser or propagandist. Now this difference begins to blur. Journalism mingles with public relations,

marketing and also advertising. Commercialization could step in the area of citizen journalism and do it. I really want to believe that even if commercialization steps in this area, it will not master it completely and there will be always some area for non-commercialized citizen journalism.

It is hard to find a job in journalism nowadays, but the internet creates some new potentiality. I wish for the internet to be a place where the most ambitious journalism and journalism is sincerely committed, not calculated solely on making money, will develop. Of course, you need to make money, but it is worth whilst making money to have the possibility of not earning money, and writing what you can identify with.

The future prospects for media are diverse and rather pessimistic, especially when we talk about traditional media. Will the profession of journalist in the age of digitization and the ubiquity of social media evolve, remain the same or gradually wane?

Today, the term “journalist” is willingly replaced by the term “media worker.” In my opinion it means the degradation of journalistic status and resignation of journalistic ethos. However, I hope that there will be always some people who will have ambition to continue the tradition of journalism worthy of the name. In any case the majority have always practiced publicity or propaganda, so there is no way to idealize the past.

In conclusion, I would like to ask you a question as a representative of the young generation of communication and media researchers who did not experience communism and this is the era of which we learn from history textbooks. Would you like to give us three pointers which we should be guided in our research and academic activities?

If you ask about three pieces of advice, I'll give you three. Please do not draw conclusions regarding their validity on the basis of order. One piece of advice should be the postulation of efforts to accumulate knowledge. Each new research project should begin by determining the state of research and define what we know and what we do not know about the subject of interest. The results of the research should be integrated with the current state of knowledge, check assertions which are sometimes uncritically repeated, discover their weaknesses, disambiguate them or complete them. You have to incorporate what you did, to what has been done by others. Nowadays researchers usually crave for grants and after realization look for the next, with a completely different range, and they do not care anymore about what they did.

Secondly, when you embark on new research, you should defend yourself against common opinions, stereotypes and prejudices against people, dates, places

and countries. It is not true that there are certain countries and periods in which nothing ever happens, or at least there is nothing worthy of attention and interest.

Thirdly, when you write a research report, an opinion or a review, you must beware of the black-and-white images in which black is related to what you hate, and white — to do what we love. If your opinion or review does not see in the analyzed text no fault, no flaw, no substantive, methodological or formal lapse we can call it encomium. On the other hand if your opinion or review does not see any advantage in the analyzed text, no original thought, no methodological innovation, no inspiring metaphor, or anything that deserves a benevolent mention, you have not written a monograph, an opinion or a review, you have written instead, libel. Sometimes you have to write an encomium, sometimes you have to write a libel, but you should not write only encomiums and libels.



Prof. Dr. Walery Pisarek was interviewed by Paulina Barczyszyn in November 2013.