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The current importance of Christian media in Slovakia

SUMMARY

Christian media in Slovakia are important opinion-forming agents of society influencing the public opinion of various opinion groups, they influence a person's thinking as well as the moral and the spiritual potential. Primary attention has been focused on RTVS – radio and television in Slovakia. The sources used are many, enriched with my own views and experiences.

KEYWORDS: media, religious broadcasting, programme structure, radio, television

STRESZCZENIE

Aktualne znaczenie mediów chrześcijańskich na Słowacji

Media chrześcijańskie na Słowacji są poważnymi czynnikami kształtowania świadomości i opinii publicznej, wywierają wpływ na różne grupy społeczne o różnych poglądach, i na kształtowanie się myśli, moralnego i duchowego potencjału człowieka.

Pierwotną uwagę skupiłem na RTVS – radio i telewizję na Słowacji. Informacje do tematu czerpię z wielu źródeł, które również są wzbogacone moimi własnymi poglądami i praktyką.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: środowisko, transmisja religijna, struktura programu, radio, telewizja

Currently media culture and culture in general finds itself on the periphery of social interest, which is aptly reflected in the programme structure of Slovak media. This is a typical phenomenon which is prevalent to a greater or lesser degree in the neighbouring countries of the former socialist bloc. "The mass media is the term for the institutions and technologies that create and disseminate information towards a mass audience. The mass media create mass communications." The mass media primarily fulfils an information-orientation function, through which it conveys opinions and public sentiments to the recipients, but often approaches global socio-political events with a one-sided impression. Any rational criticism is absent, but a kind of exception is the alternative media sectors, and consequently the mainstream media lose their sense of general journalism whose purpose is to inform the relevant media audience truthfully, impartially and controversially.

Radio and television

The hallmark of radio and television is: a high degree of regulation, checks and licensing by public institutions

The distinguished English scientist and expert on communication theory, Denis McQuail, specified broadcasting media by the following features:

- A very large output, scope and impact,
- Audio-visual content,
- Complex technology and organization,
- A public nature and extensive regulation,
- A national and international character,
- Very diverse forms of content.¹

McQuail characterizes recorded music as a medium by the following features:

- various technologies for recording and dissemination,
- A low level of regulation,
- A high degree of internationalization,
- A younger audience,
- Subversive potential.
- Organizational fragmentation,
- Diversity in income opportunities²

1 Porov. McQuail, D.: 2002. *McQuail's reader in mass communication theory*. Praha: Portál. pp. 39.

2 Tamže, s. 40.

After November 1989, Slovak Radio began to create conditions for the development of religious broadcasting. This gave rise to a religious newsroom with a wide variety of programmes. Broadcasting consists of three components of the programme structure – news, current affairs and religious programmes belonging to the category of programmes in the public interest.

The radio communications have a wide application of news, journalism, literary and religious programmes that mediate radio products to recipients via a diverse reproduction unit.

Of the religious programmes broadcast by Slovak Radio, by far the most listened to is live coverage of Sunday Catholic worship celebrated by various priests.

In the context of religious broadcasting on Slovak Radio there is enormous interest among listeners for Morning Reflection. In the programme monologues predominate, based on a letter as a written form of testimony, however the manner of administering it, the distinct targeting and the means of expression, using everyday language, means it has acquired a strong audience. The aim of this genre is to provide the sender's personal experience or personal message to the intended recipient or audience. The main purpose is to positively motivate the other listeners. The manner in which it is depicted makes use of the possibilities of a direct even intimate effect. The content of the reflection is civil so as to reach out to as many listeners as possible. The thoughts in Reflections on the Day always reflect a current topic of the day and are a form of encouragement for the next day.

The aim of the religious programmes broadcast on Slovak Radio is to highlight the moral values of personalities that appeal to our youth. The programmes deal with the current problems faced by people. They take notice of the stereotype of young people's lives, seek specific solutions and recourse from the perspective of the Christian faith and offer assistance when presenting a specific, often non-conforming attitude or opinion toward the comfortable trends of contemporary society. Guests are invited to the programmes, usually experts on the given issue, and an audience of university students who express their opinions, observations or suggestions for solutions to the given topic.

The operational programme for activities aimed at organizationally ensuring the necessary preconditions for preparing programmes and trouble-free broadcasting. It concerns the preparation of broadcasting proposals (playlists), plans, prepared on the basis of the programme structure and the monthly and weekly programming plans (given the working title of daily broadcast schedules).

Specific activity: creating a programme structure, organizing broadcasting, coordinating the programming and technical components of broadcasting

The organization of broadcasting and the coordination of the programming and technical components of the broadcast is recorded in detail in the daily broadcast schedule. It is actually a detailed breakdown of the broadcast containing the following information:

- The date of broadcasting
- The programme's broadcast time and the intended scope of the programme structure
- The programme's name, if necessary, the subtitle or the number, cycle, series
- The exact broadcast time (in the case of programmes recorded in advance, 'canned programmes')
-

Programme structure – RTVS radio (December 2016)

Religious broadcasting on Slovak Radio

Radio Slovakia – Morning Reflection every weekday **5:20 to 5:22**; over the weekend **6.14**

DECEMBER 2016

03/12/2016, Saturday

6.05 – Ecumenism in the World, Rádio Regina

17.05 – Faith in Life, Rádio Regina. Current events in the lives of believers with Pavel Náther

17.50 – Ecumenism in the World, Rádio Regina

04/12/2016, Sunday

6:51 – From the Soul, Radio Regina

7.00 – Country of the Soul, Radio Devín. Magazine on religious culture and art

8.00 – Sunday Morning Guest, Radio Slovakia. Štefan Chrapp talks about the events of the last week

9.05 – Christian Sunday – Radio Regina, Radio Slovakia. Live broadcast of mass from the Church of the Family in Bratislava

10.05 – Encyclopaedia of the Just, Radio Slovakia. Stories about people who saved Jews during the war. Dagmar S Mozolová

17:05 – Spiritual Horizons, Radio Regina. With Naďa Lúčanská

23.05 – Lean on Me, Radio Slovakia. Stories of people whose faith helped in difficult situations.

12/10/2016, Saturday

5.6 – Ecumenism in the World, Radio Regina

17:05 – Faith in Life, Radio Regina. Current events in the lives of believers with Štefan Chrapp

17:50 – Ecumenism in the World, Radio Regina

12/11/2016, Sunday

- 6:51 – From the Soul, Radio Regina
7.00 – Country of the Soul, Radio Devín. Magazine on religious culture and art
8.00 – Sunday Morning Guest, Radio Slovakia. Štefan Chrapp talks about the events of the last week
9.05 – Christian Sunday – Radio Regina, Radio Slovakia. Live broadcast of mass from the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St. Elizabeth in Košice
10.05 – Encyclopaedia of the Just, Radio Slovakia. Stories of people who saved Jews during the war. With Dagmar Mozolová
17:05 – Spiritual Horizons, Radio Regina. Programme with Andrea Eliášová

17.12.2016, Saturday

- 6.05 – Ecumenism in the World, Rádio Regina
17.05 – Faith in Life, Rádio Regina. Current events in the lives of believers with Pavel Náther
17.50 – Ecumenism in the World, Rádio Regina

18.12.2016, Sunday

- 6.51 – From the Soul, Rádio Regina
7.00 – Country of the Soul, Rádio Devín. Magazine on religious culture and art
08.00 – Sunday Morning Guest, Rádio Slovakia. Štefan Chrapp talks about the events of the last week
9.05 – Christian Sunday – Rádio Slovakia. Evangelical worship services from Jasenovce
9.00 – Rádio Regina – Orthodox liturgy
10.05 – Encyclopaedia of the Just, Radio Slovakia. Stories of people who saved Jews during the war. With Dagmar Mozolová
17.05 – Spiritual Horizons, Radio Regina. Programme with Dagmar Mozolová
23.05 – Lean on Me, Radio Slovakia. Stories of people whose faith helped in difficult situations.

24. December, Saturday – Christmas Eve

- 16:00 Evangelical worship services, from Kremnica
24.00 Live Broadcast of the midnight Roman Catholic Mass at the Church of the Holy Family, Bratislava – Petržalka

25. December, Sunday – Christmas Day

- 9:00 – Live Roman Catholic Mass. St. Martin's Cathedral., Spišské Podhradie
11.50 – Radio Slovakia and Regina, Foreign broadcast Urbi et Orbi – Blessing of the city and the world

31. 12. 2016 Saturday

- 6.05 – Ecumenism in the World. Rádio Regina³

3 <http://www.ecav.sk/?p=Kalendar/Program/SRO> (cit. 20. 11. 2016).

Television is a visual medium that reflect current social events at home and abroad, with an emphasis on the visual and audio components. Its use is dichotomously diverse, because on the one hand it forms respect for cultural values and education, but often they are presented with a pseudo-value. Eva Chudinová mentions the functions of television as a medium that mostly meets an informative – cognitive, educational, recreational, awareness, regulatory, directive, hedonistic function.⁴

Religious broadcasting on Slovak Television is mostly provided by ST2 via regular coverage of religious services on Sundays and major feast days. In particular these are the programmes: The Word – Sunday Address and festive speeches – The Holy Word the spiritual, religious magazine, Orientations and sometimes foreign spiritual broadcasts from the Vatican. On the feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius STV aired the premiere of a good-quality three part documentary entitled the Thessaloniki Mission about the work of St. Cyril and Methodius in our country.

Of the Christmas broadcasts, the films St. Barbara, Padre Pio, the premiere of a documentary triptych entitled The Golden Thread of Christianity and, during prime time, the narrated documentary In the Footsteps of St. Paul 1, 2 resonated strongly with the audience. Increased viewer ratings were observed for the remarkable programme with a strong public service content.

Regular ecumenical news and current affairs, which have long been part of the radio programming of RTVS (Vatican, Ecumenical, Paths ...), are absent from the religious programmes on Slovak Television

The RTVS service broadcasting for the faithful takes up a proportion of the population claiming to be Christian. RTVS programming should continue to strive to increase their overall spiritual quality in other types of public broadcasting programmes.

The Church, which is the teacher of mankind, is aware that it must offer its own contribution for a better understanding of the perspectives and responsibilities associated with the current development of the social communications media. These media influence the consciences of individuals, form their opinions and condition their outlook on life, it should be strongly and clearly pointed out that the means of social communication are a heritage that must be protected and developed. Communications media must be put into the framework of the organically structured rights and duties, both in terms of education and ethical responsibility, as well as regards the laws and institutional competencies.

4 Porov. Chudinová, E. 2010. *Televízna tvorba*. In *Praktikum mediálnej tvorby*. Bratislava: Eurokódex, s. 190.

First, it is necessary to have extensive formative activity aimed at learning about the media and their responsible and appropriate use. New means of expression introduced by the media change the process of obtaining information and the quality of human relationships, so without adequate formation there is a danger that instead of serving the people, they begin to abuse and strongly influence them. This is especially true for young people, who show a natural inclination to technological innovations and also because they need to be much more educated in the responsible and critical use of media.

In the second place, I would like to draw attention to media access and responsible participation in their management. If the communications media are to be of benefit to all mankind, it is always necessary to find new forms that would allow broad participation in their management, including through appropriate legislative measures. It is therefore necessary to develop a culture of shared responsibility.

Finally, not to forget the great potential of the media in facilitating dialogue, solidarity and peace, as they are a means of mutual understanding. Thus, the media are an effective, positive resource, if they stand in the service of international understanding; but they become a destructive “weapon” if they are abused to fuel injustice and conflicts.

Communication within the ecclesial community, as well as the Church’s communication with the world, requires transparency and a new way of approaching issues related to the media. Such communication must seek constructive dialogue, which should strengthen well-informed public opinion within the Christian community making it able to properly discriminate.

The Church has the right and the need to inform about its activities, as well as about other institutions and groups, but also, if necessary, it should ensure the possibility of reasonable discretion without being to the detriment of accurate and sufficient information on facts related to the Church. This is one area where collaboration between the lay faithful and their pastors is very desirable, because, as the Second Vatican Council report points out,

it can be expected that these friendly relations between the laity and pastors are of great benefaction for the Church: a fact that deepens within the laity a sense of their own responsibility, assisting their willingness and facilitating the collaboration of the laity with the pastors. They in turn, supported by the experience of the laity, will be able to form a clearer and better judgment both in spiritual and in temporal issues, so the whole Church, with the help of all its members, can more effectively meet its mission for the life of the world.⁵

5 Catechism of the Catholic Church. Trnava: St. Adalbert Association, 1998. pp. 2494.

An important document from the time of the Second Vatican Council was the decree on communications media *Inter Mirifica*. The document specifies the role and importance of the Catholic Church, mentions the moral law and is dedicated to youth ministry.

Programme structure – RTVS television – religious programmes (December 2016)

DECEMBER 2015

STV2

3. 12.

17:00 Slovak families – Juraj Thurzo from Levoča (SR 2010)

4. 12.

13:50 Orientation (R). Religious magazine

17:00 Slovak Families – Businessman John Thurzo of Betlanovce (SR 2010)

23:20 Powaqqatsi. The lives of People in the Third World (USA 1998)

6. 12.

12:40 Orientation. Religious magazine

19:50 A Talk with Igor Rintel Word – first evening of the feast of Hanukkah. Spiritual intercession

00:50 The Word (R)

7. 12.

17:00 Slovak Families – The Relative of Queen Alexei Thurzo (SR 2010)

8. 12.

17:00 Slovak Families – František Turzo the Episcopal See in Nitra (SR 2010)

22:45 Dinner with Havran – Humanism in Central Europe

9. 12.

17:00 Slovak Families – Palatine Juraj Thurzo of Betlanovce (SR 2010)

10. 12.

17:00 Slovak Families – Palatine Juraj Thurzo and Elizabeth Báthory (SR 2010)

11. 12.

11:30 Orientation (R). Religious magazine

17:00 Slovak Families – Why did Imrich Thurzo have to die so young? (SR 2010)

21:25 The Wind That Shakes the Barley. Drama (Germany, UK 2006)

12. 12.

22:05 A Short Film about Killing. Kieslowski on the Fifth Commandment (Poland 1987)

13. 12.

12.35 Orientation (R). Religious magazine

- 19:20 The Word of Sister Sebastian. Spiritual intercession
20:15 Father and Son 1/4. Russian classics in film format (Russia 2008)
21:00 Father and Son 2/4. Russian classics in film format (Russia 2008)
00:55 The Word of Sister Sebastian (R)
18. 12.
11:25 Orientation (R). Religious magazine
19. 12.
21:50 A Short Film about Love (Poland 1988)
23:15 Vietoris Tablature. The music of the 17th century (SR 1993)
20. 12.
12:55 Television Messenger. Topics: Tribute to the Slovak Generals Viest, Golian, Malár and Jurech. Concert by Elena Letňanová the 200th anniversary of Ľudovít Štúr. Church under Suppression – Memories Pavel Uhorskai. Food Aid for the Needy
19:50 The Word of Evangelical Pastor Anna Debnárová the 4th Sunday in Advent. Spiritual intercession
20:10 Father and Son 3/4. Russian classics in film format (Russia 2008)
20:50 Father and Son 4/4. Russian classics in film format (Russia 2008)
01:25 The Word (R)
22. 12.
9:00 In the Footsteps of St. Paul 1/2. Documentary (UK 2012)
15:30 In the Footsteps of St. Paul 2/2. Documentary (UK 2012)
20:10 Cloud Atlas. Epic film fresco about the interconnectedness of our present with the past and the future (USA, Germany 2012)
23. 12.
15:15 In the Footsteps of St. Peter 1/2. Documentary (UK 2012)
17:25 Adam Borončo's Christmas. TV film from the book by L.N. Jégé (SR 1988)
In the Footsteps of St. Peter 2/2. Documentary (UK 2012)
23:15 Bridges of Gesharim. Concert for understanding
24. 12.
14:50 Harmonia Pastoralis. Christmas composition (SR 1970)
16:15 Christmas in Hont. Ethnographic documentary about Advent and Christmas traditions in the evangelical region Hont (SR 2008)
20:05 Festive Word. Spiritual intercession of the Roman Catholic Archbishop Stanislav Zvolenský
25. 12.
09:30 Divine Service with the Lord's Supper on the First Feast of Christmas Evangelical. In the Church of the Blue Queen. Sermon by General Bishop ECAV Miloš Klátik. Liturgy senior of the Bratislava seniority Sidonia Horňanová. Live

- 11:15 Wooden Gem. The articular church that originally stood in Paludza. Documentary (SR 1999)
- 14:30 The Treasures of Jerusalem. Documentary (France 2014)
- 20:05 Festive Word. Spiritual intercession by evangelical General Bishop Miloš Klátik
- 20:10 Age of Innocence. Romantic drama (USA 1993)
- 26. 12.**
- 10.10 The Treasures of Jerusalem. Documentary (France 2014)
- 14.35 The Treasures of the Vatican. Documentary (France 2014)
- 20.10 Les Misérables. Adaptation of the classic by Victor Hugo (USA, Ger, UK 1998)
- 27. 12.**
- 8:25 Christmas Once upon a Time. Christmas in Liptov. Documentary (SR 1997)
- 11:45 Francis: Pope of the Poor. Documentary (SRN 2013)
- 18:35 Prayers. Children's poetry Milan Rúfus (SR 1993)

JEDNOTKA

- 24. 12.**
- 21.20 The Bible Continues (1/12). The Tomb Is Open. Pokračovanie série Biblia (USA 2015).
- 22.05 The Bible Continues (2/12). The body is Gone
- 25. 12.**
- 21.40 The Bible Continues (3/12). The Spirit Arrives
- 22.25 The Bible Continues (4/12). The Wrath
- 26. 12.**
- 21.55 The Bible Continues (5/12). The First Martyr
- 22.40 The Bible Continues (6/12). The Persecution
- 27. 12.**
- 21.25 The Bible Continues (7/12). The Visit
- 22.10 The Bible Continues (8/12). The Road to Damascus
- 28. 12.**
- 21.30 The Bible Continues (9/12). Saul's Return
- 22.10 The Bible Continues (10/12). Brothers In Arms
- 29.12.**
- 21.30 The Bible Continues (11/12). Rise Up
- 22.10 The Bible Continues (12/12). The Abomination⁶

Radio and television have the greatest potential not only to deepen the religious consciousness of believers, but also to rehabilitate Christianity in

6 <http://www.ecav.sk/?p=Kalendar/Program/STV2>(cit. 20.11.2016).

the public opinion of a secularized society and influence the thinking of the entire population on the basis of general, universal Christian humanism.

Under the critical view of consumers, the religious broadcasts on RTVS gradually revised the original conception of its role. Radio and television have an enormous influence on forming the thoughts, morals and spiritual potential of mankind. After more than forty years of oppression, Slovakia needs this potential above all in the religious life of the nation and especially with regard to the period when its moral values were devastated, both in the past and today.

The programmes of religious broadcasts by Slovak Television and Slovak Radio lack aesthetic and educational programmes. The said media lead the viewer to an aesthetic sense, not only in artistic fields, but also to find emotional approaches in every working day and to motivate an aesthetic perception of the day's events. This means working closely with publishers, with cultural institutions with whom it would be possible to proceed in parallel with the production and broadcasting of cycles and also publish them in various forms. RTVS does not create sufficient space for the production of religious programmes as evidenced by the fact that the religious editorial department was closed down in Slovak Radio.

The professional production of religious programmes for RTVS requires good-quality and internally competent editors, a skilled and broad background; but also continual critical assessment of the programmes broadcast and finding new, untested and unproven forms. For this creative failure one needs only look at the relative sterility of the creators themselves, who only saw what they wanted to see let alone hear what they may not wanted to have heard. The quality of Christian journalism is reflected more in the power of analysis than in missionary zeal.

During an aesthetic perception of the religious programmes, emotional human culture comes to the fore and plays an important role. We react emotionally and then later reflect on rational grounds.

Within the Christian media, recipients should expect a broader thematic scope, which could be focused solely on current spiritual issues even of a controversial nature, which should take a clear stance. Christian audio-visual institutions in general should be more willing to implement the principles of balance, so that during discussions it is necessary to give space to the opposing party. I noticed this shortcoming a few times, especially during major religious causes. It then lacks an objective dimension, which, to some extent, leads to the loss of viewers.

The quality of religious programmes lies in mediating the truth, i.e. in admitting to one's errors. If the individual church leaders fail, unnecessarily cloud matters, to give things the right name, then the tabloids take up the mantle, the only positive aspect being that they reveal the true pain of the church.

Recipients need to hear the general truth in the broadcast media, an objectification of the issues broadcast, to offer the correct and the right values in the broadcast, not a trivialization of the problems and issues that concern most people inherently and not to force upon them only those views that the media want to broadcast. I consider political manipulation from the perspective of the clergy, who should not meddle in public affairs, to be the most serious. If space is given to individual political agents, then each one should have an equal space in the broadcast, which is a question of decency. The principles of journalistic ethics must be adhered to, even if we disagree with individual public officials, otherwise we cannot talk about good-quality, professional journalism. Everything that touches the true faith in human life is missing. But the main cause of this deficiency may be sought in the Church clergy.

If we see a downward trend of listening to Christian media, then the reason for this can be a lack of interest. The editor of Christian media must be out of tune, as concerns the professional aspect, consisting of managing elementary journalistic procedures, principles, he must also have a general cultural-political overview especially in religious matters.

Understanding and acceptance can only occur when Christians unambiguously prove that they do not intend to make propaganda and ideology for their church, but they want to reach out to everyone, to tell them that they are not here just for themselves but also for the world and that the long-term, forced silence does not entitle them to compromise on quality and the level of production offered.

I consider a benefit of the radio media to be mainly accelerating awareness and sufficient information on current topics. When determining the structure of the programme the viewer ratings of individual programmes are crucial for most of the media. The main motive in this case is an effort to sell the media product. Christian media enrich our knowledge, there is still room for improvement, and therefore we believe that the onset of the younger generation will increase the level of religious broadcasting in Slovakia. A programme is made for a person – the viewer and not the homogeneous mass. I believe that everyone is a demanding recipient and should have the chance to choose between quality and less quality programming. And now we can see what we can choose from, the media have important opinion-making and educational functions. This fundamental feature is often lacking and a deliberate absence covers the term of a mass viewer, who does not want anything other than bread, entertainment, i.e. allegedly does not want challenging types of programmes. So, as Christian media should foster mankind's spiritually, then secular media should foster the fundamental universal human values.

Conservative media, which Slovakia needs, should not be a PR manager of the Slovak Bishops' Conference. Should not be dependent on

distribution in churches, because then they lose their independence, freedom and the opportunity to write something that church leaders might not like.⁷

Christian media has a specific mission, which is to acquire and in particular to address people on an evangelistic basis. The phenomenon of active evangelism should be taken into account in individual media communications. But, in the framework of monitoring the developments in the Christian media scene, I must say that spirituality is disappearing and is being replaced by a secular aspect. In their specific platforms they succumb to the current mainstream trends, which is not a very positive signal.

Since its inception the media are linked to ethical principles that form an indispensable part of them. These are

- Honesty
- Truthfulness
- Responsibility
- Respect for human dignity
- Respect for human rights
- Participation in social welfare⁸

At the end of this paper I would like to reiterate the need to constantly coordinate the work and the workers involved in the creation of religious programmes and therefore the question of compliance with the rules of journalistic ethics is always topical.

Modern man is a “victim” of the mass media; mass media actually improves the quality of life only if it enriches the moral intellect of man and his spirit. And therefore it is necessary to direct the mass media into the right hands with greater courage and creativity.

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