

## Night with the General – *a Democratic Documentary*

The political documentary has a long tradition in the history of Polish cinematography. It flourished chiefly as a voice of opposition to the authorities in the times of People's Poland; hence it was by assumption critical. After 1989, documentary filmmakers turned their back on this type of cinema and we still have not come to see any continuators of this genre, once so fertile in the past.[1] One of the very few people who is still interested in portraying current political conflicts is Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz. Her *Night with the General* (*Noc z generałem*, 2001) is an excellent example of how the choice of a film genre may lead to the politicisation of stances shown on screen, in this case centred around the issue of whether Wojciech Jaruzelski was right to impose martial law, and on his person in general.

The political form of the documentary she adopted is consistent with the ideas of the Belgian political philosopher Chantal Mouffe writing about the agonistic nature of the concept of democracy. In addition, Zmarz-Koczanowicz avails herself of the heritage of the “Polish School of Documentary Films” – producing a democratic documentary in which she relied on the film form that had grown from fact-based films, taking up political issues in an undemocratic environment.

The political climate of People's Poland stifled any direct statements on the social reality of the period. Only at critical moments, when the Party was changing its political course, were spaces of relative freedom opened up, giving a chance to have a peek beyond the thick curtain of propaganda. The generation of documentary filmmakers who took centre stage in the early 1970s made the best of one such period and it is their experience that Zmarz-Koczanowicz has drawn on most. The tragic events of December 1970 and the ensuing political turmoil that brought down the Party's First Secretary, Władysław Gomułka, and witnessed Edward Gierek take the post, brought about a relative thaw in social life, and broadened the margin of toleration for the criticism of the authorities and Polish reality. In such circumstances, young filmmakers could speak in a politically veiled voice, pointing to both social and political ills.

[1] It must be admitted, however, that after the events of April 10, 2010, political documentaries have seen a revival. Their subjects, however, are mostly limited to a single issue: building conspiracy theories by right-wing journalists about the crash of a presiden-

tial airplane at Smolensk. This is, however, a marginal trend in the current Polish documentary cinema and has not brought about any growth of interest in making political documentaries on other topics.

The event that gave birth to a new documentary cinema was the festival in Kraków in 1971. There, the young generation of documentary filmmakers openly turned on their teachers, charging them with the conformism which they found in the apolitical, notionally artistic, lyrical films of the so-called “Karabas School”. Contrary to the *de rigueur* practice of patient observation, present in Polish documentaries at that time, these young auteurs preferred crusading forcefulness and contestation, striving to expose the ills pervading Polish life.

In the opinion of Andrzej Michalak, the main change that the younger generation demanded was to take up topics ignored by filmmakers in the 1960s.[2] The yearning for the truth about social life by such directors as Tomasz Zygadło, Bohdan Kosiński or Krzysztof Kieślowski stemmed from the same conviction that made Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski write *The Unrepresented World* (*Świat nie przedstawiony*). In this book, the two writers asserted that the social life of the 1960s was not represented in art. Fully supporting the assertions made by the literati, the young documentary filmmakers resolved to ignore the topics proposed by filmmakers in the 1960s and to have a closer look instead at Poland without a thick layer of propaganda gilding. They mutinied against politically “safe” films about the everyday life of musicians, migrants or John Does. They were not interested in the truth about the personal life of an individual, but in the truth about society viewed through a “water drop”.

They aimed to tear asunder the veils of propaganda, and to record reality, previously without audiovisual representation, by penetrating people’s consciousness, views and attitudes. The means they chose was very simple but revolutionary and controversial for those times. It involved listening carefully to what people had to say. This prompted Zygmunt Kałużyński to charge the documentary filmmakers of the “Kraków School” – as they began to be called then – with the adoption of the abused television habit of showing “talking heads”. The style they developed was not, however – as Kałużyński claimed – “recurring amateurishness”[3] but a conscious stance, both artistically and politically. The most consistent in restraining from interference and carefully listening to what people said on camera, Krzysztof Kieślowski, had an overriding principle in his documentaries: let people speak. These were people who nobody wanted to listen to before or whose voice was either distorted or jammed by official propaganda.

It is Kieślowski’s documentaries that appear to be a major source of inspiration for the work of Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz.[4] This is

[2] A. Michalak, “Przełom w polskim dokumencie – program artystyczny ‘szkoły krakowskiej’ w kontekście przemian kulturowych i politycznych lat 1968–1971” [A Watershed in the Polish Film Documentary. The Programme of the Kraków School in the Context of Cultural and Political Transformation, 1968–1971], in: *Kino polskie: reinterpretacje. Historia, ideologia, polityka*, eds. K. Klejsa, E. Nurczyńska-

-Fidelska, Rabid, Kraków 2008, p. 440.

[3] Quoted after: M. Jazdon, *Dokumenty Kieślowskiego* [*Kieślowski’s Documentaries*], Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2002, p. 61.

[4] It is worth adding that she was his student in the Faculty of Radio and Television, Silesian University, Katowice, and gave testimony to her attachment to Kieślowski by shooting the biographic documen-

visible in the gesture, she repeats, of giving voice to people. Yet, the political goal in Kiesłowski's films differs from the expected result in Zmarz-Koczanowicz's works. This follows from the different socio-political situation in which they made their films.

Kieślowski's work strategy, seen in *Workers 1971 – Nothing About Us Without Us* (*Robotnicy '71: Nic o nas bez nas*, 1971), co-directed by Tomasz Zygałdo, involved listening to people deprived of their own voice in the social discourse 'speak'. The voice of workers was only simulated in the official mass media; the authorities put into their mouth statements convenient for the establishment and not the words they actually intended to say. Thanks to Kieślowski's camera and microphone, they could finally speak their minds. He used a similar strategy in *Bricklayer* (*Murarz*, 1973) and *I Was a Soldier* (*Byłem żołnierzem*, 1971) – where he gave voice to those characters who ranked high as symbols<sup>[5]</sup> for the socialist authorities: a bricklayer and a war veteran. When these symbolic figures spoke their minds, revealing their private thoughts and attitudes on the socio-political life, it was plain they were inconsistent with the words put into their mouths by the official propaganda. Granting an opportunity to speak one's mind turned out to be a political gesture laden with criticism. It showed that human thoughts did not succumb to power and could have a real impact on social life, of which the filmmakers were perfectly aware. This is evident from their reply to Kałużyński in defence of the manner of the "talking heads" that they adopted:

Why should we stick to the external, morality-oriented description? Why not reach deeper – through human words – to human thoughts? [...] People in our films – as Kałużyński has it – "blabber", because contemporary people indeed speak and for that matter, equally interestingly as they look and behave, it is with their voice that they express what makes them interesting to us – their attitude to the world and their place in it.<sup>[6]</sup>

The manner of "talking heads" therefore was not thoughtlessly transplanted from television street surveys and reportages, nor was it merely an artistic stylisation borrowed from the practices of *cinéma vérité*. It was a conscious gesture imparting democratic traits to the public sphere by giving voice to those who had been deprived of their own space in the public discourse, and one that led to a plurality of social narratives.

Kieślowski's documentary work, however, was not limited to the exposing of falsehoods inherent in the picture of life promoted by the authorities by giving voice to people excluded from social discourse. Kieślowski was equally eager to listen to people taking up the side of the authorities. In *Life Story* (*Życiorys*, 1975), Antoni Gralak, a ficti-

tary about him *Still Alive. A Film About Krzysztof Kieślowski* [*Still Alive. Film o Krzysztofie Kieślowskim*, 2005].

[5] Mikołaj Jazdon compared Kieślowski to Wojciech Wyszniowski, whose creative documentaries also con-

centrated on symbolic protagonists for the authorities at that time – a textile worker, carpenter or a miner (M. Jazdon, *Dokumenty Kieślowskiego...*, pp. 68–69).

[6] Quoted after: *Ibidem*, pp. 76–77.

tious character with an invented life story appeared before a real party control committee, which was to decide if there was any merit in his appeal from the decision expelling him from the party. The essence of the film was not what the person harmed by the party said – Gralak is a fictitious character, serving the purpose of provoking a situation interesting to Kieślowski. The heart of the film consists, rather, of the opinions delivered by the representatives of the authorities making it, through impartial listening, an attempt to understand them. The work strategy Kieślowski adopted followed from his personal conviction that there were two ways of confronting ideological adversaries: you either engage in a mortal combat with them – then any conversation, or even listening, is out of the question – or you try to understand – then they should be allowed to speak after all.

Tadeusz Sobolewski described Kieślowski's attitude, interested in listening carefully to the other speak, as an effort to attain his own ideal of "peace", identified with political disengagement.[7] The ideal would mean blurring conflicts, not escalating them, and closing the gap between the authorities and the opposition. Giving voice to the people standing on both sides of the political barricade was not meant, according to Sobolewski, to introduce pluralism to the discourse and to show the multitude of radically different, incompatible narratives. The expected result would be rather reaching an agreement and cooling arguments. The ideal of political "peace" would involve blurring the differences between two narratives – closing the gap between them in the name of a possible agreement. It is this conciliatory attitude – of closing the distance between the people and the authorities – that Sobolewski calls democratic.[8]

This interpretation of Kieślowski's films places his oeuvre outside the political discourse – Sobolewski calls the filmmaker's attitude uncompromisingly apolitical. An entirely different interpretation is put on the political saturation of Kieślowski's films by Mikołaj Jazdon, who directly maintains that the events of 1968 politically initiated the group of documentary filmmakers headed by Kieślowski. They learned that there was no escaping from politics and that it had to find its place in their work.[9]

Transpiring from the commentaries on Kieślowski's work, the paradox of his attitude being interpreted as both political and apolitical at the same time is not at all a violation of the logical law of an excluded middle. This was expressed best by Stanisław Zawiślanski, quoting Slavoj Žižek as saying that the political dimension of Kieślowski's works went beyond the opposition to communism – dissidents. It was an

[7] T. Sobolewski, "Spokój i bunt. Uwagi o twórczości Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego" [Peace and Rebellion. On the Work of Krzysztof Kieślowski], in: *Kino polskie w trzynastu sekwencjach*, ed. E. Nurczyńska-Fidelska, Rabid, Kraków 2005, p. 130.

[8] T. Sobolewski, "Troska ostateczna. Uwagi o spo-

lęcznym kontekście kina Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego" [The Ultimate Nod. The Social Context of Kieślowski's Film's], in: *Kino Krzysztofa Kieślowskiego*, ed. T. Lubelski, Universitas, Kraków 1997, p. 111.

[9] M. Jazdon, *Dokumenty Kieślowskiego...*, pp. 57–58.

attempt to find a third way, different from the paths of the authorities and the opposition: “This [...] is the path of a continuous search for that which joins and not for that which divides”.[10] Kieślowski’s attitude, thus, would realize a post-political programme – one trying to reduce the differences between the two political extremes: the right and the left. In the light of this interpretation, the purpose of his films, giving voice to both sides of the political barricade, would be to indicate common points – the human side of the authorities and the willingness to cooperate on the part of the common man. Kieślowski’s documentaries, with all their critical potential, were meant above all as a means to understanding, reconciliation and opening of a common space of dialogue outside of the hegemonic and irreconcilable demands of the extreme wings of the two political fronts.

Kieślowski’s stance as represented in his documentaries would be political, and very much so, but pursuing a post-political vision. According to Chantal Mouffe, it is, however, inconsistent with democratic interests today.[11] An attempt to go beyond the left and right, and political antagonisms towards a rational dialogue within the framework of liberal culture, undermines pluralist democracy by striving to blur the differences between political actors, destroying thereby the diversity of viewpoints. The distinction made by Mouffe into post-politics and *politicality*, corresponding to the pursuance of dialogue or antagonism, is also what differentiates Kieślowski’s stance from that of Zmarz-Koczanowicz. The assumption shared by the films made by the author of *Camera Buff* (*Amator*, 1979) was the pursuit of a consensus, while Zmarz-Koczanowicz moves towards exposing an agonistic conflict.

Nevertheless, the above comment refers only to a few works by Zmarz-Koczanowicz, if not indeed only to a single one – analysed in detail in this text – *Night with the General*. In most of her documentaries, she departs from politics towards a sociological description of interesting phenomena in the life of Poland after the transformation[12], historical subjects,[13] or portraits of eminent figures in Polish culture[14] Also, in some of her attempts to take up political topics, her modus operandi is far from an agonistic confrontation of opposing hegemonies. This is seen best in *Generation '89* (*Pokolenie '89*, 2002).

[10] S. Zawisliński, *Kieślowski. Życie po życiu. Pamięć* [*Kieślowski – A Life After Life*], Skorpion, Warszawa 2007, p. 73.

[11] C. Mouffe, *Polityczność* [original: *On the Political*, Routledge, 2005, p. 1], trans. J. Erbel, introd. P. Gdula, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2008, pp. 16–17.

[12] For instance, such films as *Rumpy Pumpy* (*Bara Bara*, 1996), analyzing the social phenomenon of disco-polo music or similar in spirit *Love For a Vinyl Record* (*Miłość do płyty winylowej*, 2002) about emerging techno culture in Poland in the early 1990s.

[13] For instance, *Gdański Railway Station* [*Dworzec Gdański*, 2007], *An Ordinary March* [*Zwyczajny marzec*, 2009], *Wiera Gran* (2012).

[14] *What She Was and Was Not*. Irena Krzywicka (*Jaka była i nie była*. Irena Krzywicka, 1993), *Jerzy Grotowski. An Attempt At a Portrait* (*Jerzy Grotowski. Próba portretu*, 1999), *The Magic Mountain. American Portrait of Czesław Miłosz* (*Czarodziejska góra. Amerykański portret Czesława Miłosza*, 2000), *The Professor. About Leszek Kołakowski*. (*Profesor. O Leszku Kołakowskim*, 2005).

[15] The charges levied at Zmarz-Koczanowicz by the milieu of *Krytyka Polityczna*, concentrating on its intellectual, conciliatory manner of presenting political conflicts, could be levied at Kiesłowski in the same way. In *Generation '89*, she indeed tries to go beyond current political conflicts and refuses to entangle her story in immediate ideological arguments. Yet, her output includes films taking a stance in periods of political strife and bringing together diverse hegemonies present in the Polish political discourse. This strategy is seen best in *Night with the General*.

Prior to 1989, the task of a documentary filmmaker was easier in a certain aspect. For many such filmmakers the goal was to capture shreds of reality and to build metaphors to communicate with viewers, above the heads of the censors. They tried to tear down the veils of propaganda and to show the truth hidden behind them. When the veils did finally come down, everybody could see that there were many more truths still. This sudden diversification of narratives and the awareness of the many aspects of the social world embarrassed many documentary filmmakers – they faced the problem of abundance: about what, why and how should they speak? This might be the reason why the output of Zmarz-Koczanowicz is characterized by a certain “greed” [16] – she takes on what is important at the moment. Her films, watched after many years, prove, however, that her choice of subjects was right. This is also borne out by the words of Jazdon, who said that

[15] The purpose of the film was to portray members of the generation active in the attempts to revive NZS (Independent Student Union) in the late 1980s by holding anti-government demonstrations and strikes. The documentary is based on contemporary comments by the participants of those events who currently are publicly recognisable such as Marcin Meller, Paweł Piskorski or Krzysztof Varga. What we see on the screen is only the intelligentsia faction, which makes it hard to identify their opinions with the entire alleged generation. Witold Mrozek was right to observe this and charge Zmarz-Koczanowicz with making the discourse elitist. (W. Mrozek, “Pokolenie '89 Marii Zmarz-Koczanowicz, czyli sieroty po utopii” [Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz’s *Generation '89* – Post-Utopia Orphans], in: *Polskie kino dokumentalne 1989–2009. Historia polityczna*, ed. A. Wiśniewska, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa 2011, p. 93). More significant still is another deficiency of this film – the absence of the representatives of the other side of the contemporary political barricade from the screen. Mrozek lists people of the same “generation” who could comment on those events and who share different ideological views from those held by people shown in the film. These are Mariusz Kamiński, Dariusz Gawin, Rafał Matyja or Radosław

Sikorski. The focus on a single political faction made the film short on *politicality* – reproduction of current political conflicts. This finding made Agnieszka Wiśniewska and Jakub Majmurek arrive at the unjustified generalisation that all Zmarz-Koczanowicz’s films were dominated by “the narrative of the Polish ‘non-right’ intelligentsia connected with the liberal centre” (J. Majmurek, A. Wiśniewska, “Wstęp. Dokumenty polityki” [Introduction. Documents of Politics], in: *Polskie kino dokumentalne 1989–2009...*, p. 7) characterised by the conservative, cautious or outright mandarin approach to politics.

[16] Of the embarrassment of documentary filmmakers after 1989, Zmarz-Koczanowicz spoke replying to the following question put to her by the editors of the „Znak” magazine: “What was the impact of the political and economic system transformation: the arrival of democracy and the rise of capitalism on Polish documentary film?”. The filmmaker replied that “for the ‘Polish School of Documentary Films’ it was important to search for the crucial point of reality and after the transformation it was hard to find out what the most important thing in this new reality was and how to speak about it” (The reply of Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz in a survey, *Znak* 2012, no. 11 (no. 690), p. 110).

the most important characteristic of her work was her skill to spot the phenomena representative of our times.[17]

This is also true for *Night with the General* – a film giving the profile of General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who accounts for his decisions before Teresa Torańska on a night preceding an anniversary of the imposition of martial law. Of crucial importance for the significance of the whole film was the choice of the date for the interview.[18] This choice allowed her to confront Jaruzelski's convictions with his political adversaries who at that time, as each year, gathered outside of his house to voice their objections to his person, policies and decision to impose martial law. Although this is a documentary whose protagonists concentrate on past events, this is not a historical film. Far more important than establishing the chronology of events being reconstructed by the General, a confrontation of present-day political factions takes place involving, on the one side of the fence, a man identified with the post-communist camp and representing a left-wing narrative, on the other, a picketing line of members of the Republican League, a right-wing organization, charging Jaruzelski with quislingism and high treason.

Captured by the camera, the antagonistic situation is emblematic of the entire Polish political scene after 1989. For Andrzej Rychard, who searches for the political reasons Polish society has split in two, the principal reason for the split after 1989 is the argument about the past,[19] which is supposedly shown by the perennial squabbling over the vetting of public officials. One of the historical events, dividing Polish society along political lines, is martial law. What one thinks of this event reveals the person's political sympathies. An attempt to defend the decision to impose it is characteristic of the post-communist camp, while its unequivocal moral condemnation defines the post-Solidarity faction. It is this split into these two political camps that, according to Rychard, is the chief area of politically-motivated social strife.[20]

The parties to the political argument, distinguished in *Night With the General*, believe that the principal source of the conflict, making them evaluate differently the imposition of martial law, is their different

[17] M. Jazdon, "Zabezpieczanie ślądów. O filmach Marii Zmarz-Koczanowicz" [Securing the Slides. The Films of Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz], in: *Klucze do rzeczywistości. Szkice i rozmowy o polskim filmie dokumentalnym po roku 1989*, ed. M. Hendrykowska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2005, p. 131.

[18] Jazdon notices this, too. He believes that the choice of a meaningful moment for shooting film-portraits is one of the characteristics of her style (Ibidem, p. 132).

[19] A. Rychard, "Rozproszona Polska. Wstępna próba bilansu socjologicznego" [A Poland Fragmented. An Initial Attempt at a Sociological Balance], in: *Pol-ska. Jedna czy wiele?*, eds. H. Domański, A. Rychard,

P. Śpiewak, Trio, Warszawa 2005, p. 112.

[20] This opinion concerns the Polish political scene prior to the 2005 election in the wake of which, parties deriving from the post-Solidarity camp (PO and PiS) gained the two largest numbers of seats, while the representation of the chief post-communist party (SLD) considerably shrank. As a result the SLD lost power and was now no longer the largest opposition party. Since that time, the adversaries to the main political argument have ceased to be the left and the right, and have been replaced by two parties of the Solidarity background. Nevertheless, Rychard's comment reflects well the situation on the political scene at the time of shooting *Night With the General*, i.e. in 2001.

understanding of the concept of patriotism. Jaruzelski, referring to the charges that he had been fawning on Brezhnev, which the young people on the other side of the fence considered quislingism, says: “I would fawn on the devil himself to help Poland”. Another of his arguments, showing that he was a good and responsible patriot, was his strenuous efforts to convince the Soviet leaders that the imposition of martial law should be “the internal affair of Poland”. Provided they listened to him, there was hope that Soviet troops would not invade Poland as they did Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. Hence, the imposition of martial law, in the light of his explanations, was a responsible move – he knew that Poland was consequently not threatened from the outside. Moreover, it was also necessary because increasingly radical opinions were coming to the fore at the continuing session of the National Committee of the Solidarity Trade Union, according to his informers, and ever more desperate speeches could be heard. All this augured very badly for the demonstrations scheduled by Solidarity for December 17th.

His ideological adversaries, gathered outside of his house, put an entirely different interpretation on the decisions made in 1981. Standing among their midst, Mariusz Kamiński, the former chief of the Central Anti-Corruption Office, says that to him the General is a quisling and a traitor who tries hard to dodge responsibility (the demonstration starts with a march, with the participants carrying a banner reading: “Bring Jaruzelski to Justice”). Similar words are used by other demonstrators to voice their disapproval of the general. Their opinions, however, are not strictly political, but rather moral. One of them says: “The fact that so few people attend is a sign how morally unstable are the times we live in”. The question of Jaruzelski’s decision is not ideological or political but rather ethical for them,<sup>[21]</sup> and protesting against his person is a question of conscience now. The General, too, shows his resentment towards the demonstrators – he observes with irony that these are very young people, who “surely” remember the martial law very well. Afraid of being attacked and insulted, he refuses to start a dialogue with them.

Neither side treats the other as a suitable partner for a political showdown – they are hostile to each other and view themselves only through a moral filter. According to Mouffe, this is the greatest problem of contemporary politics:

*Politicality* is played today in the register of morality. In other words, it is still being played on the distinction us/they, except that it is defined not in political categories but in a moral language. The place of the conflict between “the right and the left” is taken by the struggle of “good and evil”.<sup>[22]</sup>

According to Mouffe’s criteria, the conflict is, admittedly, played in the arena of *politicality*, because she defines it as an antagonistic atti-

[21] One of the younger female demonstrators says that Jaruzelski is a clearly negative figure of Polish history because he has blood on his hands.

[22] C. Mouffe, op. cit., p. 20.

tude – one where two orders clash – but it does not keep to democratic standards. Their principal task is transforming antagonistic conflicts, setting up the friend/foe opposition into agonistic ones where a representative of the opposition is only an opponent whose legitimate existence in the sphere of social discourse is respected by all parties involved.[23] According to Mouffe, the transformation of antagonistic relations into agonistic ones is the primary task of democracy.[24]

The ideological conflict shown by Zmarz-Koczanowicz is not played out along democratic principles as the sides do not legitimize each other's positions – they speak of the other side, with Jaruzelski's opponents in particular “in terms of morality” and not in terms of politics. The director, however, by bringing together in her documentary radically different points of view on a single political issue, makes the political conflict democratic and achieves what she failed to do in *Generation '89* – she shows a contemporary political conflict. The idea for the film – beginning with the choice of the moment when a symbolic confrontation of the left and the right takes place and ending with the recording of different, absolutely incompatible points of view on whether the imposition of martial law was right or wrong – meets a democratic standard, proposed by Mouffe, aimed at encouraging the plurality of the political scene. An agonistic confrontation of two hegemonies takes place, then, virtually thanks to the filming of the two sides of the conflict by the documentary director's cameras and editing of the recording so that the foes are placed side by side.

Zmarz-Koczanowicz avails herself of the gesture of giving voice, drawn from the work of Kieślowski. Like him, she puts herself in the position of an impartial witness whose only role is to listen patiently to what her protagonists have to say. She took over the method of “talking heads” from Kieślowski and the other documentary filmmakers of the “Kraków School”, which, like them, she uses as a very conscious artistic strategy. In this way, she includes her protagonists in the sphere of discourse – she listens carefully to what they have to say, without passing judgements, or jeering and distorting what they said.[25]

As in the case of the documentary filmmakers in the 1970s, also in her work the gesture has a political side to it. Allowing protagonists to speak – impartial listening to the people who have been given an opportunity to speak their minds – is an attempt to implement an agonistic vision of democracy by structuring the film material in such a way as to

[23] Ibidem, p. 35.

[24] Ibidem, p. 36.

[25] It is her listening skill and an attentive concentration on the faces of her protagonists that Łukasz Maciejewski believes to be the hallmarks of Zmarz-Koczanowicz's oeuvre: “Concentrating on the protagonist's face and an attempt to understand his arguments is crucial for her oeuvre” (Ł. Maciejewski, “Uśmiech cudzysłowu” [The Smile of a Quotation

Mark], *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2008, no. 23, <<http://tygodnik.onet.pl/kultura/usmiech-cudzyslowu/8jgdn>> [accessed: November 15th 2013]). The director herself confesses that she strongly favours the method of “talking heads”: “For many people talking heads are a cinch. But I am a person who believes in a conversation or an interview” (Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz says in *Klucze do rzeczywistości...* [The Keys to Reality], p. 200).

facilitate a virtual confrontation of the feuding sides. This means that the discussion in the “register of morality” is abandoned and that an attempt is made to politicize it. The gesture made by Zmarz-Koczanowicz shows that she believes in the sense of talking to the people who in the Polish political discourse are often marginalized and deprived of their own autonomous voice. She attains the diversification of political discourses taking place beyond the principle of morality, by giving voice to both Jaruzelski and his opponents without passing any value judgments, without supporting any side, but searching for common points or chances for a possible agreement. She makes possible a confrontation of two antagonistic political positions, which was not possible in reality because of mutual moral prejudices.

The vision of democracy developed by Chantal Mouffe relies on the plurality of ways the reality is viewed. Democracy should be founded on the confrontation of real and different hegemonies – incompatible ways of organizing the social life. Each side, according to Mouffe, must represent a clear cut political proposal, not one seeking a consensus. Similar, clear-cut and authoritarian political factions attract Zmarz-Koczanowicz’s attention in her political documentaries. Jazdon observed, quoting her words, that she chose those protagonists who want to change reality and fight for it, that she is interested in the people who are “hot” or “cold” but never “lukewarm”.[26] Her work strategy relies, therefore, on depicting those people who hold strong political opinions, who are not interested in a consensual dialogue and possess a clear and radical political identity. This choice of protagonists is a consequence of her faith in politics, to which she testified in an interview: “We are being told that today all politics is about is just a game and nothing but; I wanted to show that there still are young people who continue to believe in something”.[27] To satisfy the demand that political discourse be made more democratic, in her documentaries she reached for the method developed by Kieślowski and other members of the “Kraków School” generation. She took advantage of the strategy of giving voice in the form of “talking heads”, which was to help the documentary filmmakers of the 1970s find common points in the discourses between the authorities and the opposition. In the hands of Zmarz-Koczanowicz, the strategy became a way of bringing forth political difference.

[26] M. Jazdon, “Zabezpieczanie śladów...”, p. 140.

[27] Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz says, in: Ł. Maciejewski *Przygoda myśli. Rozmowy obok filmu* [*The*

*Adrenalin of Theory. A Discussion Around Cinema*], Trio, Warszawa 2009, p. 164.