

Tomasz Fraszczyk

Television in Greece in the era of socialist dream of Andreas Papandreu¹

KEY WORDS:

Greece, television, Andreas Papandreu, PASOK, media policy

ABSTRACT

Andreas Papandreu is one of the most well-known Greeks living in the 20th century. He was the creator of PASOK and served as the Prime Minister of Greece in the 1980s and 1990s. The aim of this paper is to present the activities of Andreas Papandreu's government in 1981–1985 related to the sector of television. Special emphasis is being put on instrumentalization of public service broadcasting. The presented chapter argues that media policies of left-wing-oriented Papandreu were a part of His 'socialist dream', which could have been observed in all fields of societal, economic, and political environments of Greece in the 1980s.

Andreas Papandreu is not simply the legend of the Greek political scene but, beyond doubt, one of the most widely known 20th-century Greeks in the world. As the founder of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK; Gr. *Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα – ΠΑ.ΣΟ.Κ*), Greek prime minister for many years, the hegemon of the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, who nevertheless did not avoid both political and moral scandals, he remains one of the most significant reference points in the discussions on the past and future of Greece to this day. A hero and patriot who wanted to bring prosperity and the feeling of social security to the Greeks for some, for others a corrupt adulterer who wasted the best, first decade of the membership of his country in the European Economic Community and the opportunities which were opening for Athens then. This paper presents a small section of Papandreu's administration during his first term of office (1981–1985) – the section which most directly

¹ This paper is a part of the author's doctoral dissertation entitled *Radiofonia i telewizja w Grecji. Ewolucja mediów audiowizualnych w modelu śródziemnomorskim* [Radio and television in Greece: The Mediterranean model of the evolution of the audio-visual media], which is the winner of the 7th competition for doctoral dissertation in media sciences organized by the "Studia Medioznawcze" ["Media Studies"].

relates to his dealings with the most influential medium below the Acropolis, that is, the television².

Television during the first term of office of socialist rule: the beginning of the changes

The reform of the Greek state media, which had been harshly criticized by the socialists for many years, was an important item in their party's election program³. Andreas Papandreu claimed that the conservatives made the ERT an "organ of party propaganda and brainwashing, which only informs about the activities of the government, where the reports of handovers of new swimming pools and unending statements by ministers replace the subjects which are important but uncomfortable to the rulers, filling the news programs to the brim"⁴. Among the specific allegations made against the broadcaster and the way it was organized, the left-wing candidate for prime minister named, among other things, the direct political dependence of the management and the directors of individual divisions of the company, and surreptitious advertising of pro-government press in journalistic programs. He postulated the creation of an independent council of journalists, which would be responsible for the scheduling in the radio and television and the selection of subjects related to politics, and also a parallel council of authors to create the cultural offer of the ERT. Moreover, Papandreu strongly advocated a complete prohibition of commercials, calling them the "trash that fouls the ether" and represents the interests of international corporations, acting to the detriment of the country's independence⁵.

² See also: D. Hallin, P. Mancini, *Systemy medialne. Trzy modele mediów i polityki w ujęciu porównawczym* [Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics], Kraków 2007, p. 21–45; and Σ. Παπαθανασόπουλος, *Πολιτική και ΜΜΕ. Η περίπτωση της Νότιας Ευρώπης*, Αθήνα 2004, p. 37–79.

³ The short, one-word slogan used in this campaign by PASOK: "Change" (paraphrased and developed in numerous ways, e.g. "PASOK for change", "The rule of change", "Change is coming", "PASOK in government, nation rules", "The nation wants change and PASOK can do it", etc.) was written down in the history of Greek politics.

⁴ Even today, Greek (and most likely not only Greek) politicians like to present themselves with newly handed over public investments in the background.

⁵ The question of the threat that international capital groups and foreign companies would capture Greece was one of the subjects most often raised by PASOK during the 1981 election campaign, and the chief postulate stemming from this diagnosis was the objection against the implementation of the accession agreement with the European Communities under the conditions negotiated by the New Democracy in 1979. See also: J. Bonarek et al., *Historia Grecji* [History of Greece], Kraków 2005, p. 633.



Fig. 1. The historical electoral rally of PASOK, Athens, 15 Oct 1981. Hundreds of thousands of backers of Andreas Papandreu were gathered then on the streets of the Capital between the squares of Syntagma (Constitution) and Omonia (Concord), and three days later contributed to a great victory in the elections

According to the expectations, the parliamentary elections of 18 October 1981 were clearly won by the socialist PASOK, who filled 174 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, giving it a comfortable majority. The defeated New Democracy had to resign itself to 113 seats, and the composition of the Parliament was completed by the Communist Party of Greece with 13 deputies⁶. The new Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu gave the first interview, transmitted by the ERT, to the American NBC network, “making many promises which awakened great expectations,” but also “making a good impression thanks to his balanced, matter-of-fact replies, which incited a feeling of general satisfaction among the viewers”⁷.

Shortly after taking office, the new government began the process of changes in the area of electronic media. The PASOK politicians suggested unambiguously that the changes

⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷ Cf.: Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης*, Αθήνα 2008, p. 102.

would go deep, since, as one of the close collaborators of Papandreu said, “currently even the camera operators in the ERT are openly in support of the New Democracy”⁸. Journalist Giorgos Romeos was appointed the president of the national broadcaster; he was tasked with immediate implementation of the provisions of the Media Act of 1975 regarding the inclusion of the military YENED television into the ERT structures, which was successfully suspended during the previous term of the parliament by the conservative faction who sympathized with the army⁹.

ΓΡΑΦΕΙΑ ΤΥΠΟΓΡΑΦΙΑ ΕΣΚΑΤΟΥΣ 2 (Τ. Γ. 101), ΠΛΑ. ΚΕΝΤΡΟΥ 500.011, 100 001, ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ 1 411-077, ΤΙΜΗ ΦΥΛΑΚΤΩ ΔΡΑΧ. 15

Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ

ΑΘΗΝΑ ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ 19 ΟΚΤΩΒΡΙΟΥ 1981

Εκδόσεις 81
Κυριακή από 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 και 8

Η πλειοψηφία του ελληνικού λαού ετάχθη υπέρ του κόμματος του κ. Α. Παπανδρέου

ΤΟ ΠΑ.ΣΟ.Κ. ΣΧΗΜΑΤΙΖΕΙ ΑΥΤΟΔΥΝΑΜΗ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗ

Ράλλης: Η «Νέα Δημοκρατία» δά ασκήσει υπεύθυνη αντιπολίτευση

ΣΥΓΚΕΝΤΡΩΤΑ ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑΤΑ ΕΩΣ ΤΗΝ 19 ΠΡΩΙΝΗ

Ψηφοί: 7.428 επί συνόλων 18.478
Μείζονα 2.297/30. Σύνολο ψηφοφόρων 2.246. 1981

ΣΥΛΛΑΒΗ	
Κ. Δημοκρατία	792.238 35,81%
ΠΑΣΟΚ	1.051.277 47,81%
ΕΣΚ	1.651.622 73,4%
ΚΣΕ	345.056 15,36%
Κ.Ε.Ε.	31.439 1,4%
Κ.Ε.Ε.Ε.	8.101 0,36%
Κ.Ε.Ε.Ε.Ε.	35.781 1,59%
Κ.Ε.Ε.Ε.Ε.Ε.	16.588 0,74%

Το ΠΑΣΟΚ ανέλαβε κυρία θέση στις βουλευτικές εκλογές εξερχόμενος - σύμφωνα με το αποτέλεσμα επί του πρώτου του εκλογικού σώματος - την απόλυτη πλειοψηφία στη Βουλή με 172 έδρες ποσοστό 47,81 έναντι 113 της Κ.Δ. Δημοκρατίας ποσοστό 35,74 και 15 έδρες του ΚΣΕ ποσοστό 11,36. Ολοκληρώθηκε πολιτικός διαρκής, οι οποίοι εκλέχθηκαν με τον συνδυασμό σφραγίδα στις εκλογές κατανοήσιμων κυριαρχικών και ουσιαστικών εκλογικών αποτελεσμάτων. Ο πολιτικός χαρακτήρας των ψηφοφόρων είναι ο πιο μεγάλος κόμμα διαμορφώθηκε το 60% και συνέβαλε να εκλεγεί ο πρώτος πρόεδρος της Βουλής ο κ. Α. Παπανδρέου με 172 έδρες ποσοστό 47,81.

Ο νόμος της δημοκρατίας

Ο ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΛΑΟΣ σφραγίστηκε. Η επιτυχημένη του είναι οδοί της δημοκρατίας και της ελευθερίας. Η Ελλάδα είναι πλέον μια χώρα που ο λαός της έχει αποφασίσει να κυβερνηθεί με τον νόμο της δημοκρατίας. Η Ελλάδα είναι πλέον μια χώρα που ο λαός της έχει αποφασίσει να κυβερνηθεί με τον νόμο της δημοκρατίας. Η Ελλάδα είναι πλέον μια χώρα που ο λαός της έχει αποφασίσει να κυβερνηθεί με τον νόμο της δημοκρατίας.




ΤΑ ΣΧΟΛΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΩΝ ΑΡΧΗΓΩΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΑΠΟΤΕΛΕΣΜΑ

Τά μικρά κόμματα επισημειώνουν την πολωτική έκβαση των εκλογών

ΤΑ ΔΥΟ Κ.Κ. ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΖΟΥΝ ΤΗΝ ΗΤΤΑ ΤΗΣ "ΝΕΑ" ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑΣ




Αύριο πιθανότατα δά ορκισθεί η νέα κυβέρνηση του ΠΑ.ΣΟ.Κ.

Οι πολιτικοί αρχηγοί των μικρών κομμάτων εξέφρασαν την απογοήτευση τους για το αποτέλεσμα των εκλογών. Ο κ. Α. Παπανδρέου δήλωσε ότι η νέα κυβέρνηση θα ορκισθεί αύριο. Ο κ. Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής δήλωσε ότι η Νέα Δημοκρατία θα ασκήσει υπεύθυνη αντιπολίτευση.

Οι πανηγυρισμοί των νικητών

Οι νικητές των εκλογών πραγματοποίησαν πανηγυρισμούς στην Αθήνα. Ο κ. Α. Παπανδρέου δήλωσε ότι η νέα κυβέρνηση θα ορκισθεί αύριο.

Fig. 2. The front page of the Athenian daily “Kathimerini” from 19 October 1981, relating the electoral victory of PASOK. In the pictures, top left Georgios Rallis, the leader of the

⁸ Γ. Δάμπασης, *Την εποχή της τηλεόρασης*, Αθήνα 2002, π. 184.

⁹ Soon, within the ruling PASOK party doubts would arise regarding the direction in which the YENED was being transformed; the details can be found further in the text. The history of military media in Greece dates back to the years of the Civil War of 1946–1949.

New Democracy, top right Andreas Papandreu, the founder and leader of PASOK; at the bottom Konstantinos Karamallis, the maker of the Greek democracy after 1975, founder of the New Democracy party, and the President of the Republic in 1980–1985 and 1990–1995

Contrary to the concept of depoliticizing the state media, announced by Papandreu, it did not take long for party nominees of “unspecified responsibilities”, jokingly referred to as the “green guards,” to appear in the main ERT building¹⁰. They did not hide their close ties to the left-wing authorities, and the new director of the television Nikos Alevras, privately nephew of the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Ioannis Alevras appointed after the October elections, frankly admitted that he feels himself a “commissary of the Socialist government”¹¹. Prime minister Papandreu did not see the contradiction between his previous criticism of the New Democracy activities and his pre-election announcements on the one hand, and the post-election actual state on the other, explaining that “our socialist dream will never come to be if the party does not assume control over the state structures, which should begin to work to further the changes we promised”¹². It can be said that both at the level of its rhetoric and, most importantly, specific actions, PASOK did not resist the temptation of making the ERT a political instrument in the realization of the “socialist dream”, treating the media as an important part of the spoils of electoral victory.

¹⁰ Green has remained the color of PASOK until today. Cf.: Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 103. For more on the “green guards” and the Green Guard they formed, see: J. Bonarek et al., *Historia Grecji...*, op. cit., pp. 636–637.

¹¹ Γ. Δάμπασης, *Την εποχή της τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 177.

¹² Quoted after: Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 103.



Fig. 3. Andreas Papandreu triumphant. Athens, October 1981

The new program director of the ERT Vasilis Vasilikos¹³ launched energetic changes in the media offer of the national broadcaster¹⁴. His first decision led to the most popular foreign TV show in Greece being taken off the air: the American *Dallas* series. The motives for this decision were purely political and clearly subscribed to the anti-American – or, more broadly, anti-Western – rhetoric of PASOK. The objections against the show involved the pop-culture promotion of consumerism, stigmatized by the Socialists at many occasions, which was to benefit only the great corporations, often hailing from the US¹⁵. After the mass protests of distressed viewers, Vasilikos recalled the ban on broadcasting *Dallas*, but he simultaneously announced the appointment of a “round table” to perform an axiological assessment of the messages contained in Western TV productions¹⁶.

The harsh assessment by the director was applied not only to foreign films and series, but domestic productions as well. After his experiences with *Dallas*, Vasilikos did not dare to

¹³ A popular left-wing writer, author of the novel *Z* known in Poland, which contains a harsh criticism of the political situation in Greece before the military coup d'état of 1967 (Polish edition by Czytelnik, 1976).

¹⁴ The changes in the concept of operation and program policy of the television, presented further in the paper, also included the military broadcaster YENED, which was still being consistently prepared for the merger with the ERT by integrating the management divisions one by one.

¹⁵ Which was also the reason for Papandreu's cold attitude towards TV commercials.

¹⁶ *Dallas* eventually received the permission for continued broadcasting, which was supported among others by Roviros Manthulis, who advised Vasilikos. Such American shows as the *Dynasty* and *Love Boat*, or British *Yes Minister* were also aired by the ERT and YENED. See also: Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 103.

remove with a single stroke all productions of ERT and YENED which did not conform to the Socialist vision of the public space promoted by PASOK, because the viewers liked them. Therefore, correcting the media offer was stretched to cover a longer period¹⁷, while he began with blocking some of the new projects already accepted by the previous management, which were still being prepared for airing¹⁸. At the same time, the budget for the realization of scenarios accepted by the current directors was increased, which was meant to improve the quality of the offer. To increase the airing dynamics and mobilize the writers to submit fresh ideas more frequently, Vasilikos introduced the maximum number of episodes the new TV series could have, equal to 13.

It should be stressed that already in mid-1970s PASOK demanded that the television employees who, according to the party politicians, had discredited themselves during the military dictatorship, should be fired. After the left wing took over power in the state media, this postulate started to be put into practice, and the list of unwanted persons was joined by those who began working in the media after 1974 but were labeled as rightists. “The decision-making circles of the ERT had an unwritten *black list* of producers, authors, actors, and members of other professions, for whom the doors of the radio and television were closed. (...) To replace them, new people were employed, who in majority either were members of PASOK or had unofficial recommendations from the members of the party”¹⁹. It can be presumed that this kind of personal shifts, animated by the abovementioned “green guards”, by necessity had to hasten the thorough reconstruction of the program offer in all areas of TV production.

Program policy of the socialist dream television: films and shows

The first program created from scratch, which was aired by the Greek television managed by the PASOK-appointed team, was a reporter magazine aptly named *Reporters*. Its concept referred to the policy of bridging the gap between the public service broadcaster and normal people and their problems, announced already by Roviros Manthulis, director general of the ERT during the Conservatists’ rule. The magazine was launched in December 1981. In February 1982 the ERT viewers could watch the premiere of the first series produced under

¹⁷ The first television series selected for cancellation were discontinued already in December 1981.

¹⁸ It is interesting that many scenarios rejected by Vasilikos in the early 1980s would be taken over 10 years later by commercial televisions entering the market, gaining much popularity.

¹⁹ Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 104.

Vasilikos' supervision, called *Lavreotika*²⁰. Its scenario was based on true events from the late 19th century, when Attic laborers protested in great numbers against the exploitation of Greek metal deposits by foreign extraction companies. The protests culminated with the strike of miners in 1896, which is regarded as the beginning of mass labor movement in Greece²¹. Therefore, it is not surprising that the ERT management, referring to Andreas Papandreu's program of socialist change, reach for this subject as a kind of a creed and a symbolic determinant of the broadcaster's new program policy.

A few months after the elections, the ideological goals were set, expressed in the slogan "socialism, countryside, woman," which were to govern the activities of the "green" state media. First, it was assumed the ERT would take an active part in fighting social oppression, among other things through politically loaded, persuasive messages in both journalism and entertainment; second, there was a plan to place more emphasis on showing the problems of Greek countryside and sparking the discussion to further the balanced development of the country²²; third, it was announced that the broadcaster would support the feminist circles fighting for equal rights for both sexes and to subvert the patriarchal family model. The latter was heartily endorsed by the prime minister's wife, Margarita Papandreu, whose achievement it was that a representative of the left-wing Union of Greek Women joined the ERT management²³.

The most popular TV series during the first term of PASOK rule was the *Sounds of Dawn*, which premiered in the ERT in January 1983. It was a production about the life and work of performers of urban folk music, *rembetiko*, from 1930s to 1960s. The series showed the fascinating path trodden by the urban musicians as a social group: from seedy taprooms in dilapidated districts of major cities, where this musical style was born, and being seen as suspicious individuals, to scientific studies acclaiming *rembetiko* as an important part of the modern national culture and its performers as the depositaries and witnesses of the difficult fate of Greece during a couple of preceding decades. Many well-known and much liked actors were featured in various roles in the series, with dance and musical accompaniment of groups specialized in *rembetiko*. The great success of this show was attested by the fact that, in spite

²⁰ The title was derived from the word Lavrio (Laurium), the name of a geographical region in Attica; thus the title, in a free translation, means the "Laurium affairs".

²¹ More on the socio-economic background of the plot of this series can be found in: J. Bonarek et al., *Historia Grecji...*, op. cit., p. 513–518.

²² The already mentioned new magazine "Reporters", as well as the cycle *ERT in Northern Greece*, retained and developed by the state broadcaster, are examples of the programs which presented the problems of country regions, small towns, etc.

²³ Cf. Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 105.

of initial resistance, the ERT management was swayed by the viewers and political factors to agree to produce the second season of the *Sounds of Dawn*.

Program policy of the socialist dream television: information services

Even though PASOK activists, headed by Andreas Papandreu, spoke a lot about the excessive instrumentalization of state media and the deep interference of censorship in the content of information services during the election campaign, promising a fundamental change of this situation, it turned out faster than anyone could expect that there would be changes, indeed, but only in the ideological orientation of individual editorial groups. The first sign of new times and trends in ERT services was a complete silence regarding the introduction of martial law in Poland by the Communist dictatorship on 13 December 1981. In words of a Greek media scholar, the “declarations and ideas of creating an independent, pluralistic television, modeled on the BBC, were dropped sooner than anyone expected. They were replaced by a new version of party media, entirely dependent on the ruling group”²⁴. The main editions of news services on both channels scrupulously informed on all government actions, while prime minister Papandreu “appeared on the TV more often than in the parliament”²⁵. Although the New Democracy politicians and Communists were allowed to freely present their view on current affairs, their statements were usually countered by a government riposte²⁶, which could make the impression that it is the task of the government to criticize the actions of the opposition and not the other way round.

A novelty in the information and journalism offer of the ERT were talk-shows, realized in a dynamic form, attractive to the viewers, and containing entertainment parts. Already in 1982, the ERT showed two new premiere titles: *Speak freely* and *Cards on the table*; however, in spite of the titles which raised high expectations, they still bore political stigmas. The journalists who hosted them allowed unbridled discussion on historical subjects, even those which still divided the Greek society (such as the occupation and Civil War), trying not to outstep the moderator role they were assigned. Worse still, whenever the debate touched upon the current subjects with which the PASOK government had to struggle, the conversation was consistently directed towards conclusions which favored the Socialists²⁷.

It should be said that having spent many years in the West, Andreas Papandreu learned that communicating with the society and creating one’s own image using electronic media is

²⁴ Σ. Παπαθανασόπουλος, *Απελευθερώνοντας την τηλεόραση*, Αθήνα 1996, p. 242.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p.143.

²⁶ Cf. Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 110.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

an indispensable tool of successful politics²⁸. Unfortunately, neither this knowledge nor the activities of the Prime Minister and his associates on the radio and TV were followed by appropriate legal solutions or even practical measures which could make the ERT actually open towards all ideological circles and movements in Greece, which was quite full of diversity in this regard. To the contrary, the tendency to subordinate the state broadcaster to the interest of the ruling PASOK party was not lesser than in the case of the Conservatives. What is more, it is worth remembering that, thanks to Konstantinos Karamanlis, for a time after winning the elections in 1974, the latter group kept a certain balance between the right-wing president of the television Lampsas, supported by the conservative party structures, and the centrist, unaffiliated general director Manthulis, recommended by director Michael Cacoyannis²⁹, known for his left-wing sympathies, which was reflected in a fairly colorful program offer here and there³⁰. Whereas the Socialists, from the very beginning of their rule, decided on an ideologically coherent, uncompromising policy towards electronic media, perfectly expressed by the words of prime minister Papandreu, who stressed the role of the media in realizing the socialist dream³¹.

The end of the armed forces television

As Greece joined the European Economic Community (1 January 1981), the issue of the YENED channel being subordinated to the Ministry for National Defence and the presence of professional soldiers in its management were criticized by Brussels, amazed by this peculiar element of the Greek media system, according to the Western standards. Signals from abroad strengthened the conviction of PASOK politicians that YENED should be immediately dissolved. However, after the elections in the fall of 1981, it turned out that, contrary to their prior statements, the Socialists had not agreed upon how to strip the army of its influence on the television. Roviros Manthulis, who joined the group of advisors to PASOK on electronic media, suggested the simplest and fastest solution in accordance with the existing legal order, that is, issuing of implementing provisions to the so-called Lambrias Act of 1975, which

²⁸ The professional arrangement of PASOK's election campaigns and interviews given to foreign press well illustrate the media consciousness of the Socialist leader.

²⁹ The maker of the famous movie *Zorba the Greek* (1964), among others, starring Anthony Quinn.

³⁰ See the heated discussions about ERT programs in both left- and right-wing press in the second half of the 1970s. The state of affairs described here was mostly the result of faction disputes within the New Democracy (the conservative faction supported by the army and the centrists close to prime minister Karamanlis), rather than an effort to preserve pluralism.

³¹ In 1981, PASOK was a more internally coherent party than the New Democracy was in 1974–1977, which must have influenced its decisive attitude towards the television.

advanced a merger of YENED and the state-held ERT³². This idea, however, was met with a strong resistance of influential politicians associated with prime minister Papandreu, who were unwilling to entertain the thought that their party could make use of the legislative work of the Conservatives in such an important issue as the establishment of socialist media. The expert groups associated with the Socialists did not put forward any other serious solution, and the right-wing press mocked the left-wing, who had been calling for the dissolution of YENED but gave up as soon as they gained power³³.

The stalemate situation described above changed in the late fall of 1982, during the parliamentary work on a bill to reorganize the Ministry – Government Executive Office. The provisions adopted then were utterly different from both the vision of the YENED fate outlined in 1975 and the later considerations in this regard. According to the new ones, the military broadcaster was to be transformed from an institution that was part of the Armed Forces into a public service company subjected to the Government Executive Office, which was to assume full control over the management and finances of the company. Moreover, the Head of this Office (being a member of the Council of Ministers) nominated the 5-member management of this new institution. The name YENED was consigned to the past, replaced by ERT-2, or the second channel of the Greek TV³⁴.

The institution which was weakened the most following the dissolution of YENED was the Greek army, who lost control over the entities which had comprised until then the system of military media, so it quite vocally protested against the introduced reform. As one of the witnesses of the events discussed here, who accepted a proposal of transfer from ERT-1 to ERT-2, reminisced years later: “(...) Had I known the enmity with which the uniformed people would react to having lost the television, I would not have agreed so quickly to take on the new challenge, meaning the pressure and negative campaign launched by the press sympathizing with the military which targeted the people who joined the reformed channel in 1982”³⁵. It was the Government Executive Office whose position was strengthened in the government and media system at the expense of the armed forces, by adding the control of ERT-2 to the influence on the appointment of ERT-1 authorities it already had.

³² As already mentioned, it was the concept realized by the ERT management immediately after the 1981 elections.

³³ Cf. Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 111.

³⁴ Act A.N. 1288/1982. The same act also changed the current name of ERT to ERT-1. It should be mentioned that in spite of the identification created there, which might suggest an institutional connection between ERT-1 and ERT-2, both broadcasters remained completely independent of each other. Also, see Table 1.

³⁵ Γ. Κάρτερ, *Ελληνική Ραδιοφωνία Τηλεόραση*, Αθήνα 2004, p. 55.

Table 1. Television in Greece after the changes of 1982.

Channel	ERT-1	ERT-2
Legal framework of activities	Act establishing the joint stock company Greek Radio and Television (ERT), 1975	Act defining the competencies of the Ministry – Government Executive Office, 1982
Organizational form	Joint stock company; share ownership controlled by the state treasury	State-owned public service company
Institution appointing the broadcaster's management	Council of Ministers (executive and its president); Ministries of Finance, Communication, Government Executive Office (other organs of the broadcaster)	Government Executive Office
Profile	Information-culture-entertainment	Entertainment-information

Source: author's own work based on: the Act establishing the joint stock company Greek Radio and Television (ERT), A.N. 230/1975; the Act defining the competencies of the Ministry – Government Executive Office, 1288/1982; and the analysis of both broadcasters' programs.

Television in the PASOK political system: abortive reforms

In the first period of the rule of the Socialist party, the main problems of the electronic media system in Greece were nepotism, corruption, and issues with the range and the unification of the national table of civilian frequencies. The symbol of the nepotism and the omnipresent social relations which governed the media was the Party Association of Artists created within PASOK. The membership of this organization was an informal condition necessary to obtain commissions for the production of programs and series for the ERT, which facilitated the politicians' control over the content of new programs. Its usefulness in cutting off from the TV of the producers who cooperated with the state broadcaster during the rule of the New Democracy was also important. Whereas the source of corruption was the maze of unclear tendering procedures as well as the negative competition³⁶ between both media institutions belonging to the state, which was not completely eliminated by the 1982 reform, which took YENED away from the military. The result was a system of rigged tenders and bribed committees which approved scenarios for realizations³⁷. Moreover, both Greek broadcasters struggled to cover the whole territory of Greece with their range, especially the northern

³⁶ The competition did not result from the drive to constantly improve the quality of the program, or encouraging the best journalists and authors to cooperate. It was exclusively motivated by political reasons and tensions between the representatives of PASOK in the ERT (including the "green commissars") and the people close to the army, who still held some influence in the YENED, especially until the 1982 reform was introduced. Activities meant more to damage the rival than to improve the quality of one's own offer resulted, among other things, in programs receiving lower grades from the viewers. Suffice it to say that during the first two or three years of Socialist rule, few Greek series based on original scenarios could rival the popularity of the productions from the 1970s in spite of numerous attempts and gradual discontinuation of titles inherited from the Conservativists. The ideologically uniform of the television message, also including feature productions, was not conducive to high grades either.

³⁷ Γ. Δάμπιασης, *Την εποχή της τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 200.

regions and islands of the Aegean³⁸. It was largely compounded by the lack of a unified table of civilian frequencies, and the chaos was compounded yet by the fact that YENED had used frequencies belonging to the armed forces.

After 1982, the deficiencies of the electronic media system in Greece described above were more and more clearly visible to the ERT-1 authorities. It was not difficult to realize that the reform of the television, introduced that very year, did not remove the source of the pathology, that is the institutional division of broadcasters, focusing instead only on taking YENED away from the care of the Ministry of Defense and the army. Meanwhile, the merger, stipulated by the Act of 1975, remained a moribund law. During the Christmas-New Year meeting in the first days of January 1984, the ERT-1 management prepared a communication regarding the necessity of creating a single state radio and television broadcaster, so that “next year the employees of both channels could celebrate together”³⁹. This communication hastened the pace of events in the area of radio and television: in mid-January 1984, prime minister Andreas Papandreu announced the formation of a new ministry without portfolio responsible for the state supervision of the electronic media, thus taking over some of the competencies of the Government Executive Office in this area. In the general opinion, this decision prepared the Council of Ministers structurally to the imminent merger of both broadcasters, especially that PASOK politicians did not express negative opinions regarding the New-Year statement of the ERT-1 management.

The new Minister for electronic media, Anastasios Peponis, immediately disillusioned the advocates of the merger in his first public speech, unexpectedly stating that he was given unanimous dispositions by the Prime Minister, according to which the further development of the Greek television was to be based upon two mutually independent entities. Each of them was to retain separate news and journalism editorial teams with diverse tasks, as well as to develop its own offer in entertainment, culture, etc. In Peponis’s opinion, to create a unified organism to monopolize the public space in Greece would not improve the pluralism and quality of the program.

The wide scope of changes laid out by minister Peponis could not fail to affect his relations with the current management of both broadcasters and trade unions. This was because the core of his reform, that is, the specialization of extended information teams and opening of the “Two” to external authors, had to result in, on the one hand, laying off some of

³⁸ This issue will accompany the Greek radio and television until today, also involving the process of digitalization of TV broadcasting.

³⁹ Cf. Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 112.

the employees, and on the other in the ERT-2 management losing its tight control over the program policy of the channel or cracking open the hermetic producer system allowed to bid for contracts from the TV. It was not unimportant either that Peponis wanted to create unified law regarding the conditions of broadcasting commercials.

Minister Peponis was most certainly aware that the changes he put forward, forged into actual bills presented to the parliament, infringed upon the interests of all the main players and many small participants of the electronic media market. Therefore, in fear of an organized sabotage of his activities, he strived first of all to appoint a new management for both channels. Owing to the personal intervention of prime minister Papandreu, who supported Peponis, almost the entire executive of the ERT-1 was fairly efficiently replaced, including its president. The situation in the ERT-2 seemed significantly more difficult, as not only its trade unions protested vehemently against the reform concepts of the ministry, while that time the Prime Minister decided to stand a little to the side of the debate, as he realized that many PASOK Members sympathized with the directors and employees of that channel, and were unwilling to give up even a small part of the bandwidth to the opposition politicians or non-government organizations. Eventually, in a climate of program confusion and mutual aversion and animosity, Peponis achieved his goal and appointed a new president of the *Two*, but it was a Pyrrhic victory.

There was a tension and unrest growing among the Socialists, caused by the open conflict between minister Peponis and the management and trade unions of the ERT-2. Many-hour breaks in the work of journalists and technicians were a daily occurrence, programs interrupted half-way “due to technical problems” were not uncommon, the opposition press printed materials which documented a complete lack of supervision of spending money, which flowed in a broad stream to selected producer groups based on artificially overstated production costs of commissioned programs. The newly appointed president of the channel, George Tsouyopoulos, was unable to calm the moods. Prime minister Papandreu seemed to gradually recall his support for his favorite so far, and the PASOK party structures in the parliament were unusually efficient in blocking the legislative solutions sent in by the Ministry for the media, dooming them to unending disputes in the committees.

What turned out to be decisive for Peponis’s future was the election campaign before the elections to the European Parliament, which were to take place in June 1984. In its course, there were several discrediting blunders, which the press credited to the government (e.g. the main edition of the news was delayed by 40 minutes so that it included an edited speech by prime minister Papandreu, against which Peponis strongly protested). As a result, the minister

for electronic media decided that his continued service in this capacity was unproductive, in particular facing the common calls for his resignation⁴⁰, having the instructions issued by him ignored, as well as the parliamentary obstruction of proposed bills. Peponis's resignation was accepted soon after the elections, soon followed on its way to history by the ministry created for him, and the competencies were returned to the Government Executive Office. Also, the plan to merge the ERT-1 and ERT-2 failed again: the call raised shortly before Peponis was relieved was first postponed by him, and after his resignation the subject was not taken up anymore, which can be seen as a direct result of the ministers half-year long term of office.

One can hardly avoid the impression that the unexpected creation of a new post of the Minister for electronic media and appointing to it an unknown to anyone and inexperienced background official could serve Andreas Papandreu, who had more than 20 years of experience in the meanders of great politics, to gain a certain knowledge about the moods among people associated with the television, especially in the context of the January communication of the ERT-1 management regarding the proposed merger of two broadcasters.

The "Peponis case" made the head of the government aware that among the most influential politicians of his own party there was nobody who would support any form of a deeper reform of the television aimed at making it more open to the opposition or non-government organizations, and seeing the broadcasters as important spoils of the elections turned out to be the dominant attitude. Nobody from the top PASOK leadership sided with Anastasios Peponis when he asked for support in his conflict with the management and employees of the ERT-2 or when he pleaded for faster proceeding the statute changes in the parliament. Prime minister Papandreu must have also known, having studied the fates of president Dimitris Horn and director Roviros Manthulis in the times of the New Democracy, that someone from the outside, without a strong political legitimation, would be unable to cut the thick network of social and financial dependencies in state media, or to overcome the resistance of the bureaucratic apparatus. Indeed, the sources provide no straight answer to the question whether or not the concepts of minister Peponis were actually only a provocation by Papandreu intended to cause a short-lived turmoil and reconnoiter the moods. However, the sequence of events and the loneliness of the former at key points in time suggest that the prime minister had no intention to give up the deeply instrumentalized media of socialist dream, or perhaps could not get his closest associates to agree upon it. Moreover, the way in

⁴⁰ Peponis could not count on the support of the Conservative and Communist opposition, who accused him of unequal division of air time among individual parties competing in the elections, among others.

which the leader of the PASOK played his game with the inexperienced official well reflected the growing over the years “more and more despotic style of exercising authority [by him]. [Papandreu] treated his ministers dismissively and often changed their decisions. He dismissed and exchanged ministers as he willed”⁴¹. All this gives grounds to the thought that the pro-reform messages sent from the Prime Minister’s Office in the first weeks of 1984 could have been, at least to some extent, simulated.

After the Ministry for electronic media was dissolved, the highest party and government circles came back to being the decision-making center for radio and television. The new management of the ERT-1, appointed in July 1984, did not raise any ideas of its own regarding the reorganization of state broadcasters, strictly keeping to the lines set by PASOK instead, according to which there should be calm and ideological discipline until the next parliamentary elections (fall 1985). While president Vasilis Matiopoulos promised he would provide the journalists with a free working atmosphere within a hundred days, this promise had never gone beyond the sphere of declarations published in the press, as he was unable to free the company from political directives and did not even make serious attempts in this direction⁴². Whereas the ERT-2 still suffered the results of several months of chaos and the fight against Peponis, involving sabotage and strikes, and tried to recreate a stable programming schedule. George Tsouyopoulos, appointed by the Minister for electronic media, remained the president of the channel, even though after his promoter’s resignation he was completely dependent on the current decisions made by party dignitaries.

In-depth changes in television were not helped by the thickening atmosphere on the political scene. Konstantinos Mitsotakis, who became the leader of the New Democracy opposition, preparing his party to the approaching election campaign, made the issue of the media market one of the main items of its program. The chief of the Conservatives did not refer to the broadcasters governed by the Socialists in any way other than the “fascist PASOK television”, accusing them of extremely biased presentation of the activities of right-wing politicians, and interpreting the recent history of the country in a way steeped in leftist ideology, which in his opinion had the features of primitive propaganda⁴³. Moreover, the Members of Parliament and sympathizers of the New Democracy, supported by the

⁴¹ A. Brzeziński, *Grecja* [Greece], Warszawa 2002, p. 212–213.

⁴² See also: Σ. Βαλούκος, *Ιστορία της ελληνικής τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 116.

⁴³ Konstantinos Mitsotakis meant, among others, the cycle of memorial programs broadcasted to commemorate the approaching 20th anniversary of the fall of the left-wing government of Georgios Papandreu (July 1965), accusing their makers of idealizing the intentions of the then Prime Minister, while at the same time demonizing the attitude of the king and the right-wing opposition, including himself as one of its leaders. See also: Σ. Ευσταθιάδης, *Τα παρασκήνια ενός πραξικοπήματος το οποίο άνοιξε τον δρόμο για τη δημοκρατία μέσω μιας... δικτατορίας*, <http://www.tovima.gr/politics/article/?aid=124233> [accessed: 2 June 2012].

conservative press, raised the issue of the access to the public media being made difficult for the representatives of the opposition groups, they also criticized a number of particular decisions by the authorities of both channels (e.g. the lease of ERT-1 archives to a private company connected to the Socialists⁴⁴ or the suspension of the radio journalist Maria Rezan for staging a debate on the liberalization of the Greek radio and television market, which ended in her resignation). Mitsotakis's party demanded a discussion in the Chamber of Deputies, yet due to the lack of interest of the left-wing side it moved the majority of protests to the streets of Athens by picketing the buildings of the state broadcasters (November–December 1984).



Fig. 4. “PASOK save us.” The Socialist rule was for many years associated with enormous social hopes and expectations, as attested by this very inscription on the wall. It may be because of this that many older Greeks still think nostalgically about the 1980s.

In November 1984, in spite of the tense situation and high level of political emotions, cross-party talks began regarding the re-election of Konstantinos Karamanlis as the President of Greece. Initially, prime minister Papandreu seemed to support this plan, so the program director of the ERT-1, Vasilis Vasilikos – the only person from the top management of both channels who remained in his post since the end of 1981 – filed his resignation in protest⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ Cf.: Γ. Δάμπασης, *Την εποχή της τηλεόρασης...*, op. cit., p. 204.

⁴⁵ The conflict between Karamanlis and Vasilikos reached back to the 1960s, when the latter published the already mentioned novel *Z*. In it, he indirectly accused Karamanlis that, as a minister in right-wing governments

Soon before the end of the term of office of President Karamanlis, when he was quite commonly expected to become re-elected, the leader of the PASOK came out with an unexpected statement (9 March 1985), declaring that the Socialists would present their own candidate to the parliament, Christos Sartzetakis, and announcing the introduction of changes to the constitution which would limit the current prerogatives of the head of state benefiting the Prime Minister and the Chamber of Deputies. Faced with such a fundamental about-turn of Papandreu, president Karamanlis demonstratively resigned from his office and left his residence on 10 March. In the third ballot, on 30 March, the parliament elected Sartzetakis by the minimum majority of one vote, belonging to the Speaker of the Chamber, which was immediately protested by the opposition, who pointed out he should not take part in the ballot, as he was the acting president since the resignation of Karamanlis. Konstantinos Mitsotakis did not recognize the legality of the election and announced submitting a motion of censure on the government. Papandreu forestalled the New Democracy initiative by announcing the resignation of his cabinet and setting the date of pre-term parliamentary elections for 2 June⁴⁶. As it was about to turn out, Greek voters decided to prolong the socialist dream of the great Andreas, allowing it to continue until 1989.

Conclusion

“Rule of change” was one of the variants of the PASOK slogan from the 1981 election campaign. In the context of the electronic media, as indicated in the text, the change which took place during the first term of office of Andreas Papandreu’s government mostly involved the ideological and personnel reorientation of the state broadcasters, creation of a hermetic political, social, and financial system, and structural transformations which de facto strengthened the control of the highest political and party factors over the current activity of both companies, including the content of television message. Somebody critical to Papandreu could add: *nihil novi sub sole*, since this was the gist of his government, and the enormous political and union structures, far from transparency, created in the 1980s in various branches of the economy, started to burden the economic efficiency of Greece for many decades, promoted corruption, and led to a great waste of public money. Why is it so, therefore, that Andreas remains a legend until this day?

(in the late 1950s and early 1960s), he did not oppose the illegal activities of the secret political police targeting the politicians and activists of the left-wing opposition of the time. Prime Minister Papandreu most certainly realized that opening the talks with Karamanlis would provoke a quick reaction from Vasilikos.

⁴⁶ Cf.: A. Brzeziński, *Grecja...*, op. cit., p. 212–213.