

Revolution as Media Event: Discourse on 1789 in Europe

Deniss Hanovs

Rīga Stradiņš University, Department of Communication Studies, Latvia

Introduction. The paper analyses the most crucial political event at the end of the 18th century, which became a global media event of the late ancient regime society of Europe. Various European intellectuals of that time developed the discourse on revolution which circulated in the 18th century media. As 1789 French revolution became the turning point in political culture of modernity, introducing a nation as a political body, the topic reflects on the reception of the revolutionary changes in France and Europe in the media of the period, such as theatre pieces, posters, calendar books, almanachs and opera. These sources and private reflections in diaries and letters will be analysed in order to answer the question how events of 1789 and the following radicalisation of the revolution were perceived and defined.

Aim, Materials and Methods. The aim of the paper was to introduce the history of media discourse on political abrupt changes and the discourse of “new dawn” or / and nature catastrophe. Methods will include mainly semiotics of political discourse analysis, ideas of performative turn, defining revolutionary debates as social drama, and analysing multimedia language tools to define revolution.

Results. Revolution as a media event is a discourse product of European elites, mainly in German and British media, both private and public. The predominant images of the revolution reflected the two major discursive lines: the new political age of human rights and the new chaos, related to nature catastrophe and the breakdown of the political order. At the same time, the idea of freedom was relevant to both camps and feudalism culture was declared passe.

Conclusions. The media event was created using various communication networks, both by aristocracy and intellectuals, using republic of letters culture, diaries and new media genre – political travelog, political journalism of dilettanti, travelling from Britain and Germany. The old Grand tour traveller became a new figure of political journalist. Among them various ladies became female journalists.