

Michou Bressers

Michou Bressers, born in 1983, lives in Heerlen, Netherlands, and is going to work as a History teacher

Hungary 1956 – remembered in the Netherlands in 2006

Searching on the web for answers to the question ‘how is Hungary 1956 remembered in the Netherlands?’ I immediately found the website of the public broadcasting. A television documentary is not a very conventional way of remembering events, and that is why I chose this form of remembrance. Storytelling plays a major role in remembering and learning about history. The documentary also tells a story which I will relate to in my paper.

Several documentaries on this subject were shown in October. There was e.g. a documentary on the Hungarian revolt. Another one broadcasted on Thursday the 19th of October documented Hungarian refugees who came to the Netherlands after the revolt. I chose to direct my attention to this last documentary.

At first I will explain what the documentary was about. After the summarization I will explain shortly what the role of ‘the story’ or rather of storytelling in general is. Finally I will show an example of how this documentary is used as an active part of commemoration.

What was the Documentary about?

The documentary is called: ‘Hongaarse vluchtelingen’ (Hungarian refugees)¹.

The idea of the documentary is to let eyewitnesses talk about their experiences before, during and after the Hungarian revolt².

In this documentary the history of suppression in Hungary from 1919 is described. More important and fascinating are the commentaries of the interviewees who fled to the Netherlands after the Hungarian revolt.

The thing that struck me most was the *hope turning into despair*. Julia Wieg described the joy she felt after Hungary was turned neutral right after the protest. She couldn't believe it after years of suppression and a war. This joy and hope turned into despair when Russian troops entered the country.

Jozsef Orban says (similar to Julia Wieg) that he was very disappointed in the passiveness of the West. After years of propaganda against communism he expected help from western countries. He says: 'in the year before the revolt, even radio transmitters were dropped in order to provide us with information. You should expect some concrete help from the West. That didn't happen, which damaged the trust in the West. We learned that western countries only act when it concerns economical issues and Hungary wasn't an economical question.'

Hope turning into despair is best described by Jozsef Orban. 'When those Russian tanks drove in, you had the feeling that everything was lost. It is almost indescribable. We had the taste of freedom, but it was all for nothing. All those people died for nothing. And you knew it would only be worse after this. More people would be in jail or killed by the secret police.'

After this, his father decided to leave the country. His life was in danger being the commander of local rebels. Jozsef says: 'But it was not easy to leave the country. It was the only time I saw my father cry'.

The interviewees mention the warm welcome they had in the Netherlands. They were welcomed like heroes with chocolate, bananas and oranges.

Telling a story and remembering

A way of remembering and commemorating a certain event is by telling the story. It gives people who were part of this event the opportunity to tell their stories. This is the most important and crucial way to remember. This documentary fulfils this goal in my opinion quite well. We hear the stories from eyewitnesses and learn from them how it was. Although it probably does not give the most objective image of past events, for most humans the stories of others are more relatable to than dry facts.



Her majesty visits the Hungarian refugee children in Utrecht. From the right Dr. A. Vrijlandt, Ir. F. C. C. Baron of Tuyll van Serooskerken Zuylen (19 November 1956) Elsevier collection, Press Agency ANEFO



Arrival of the third group of Hungarian refugees (25 November 1956) Photographer: Van Rossum, press agency ANEFO

Publicity for this documentary

This documentary was already broadcasted on the public television on the 19th of October, but this documentary also fulfilled a role in a remembrance meeting on the 3rd of November.

In a meeting in Amsterdam this Friday, people are able to remember the Hungarian revolt. The meeting is for free and is held at Felix Meritis (Keizersgracht 324). The Hungarian ambassador will open the meeting, a few lectures will be held and music will accompany the evening. The documentary 'Hungarian refugees' will be shown during this meeting as a form of remembrance.

Sources:

- (8-12-06)

http://beeldbank.nationaalarchief.nl/index.php?option=com_memorix&mr_x_mod=geavanceerd_zoeken&show=true&mr_x_pref_sjabloon=detail&mr_x_offset=1&skip=20

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- (8-12-06)

<http://geschiedenis.vpro.nl/programmas/2899536/afleveringen/30664405/>

- (15-01-07)

<http://geschiedenis.vpro.nl/attachment.db/30854101/Uitnodiging%203%20november.doc>

- Documentary: 'Hongaarse vluchtelingen' by Yael Koren

¹ Directed and composed by Yael Koren. Research was done by Karin van den Born.

² The interviewed people: Andries en Julia Wieg, Lajo Takacs, F.J. Mercx, Jozsef Orban

Zitierempfehlung:

Michou Bressers, Hungary 1956 – remembered in the Netherlands in 2006, in:

Zeitgeschichte-online, Themenportal Ungarn 1956 – Geschichte und Erinnerung, URL:

<http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/portals/_ungarn1956/documents/bressers.pdf >