Richard Broke, who died aged 70, not only produced and script-edited some of the most significant and politically controversial television dramas of our time, he did so from a wheelchair, having been injured in a serious car crash in his 20s. He since became a fierce campaigner for better access in public places, particularly in the theatre, one of his great loves.

At the BBC and ITV, Broke worked with many of the best and best-known actors of the day. In 1981, he produced *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years*, a landmark, eight-part serial starring Robert Hardy, Siân Phillips, Nigel Havers, Tim Pigott-Smith, Peter Barkworth and Eric Porter. As the first executive producer of Screen One for the BBC (he told *The Guardian* it was the best job in television), Broke was responsible for around 50 films in total, culminating in *Cold Comfort Farm* in 1995, directed by John Schlesinger. The film featured another star-studded cast: Eileen Atkins, Kate Beckinsale, Stephen Fry, Ian McKellen, Joanna Lumley, Miriam Margolyes, Freddie Jones and Rufus Sewell. The screenplay, from the Stella Gibbons novel, was written by Malcolm Bradbury.

With Schlesinger as director, Broke was executive producer of the award-winning *A Question of Attribution* (1991) for the BBC, from Alan Bennett’s stage play about Anthony Blunt (played by James Fox, with Prunella Scales as the Queen). Broke was also proud to have written the screenplay for James Mason’s final film, *Dr Fischer of Geneva* (1985), from Graham Greene’s novel, which also starred Alan Bates, Greta Scacchi and Barry Humphries.

In the mid-80s, Broke became best-known, or “synonymous with the word ‘controversial,’” according to *The Guardian*, for two productions that helped fuel the BBC’s head-on conflict with the Thatcher government, in particular Conservative party chairman Norman Tebbit, and with the military.

The first was *The Monocled Mutineer* (1986), a series of plays written by Alan
Bleasdale and starring Paul McGann as Percy Toplis, a deserter in the first world war. The BBC advertised the series “foolishly”, according to the director general, Alasdair Milne, writing in his memoirs, “as being ‘a real life story’, which was certainly cutting corners. The press fell upon us for telling lies and it added to their fury that most of the papers saw the plays as ‘leftwing propaganda’. The fact that they were well-made dramas counted for nothing.”

The second was *Tumbledown* (1988), directed by Richard Eyre, with a screenplay by Charles Wood, which won the BAFTA for Single Drama. It starred a young Colin Firth as Robert Lawrence mc, a Scots Guards officer who was severely injured and partly paralysed during the Falklands war. His family was involved in the making of the film, much to the ire of the Ministry of Defence. The press contrasted the screening of these two productions, both questioning military policy, with the BBC’s shelving of a “pro-Thatcher” Falklands play by Ian Curteis.

“I never set out to make controversial drama and I would fall flat on my face if I did so,” Broke told an interviewer at the time. But according to friends he relished the controversy and loved it when *The Daily Mail* attacked one of his programmes.

He worked on a wide range of television programmes, including the cult drama series *Adam Adamant Lives!*.