

The Cold War and Entertainment Television

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Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Chapter One..... | 1 |
| Introduction | |
| Lori Maguire | |
| Chapter Two..... | 17 |
| Foreign Entertainment Programs on Soviet Television: Dosage and Censorship | |
| Anatoly Tokmakov | |
| Chapter Three..... | 31 |
| <i>The Adventures Robin Hood</i> : Outlawed in Sherwood, Banned from Hollywood | |
| Scott Brand | |
| Chapter Four..... | 53 |
| Fight, Classify, Borrow and Replace: The Soviets and the West in the Television Series <i>State Border</i> (1980-1988) | |
| Gueorgui Chepelev | |
| Chapter Five..... | 69 |
| Socialist Indians and Capitalist Cowboys: The Uses of Westerns in Both Germanies | |
| Nancy Reagin | |
| Chapter Six..... | 83 |
| Playing Socialist Games: East German Game Shows and an Alternative Model of Consumption | |
| Laura Honsberger | |
| Chapter Seven..... | 97 |
| Images and Image-Making in <i>TASS is Authorized to Announce</i> | |
| Jonathan Ludwig | |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter Eight..... | 107 |
| False Nazis and True Chekists, Treacherous Allies and Close Enemies: The Soviet Series <i>Seventeen Moments of Spring</i> Cécile Vaissié | |
| Chapter Nine..... | 121 |
| Treating the Nation's Wounds: <i>M*A*S*H</i> , 1972-1975 Lori Maguire | |
| Chapter Ten | 135 |
| A Cold Warrior in Paradise: American Cold War Masculinity, Race and Empire in <i>Hawaii Five-O</i> Michael G. Vann | |
| Chapter Eleven | 155 |
| Politics and Evil: Detective Stories on Soviet Television in the Cold War Context André Filler | |
| Chapter Twelve | 167 |
| Propaganda and the Atomic Age: <i>The Adventures of Superman</i> and American Cold War Rhetoric Joseph J. Darowski | |
| Chapter Thirteen..... | 181 |
| Cold War Edutainment: Understanding Czech Documentaries on Cold War Latin America Katerina Brezinová | |
| Chapter Fourteen | 203 |
| <i>Men Into Space</i> : The Space Race and Entertainment Television Margaret A. Weitekamp | |
| Chapter Fifteen | 219 |
| Music on Romanian National Television: Between National Glorification and Demarcation from the West Irène Costelian | |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter Sixteen | 231 |
| Comedy on the Front Lines of the Cold War: Bob Hope's Christmas Specials during the Vietnam War Uldis Kruze | |
| Chapter Seventeen..... | 247 |
| The Fall and Rise of the Cold War Masquerade: Magical Young Women in North American Television, 1964-2015 Anne Rubenstein | |
| Contributors..... | 267 |
| Index..... | 273 |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

LORI MAGUIRE¹

In the past, works designed primarily for entertainment have not usually been taken seriously, especially when they were created for television. Recent years have seen the development of scholarly analysis on the subject, however, and this book aims to make a contribution to the debate through a rigorously comparative analysis of the two blocs. Linked, as it has evolved, to capitalism (mass entertainment is, in most of its manifestations, an industry designed to make money), to democracy (just how much can one trust the tastes of ordinary people and their ability to choose well?) and to the United States in particular, popular culture was bound to be politically charged during the Cold War. Furthermore, when you add to this equation the vast number of people it reaches, its potential for propaganda and fears of outside penetration on both sides of the Iron Curtain, it was certain to become an area of conflict. Merriam Webster has defined the term “cold war” as meaning “a conflict over ideological differences carried on by methods short of sustained overt military action and usually without breaking off diplomatic relations”² For our purposes, the key word here is *ideology*. The main protagonists of the Cold War were the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and they, of course, never directly faced each other in battle—although each developed weapons and a military strategy aimed at the other power. Certainly they had diplomatic disagreements and fought proxy wars, such as in Vietnam and Afghanistan. But, as the above definition shows, a great deal of their conflict was in the ideological realm as each side tried to show that their way of life was better.

¹ I would like to thank Jonathan Ludwig, Cécile Vaissié and Margaret Weitekamp for their criticism and advice on this introduction. All mistakes are my own.

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cold%20war> (accessed 18 January 2014). A definition that is obviously derived from the Cold War.

Who were they trying to show this to? First of all, to their own citizens, then to the citizens of their sphere of influence (notably in Europe), then to countries with great numbers of sympathizers (such as France or Italy in the West with their large communist parties or most Eastern European nations with their anti-Russian feelings), then to inhabitants of the developing and often recently decolonized nations and finally to each other's population. As mass media developed throughout the world, one of the main instruments for this became popular culture.

Cinema has by far attracted the greatest amount of scholarly attention. Certainly the power of its images was recognized by Lenin who argued that "of all arts, cinema for us is the most important".³ Stalin saw writers as "engineers of human souls" and in 1934 officially imposed Socialist Realism, the idea that the arts should promote a true socialist society.⁴ The heavy politicization and censorship of Soviet and Eastern bloc cinema is easy to see. However, Hollywood has traditionally liked to present itself as a primarily apolitical business: "If you want to send a message, call Western Union".⁵ Furthermore, the association of propaganda with dictatorships also discredited it in the West. It took World War II to show how effectively both democracies and dictatorships could use the movies for propaganda—and that Hollywood could actually do it better. This knowledge would not be lost and would carry over into the Cold War, becoming one of the main reasons for the House Un-American Activities Committee's (HUAC) investigation into Hollywood and the industry's infamous blacklist.

But already another form of communication had appeared with the potential at least to pass cinema because it actually entered people's homes. Television became a mass medium, indeed, one could argue *the* mass medium, just as the Cold War began. Although developed before World War II, continuous large-scale broadcasting only began afterwards. Despite its massive reach, research on it has been relatively limited,

³ Quoted in Birgit Beumers, *A History of Russian Cinema* (Oxford: Berg, 2009) 38

⁴ See Cécile Vaissié, *Les ingénieurs des âmes en chef. Littérature et politique en URSS (1944-1986)*. Paris: Belin, 2008. See also Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, new edition 2009) 165: Lenin had already imposed it on literature in 1905: "Party Organization and Party Literature", <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/nov/13.htm> (Accessed January 30, 2016).

⁵ This quote has been attributed to a large number of people, most frequently movie mogul Sam Goldwyn, although A. Scott Berg, *Goldwyn: A Biography* (New York: Riverhead, 1989) 220, denies this.

especially with regard to entertainment television and particularly on the Eastern bloc.

Two Models, Two Messianic Ideologies

Communism was from the beginning a messianic doctrine.⁶ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels ended the Communist Manifesto with a clarion call to international revolution, writing “Working men of all countries, unite!” They believed the working class everywhere suffered from the same problems and had the same fundamental goals. Lenin thought that events in Russia were only the first step to world revolution, declaring in 1919: “Soon we shall see the victory of communism throughout the world; we shall see the foundation of the World Federative Republic of Soviets”.⁷

After Lenin’s death, defeats in attempted proletarian revolutions in other countries prompted Stalin to talk of “socialism in one country”. Opposing Trotsky’s idea of permanent revolution, Stalin argued that the USSR should strengthen its industrial and military power before exporting its revolution. In 1925, Stalin effectively predicted the Cold War, talking of “two camps”, two “opposite centers of attraction” being created in the world: that of capitalism led by Britain and America, and that of the workers and revolutionaries, led by the USSR.⁸ The USSR would serve as a model and, as they created socialism in their country, its successes would inspire workers in other nations. The Soviet way of life would prove itself superior and thus would spread throughout the world.

Of course, later, when circumstances became more favorable, this attitude would change. Stalin took full advantage of the situation at the end of World War II to take control in Eastern Europe.⁹ Undoubtedly there was a large element of self-defense here as the Soviets sought to establish

⁶ I use the definition of messianism as “zealous devotion to a leader, cause or movement”. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/messianism> (accessed 22 February 2016). In this chapter it also contains the notion of wanting to spread the ideology in question.

⁷ Address to Third Communist International, March 1919, available online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/mar/x04.htm> (accessed 23 January 2014)

⁸ Joseph Stalin, Address to the Fourteenth Congress of the CPSU, 18 December 1925. Available online at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1925/12/18.htm> (accessed 23 January 2014).

⁹ For a detailed study of this see Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (London: Allen Lane, 2012)

a buffer zone to protect them from any future attack and so borders were shifted. But there was also an ideological conviction that communism was the wave of the future and that its time had come. The victory of Mao in China in 1949 further convinced Stalin that communism was advancing and probably contributed to his decision to approve the North Korean invasion of the South in 1950. He would also try to take full advantage of decolonization to convince leaders in the newly independent countries that the Soviet way of life offered them more. And, of course, later leaders would actively seek to promote and support revolution in many places in the world.

The United States, from its founding, also carried the seeds of messianism. Many of the original colonies began as refuges for persecuted religions and these groups, especially the Puritans, wished to set an example for the world, to create the New Jerusalem on earth. Over the next centuries, though, the country was much too preoccupied by its own establishment, expansion and the fierce debate over slavery to take on a world role. Indeed, the nation's first president, George Washington, in his farewell address, stated "It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world".¹⁰ It was only in the late 19th century that America became united and strong enough to seek a major role in world affairs and only with World War I that it began to play a full part in the world.

The next few years saw a reaction against that interventionism, known as isolationism. However, World War II ended isolationism and views began to change. In January 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt called for the establishment of "four freedoms" throughout the world: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.¹¹ Shortly after this, in February, the press magnate, Henry Luce, writing in *Life*, called for an end to American isolationism and advocated a missionary role for that nation in the spread of democracy in the world. This in turn would lead to an "American Century", as he termed it.¹² As World War II progressed, and especially after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, more and more Americans became convinced of their special

¹⁰ The "address" was actually a letter published in the press on 19 September 1796. The complete text can be found at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp (accessed 21 January 2014)

¹¹ The full text can be found at <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/fdr-the-four-freedoms-speech-text/> (accessed 21 January 2014)

¹² The full text of the article can be found at <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article6139.htm> (accessed 20 January 2014)

mission in the world. This belief in American exceptionalism would carry over into the Cold War.

Central to this idea was the American way of life of which an important element was the American Dream, a term first used by James Truslow Adams in 1931. He identified it as: “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement”. He went on to assert that this dream held “hope and promise for mankind”.¹³

Like the Soviet Union, American leaders believed in this ideal of their system and in its applicability to all of humanity. At the end of World War II Europe was devastated and many nations in the Western part, like Italy or France possessed strong communist parties. The US worked to convince this section of Europe that their way of life was the better one. They also tried to do the same thing in the newly decolonized nations.

Indeed, the term “public diplomacy” first appeared at this time. To quote one of the standard texts on diplomacy, it aims to assert indirect influence (much of which has become known as soft power) on foreign governments “by appealing over the heads of those governments to the people with influence upon them”.¹⁴ It tries to establish a positive vision of one nation among the citizens of another and, as such, involves what are essentially propaganda activities by a government towards the population of another country. The United States pioneered public diplomacy during the Cold War, in order to counter anti-American rhetoric and improve the nation’s image. While Hollywood undeniably is not part of the US government and benefits from freedom of speech, by its very nature it became an advertisement for the American way of life.¹⁵ Films presented the wealth of American society and the modernity and individual freedom of its way of life. Historian Reinhold Wagnleitner has argued that in Austria, and by extension other places, America became associated, through its popular culture, with “wealth, a comfortable standard of living

¹³ James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1931) 404, 416.

¹⁴ G.R. Berridge, *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 4th edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 182. See Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990) and *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

¹⁵ For more on this see Tony Shaw and Denise Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010) 97-125.

for the masses, freedom, modernity, the culture of consumption and a peaceful life".¹⁶

So the Soviet Union and the United States each presented itself to the world as a model for the future and one that held out hope for even the poorest, whether they be called the proletariat or the common man. Each set itself up in opposition to an older, aristocratic order and to the other. Two competing visions, two competing ideologies and in 1945 no one knew which would triumph. Over the next decades the USSR and the US would compete in an arms race and a space race; they would fight proxy wars across the world (although they would never fight each other directly) and they would develop military strategy that coldly talked about the death of millions but vision and ideology would always remain a significant element of their conflict—and the mass media a key means of its expression.¹⁷

Western Television

Hollywood and the immense popularity of its films and stars predated the Cold War. Although theoretically apolitical, the American movie industry, based on the studio system, was also a multi-million dollar, profoundly capitalist business and thus unlikely to be sympathetic to communism. Ernst Lubitsch's 1939 film, *Ninotchka* set the tone for Hollywood's treatment of the subject: the USSR was a dreary world of chronic shortages populated either by a dissatisfied rank and file or stiff doctrinaire leaders.

Television had been invented before World War II but it was only after that conflict that it became a real mass medium. It grew at a frantic pace in the United States which was far in advance of the rest of the world, and by 1960, 86 percent of families owned a set.¹⁸ Three national networks began broadcasting in 1946: CBS, NBC and DuMont (which ceased in 1956); they were joined by ABC in 1948. Three of these networks began in radio

¹⁶ Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coco-Colonization: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) 278.

¹⁷ For a detailed study of this competition see David Cauter, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

¹⁸ William Boddy, "The Beginnings of American Television" in *Television: An International History* edited by Anthony Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 60. See also Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1982)

so it is not surprising to find that much of TV's early programming was simply carried over from that medium. Variety shows, game shows, situation comedies and anthology series dominated programming. Sports also quickly became a major feature and television played a primary role in the growth of professional sports after World War II. By the mid-1950s the Western, and, to a lesser extent the spy series, had become extremely popular. While the link between the latter and the Cold War is obvious, the significance of the Western is perhaps less so. A number of analyses have pointed out the importance of capitalism in the genre as well as the often simplistic way in which Good and Evil are represented.¹⁹ If the US had taken on the role of policeman of the world, then the Marshal made a good symbol. Sitcoms glorifying the American way of life were also popular.

As elsewhere, TV quickly became the leading source of information on world and national events which meant it could have a high propaganda value. Much of this, whether in series, documentaries or even the news, was presented in very simplistic terms of Good versus Evil. The impact of HUAC and the industry blacklist came later to television but still had a profound impact with the most serious case, probably that of the actor Philip Loeb of *The Goldbergs* (DuMont, CBS, 1949-56) as his firing almost certainly contributed to his later suicide.²⁰ Of course, TV could also have a contrary effect—it played a major role in the fall of Joseph McCarthy, for example.

By the end of the 1950s, people were growing disaffected with the official presentation of the Cold War. This trend would continue and grow stronger in the 1960s as détente developed. One sign of this was the appearance of positive Russian characters around the middle of that decade. Marya in *Hogan's Heroes* (CBS, 1965-71) may not have been entirely trustworthy but Ensign Pavel Chekov in *Star Trek* (CBS, 1966-69) held out the hope of future friendship. Most intriguing was Ilya Kuryakin

¹⁹ Studies of the Western and the Cold War include Stanley Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western & US History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004) and J. Fred MacDonald, *Who Shot the Sheriff? The Rise and Fall of the Television Western* (New York: Praeger, 1987)

²⁰ A vast literature exists on HUAC and the industry blacklist. See, for example, Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Policies in the Film Community 1930-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 4th edition, 1979) or Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Cultural and Political History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). For its impact on television see Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003)

who worked with fellow American spy Napoleon Solo in the same seemingly international intelligence agency in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (NBC, 1964-68). The Western and spy series continued but, in general, they became less paranoid and some parody appeared in shows like *The Wild Wild West* (CBS, 1965-69) or *Get Smart* (CBS, 1965-70). Both of these genres would virtually disappear in the 1970s as less traditional series, especially sitcoms which questioned the American way of life, became popular—*All in the Family* (CBS, 1971-79) being the best known. Interestingly enough, as the Vietnam War played out on nightly news broadcasts, the subject was taboo in series—unless presented in a disguised fashion—until after the conflict ended.

As in cinema, there was some return to traditional Cold War themes in the 1980s in series like *Airwolf* (CBS, 1984-87) but this was an exception rather than the rule. Significantly, Mickey Spillane's hardboiled detective Mike Hammer returned to TV (CBS, 1984-7) but in a toned down version with much less anti-communist rhetoric than the novels. One very popular series that had Cold War elements was *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS, 1980-88) whose main characters were Vietnam veterans trying to readjust to civilian life. Perhaps most symbolic of the Reagan period was *Dallas* (CBS, 1978-91) because of its celebration of capitalism. It attracted a worldwide following as did amoral, wheeler-dealer J.R. Ewing, the man everyone loved to hate. But by this time, American film and television were present virtually everywhere in the world.

In many ways the early history of television was similar throughout the West although in most countries the initial steps were undertaken by a government-sponsored corporation. The link with radio, however, was a general phenomenon. In Britain, for example, the BBC was responsible for television's early development and began experimental television broadcasts in 1932 which it gradually expanded over the next few years. This stopped completely, though, with the start of World War II, only returning in 1946. The 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II was the single most important early stimulus to growth with over 20 million people watching at least part of the ceremony. Although progressing more slowly than in the US, television grew immensely over the next twenty years with the introduction of commercial TV in 1955 and color in 1967. In the 1960s and 1970s British television began to find a worldwide audience even penetrating the US market with shows in popular American genres like *The Avengers* (espionage) or *Doctor Who* (science fiction) and wildly experimental ones like *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

Television in France had begun broadcasting in 1931 although the number of sets remained tiny until the late 1950s. The Germans took it

over during World War II but their programming was aimed at their own soldiers. After the Liberation, *Radiodiffusion française* was formed and this became *Radiodiffusion-télévision française* in 1949—when television licensing fees were also introduced. In general, France was behind Britain with regard to major developments: color only appeared in 1967 and private channels and cable later still.

German television began broadcasting in 1935 and continued until near the end of the war although its range was limited to Berlin. The division of the country after 1945 led the US, Britain and France to create a decentralized system for the West (in order to prevent any future nationalist propaganda) with broadcasts beginning in the early 1950s. Otherwise, television developed in a similar pattern to most other Western nations with sports playing a leading role (notably the 1954 World Cup) and the 1960s seeing major growth and expansion as well as the introduction of color TV. Of course, there was one major difference: West German broadcasting reached the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and thus provided a window on the outside world to its citizens along with maintaining some sense of unity between the two halves. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Eastern Bloc Television

In the years after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks consolidated their power and expanded, forming the USSR in 1922. Lenin himself died in 1924. The following years saw Stalin solidify his power but they also saw some of the greatest achievements in Soviet cinema by directors like Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin. From 1928, though, cinema came under increasing criticism for its high cost and for supposed bourgeois tendencies. In 1929, purges of the industry began in order to impose Socialist Realism, which would become officialized in 1934. Stalin sought to destroy the old commercial, popular culture that had existed before the Revolution and create a new mass one designed to express ideas approved by the state. Socialist Realism was the order of the day with healthy, attractive workers in beautiful factories finding happiness through work and romance with other workers and perhaps—if they were truly lucky—experiencing the ultimate bliss of meeting Stalin. Although the situation loosened during World War II, this was more or less the state of things as the Cold War began.

The period after the death of Stalin is known as the “Thaw” because it saw a relative liberalization in the arts. Comedy could return although tension always remained about what exactly could be laughed at.

Characters could become human beings again rather than just ideological symbols, and there was a very real, although generally subtle, questioning of the Soviet way of life as it had been presented under Stalin. But while the “Thaw” saw some development of freedom of expression, censorship never vanished, although its extent fluctuated over time. Certainly Socialist Realism evolved but did not disappear since it remained the official art form.

As elsewhere, the USSR pioneered television before World War II but it only became a mass medium much later. In fact, the USSR was surprisingly slow to decide on how to exploit television which suffered from serious technical problems for a number of years: the sets continually broke down and even when they were working reception was often poor. Added to that were problems linked to the fairly slow progress of electrification and the expense of creating transmission systems. Still, television grew spectacularly: in 1940 there were 400 sets; in 1950, 10,000; in 1960, 4.8 million. By 1976 the USSR was producing seven million sets a year. Only five percent of the Soviet population could watch television in 1960 but by 1986 the figure had risen to 93 percent.²¹

But beyond the obvious technical difficulties, television posed possible ideological complications as well. On the one hand, it made it possible to reach greater numbers of people than ever before—people from all ethnic groups, in all age ranges, with all sorts of educational backgrounds and in virtually all parts of the country. But, as Kristin Roth-Ey has pointed out, the private nature of television viewing also posed very real problems for the Soviet leadership:

Who knew for sure if viewers were snoozing their way through symphonies and lectures on Lenin, or laughing at lecturers and gossiping about their hairstyles, or not tuning in for important political and cultural programming at all? ... Where Soviet tradition was geared to mass political and cultural mobilization TV looked like immobilization; where Soviet tradition privileged collective, public settings, TV broadcasting reached individual and anonymous viewers in their homes. Never had the Soviet regime had a medium for reaching so many people with its messages, and never had a medium appeared so potentially out of sync with the messages it was to deliver.²²

²¹ These figures are from Ellen Mickiewicz, *Split Signals: Television and Politics in the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 3.

²² Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011) 180-1.

As in the West, sports programming was particularly popular from the start. Unlike the Americans, who saw the entertainment possibilities of television early on, in the USSR broadcasting was supposed to exist to “improve” society and to inform the public of the benefits of their system. It was only in the late 1960s that the government came to realize that television had to be made more entertaining.²³ Series did not develop, though, until the 1970s and even these were only mini-series. In this they were far behind, not only the West, but other members of the Eastern bloc.

The period after the departure of Khrushchev in 1964, is known as the “Stagnation Era”, and, saw the triumph of television as the preferred leisure activity of the Soviet people. At first glance, even subtle questioning found little toleration. Although, internationally, détente was the order of the day, the arms race continued as did proxy wars, with the USSR providing massive support to North Vietnam. In particular, the Prague Spring in 1968 had a profound impact, convincing many communist leaders that its cause had been too much freedom of expression. Programming had to show ideological conformity as well as some pretension to cultural seriousness which led to many of the series of the period being adaptations of novels.²⁴ Three types of series dominated and all had a clear link with the Cold War: the spy thriller, the police procedural and the detective series. Significantly each of these genres tend to focus on individuals which went against the emphasis on collective identity in the USSR. Highly positive portrayals of the military and of World War II returned to Soviet cinema and then migrated to television. This trend would continue after the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan that would lead to a renewal of Cold War tension. A major change did occur, for much emphasis began to be placed on attracting audiences and a consumer mentality of sorts developed. Very real attempts were made to dress up a political message in terms that would attract viewers and this had some success. The Cold War thriller returned with the Americans, especially the CIA, firmly presented as villains. Films and TV series showing the two superpowers in confrontation were popular.

That much of Soviet programming was propaganda was undeniable but what was not clear was whether it actually had an impact. A 1975 report discovered that in rural Russia about 40 percent of the population had only a fourth-grade equivalent education and 93 percent of these could not understand political and news programming. A 1980 study found that

²³ Mark Hopkins, *Mass Media in the Soviet Union* (New York: Pegasus, 1970) 51.

²⁴ The most complete study of this period is Elena Prokhorova, “Fragmented Mythologies: Soviet TV Mini-Series of the 1970s” (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2003).

many of the words used in news reports meant nothing to Soviet citizens: one-quarter did not know the meaning of the word “colonialism”; nearly fifty percent did not understand “imperialism”; two-thirds “leftist forces” and nearly three-quarters, “reactionary”.²⁵ When you add into this the number of distractions that one can have while watching television, as well as a certain natural skepticism, it is not difficult to argue that much of the official discourse was not reaching its target.

Most other Eastern bloc countries were well in advance of the USSR in the development of entertainment television. Polish television made its first broadcasts in 1938, stopped during the war, and then restarted in 1952—although it was only in 1956 that national broadcasting began. Poland was well in advance of the USSR for entertainment programming, presenting, from the 1960s, variety shows, contemporary dramas, quiz shows and, of course, series. At first political content was kept fairly light but, after the upheavals of 1968, propaganda became more important. This situation would continue until the fall of communism.

In Germany, after the war, television stopped broadcasting in the Soviet zone until a unified service for the East was created in 1956. In 1969 a second channel was added but the vast majority of broadcasting remained in black and white until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Series developed soon after and thus much earlier than in the USSR. As in other socialist countries, the GDR viewed television as a way to educate the people, primarily politically through rather blatant propaganda but also with regard to art and science.²⁶

The GDR, of course, faced a problem that did not exist in other socialist countries—competition from West German television. For this reason the government was forced to pay more attention to viewer wishes. Certainly, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) sought to impose their vision of the ideal society on the population and looked to television as one of their main tools.²⁷ In order to attract audiences, some experimentation was allowed and even encouraged at times. While many series were highly political, other genres did exist, such as romance, science fiction and Westerns—although expression remained limited and some ideological content was usually obligatory.

²⁵ See Mickiewicz, *Split Signals*, 182.

²⁶ For more on this see Simone Barck, Christoph Classen and Thomas Haimann, “The Fettered Media: Controlling Public Debate” in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, edited by Konrad H. Jarausch, translated by Eva Duffy (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999) 213-240.

²⁷ For more on this see Heather Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism: Television and the Cold War in the GDR* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2014) 11.

Undeniably West German television won its battle with the GDR but this was not obvious at the start. The two Germanies diverged dramatically in the post-war period and East German viewers found that the Federal Republic's programming was totally out of sync with their experiences of life. The GDR even had some programming successes, notably in the 1960s, and always attracted some viewers from the West—although mainly for films. It was only near the end that viewers felt alienated from their television and turned to Western German television for information about what was really happening.²⁸ Television in communist countries often failed as a propaganda tool—but that does not mean that it did not sometimes make entertaining programs that usually also tried to get across a political point.

The structure of this book

One of the main purposes of this work is to compare entertainment programming in the two blocs. As such it is organized thematically and comparatively with examples from each side. First the question of censorship is examined. Some people on both sides saw a very real danger in popular entertainment, especially television. As early as 1935 Rudolf Arnheim dismissed it as “a mere instrument of transmission, which does not offer new means for the artistic interpretation of reality” and many scholars would follow in his footsteps.²⁹ Although some Western broadcasters (especially government-financed ones) sought to provide culturally uplifting programs, this policy would be especially pronounced in the Eastern Bloc. Even more important, though, from the authorities' point of view, was the fear that Western shows could communicate positive visions of capitalist society. Chapter Two, “Foreign Entertainment Programs on Soviet Television: Dosage and Censorship” by Anatoly Tokmakov, provides an in-depth discussion of how and why the USSR limited Western programs. Not surprisingly, the next chapter concerns the period that saw the greatest informal censorship in the US—the McCarthy era. Scott Brand's “*The Adventures of Robin Hood—Outlawed in Sherwood, Banned from Hollywood*” considers the case of this British series (which appeared in the US) that employed several blacklisted writers who used it to subtly attack censorship, government oppression, secret denunciations and exploitation of the poor. Chapter Four “Fight,

²⁸ Gumbert, 158.

²⁹ Arnheim, “A Forecast of Television” written in 1935, published in *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957) 194.

Classify, Borrow and Replace: The Soviets and the West in the Television Series *State Border* (1980-1988)” by Gueorgui Chepelev returns to the USSR and examines the official representation of Western nations and citizens.

After this we look at the very particular case of Germany. Nancy Reagin in “Socialist Indians and Capitalist Cowboys: The Uses of Westerns in Both Germanies” examines the phenomenal popularity of the American Western with special attention to the problems this caused in the GDR. Here, to be acceptable, the exploitation of Indians by greedy Americans had to be stressed. Laura Honsburger’s chapter “Playing Socialist Games: East German Game Shows and an Alternative Model of Consumption” details efforts to create a non-capitalist game show and, in doing so, illustrates the difficulties Eastern Bloc television experienced in trying to create an alternative form of entertainment that could be educational, ideologically sound, and attractive to viewers.

After this, we turn to a comparative analysis of examples from different genres, beginning with war (and more than a touch of espionage). On the Soviet side two chapters provide in-depth analyses of mini-series based on the novels of Julian Semyonov. Jonathan Ludwig examines *TASS Is Authorized to Announce*, from 1984, which provides a highly negative and simplistic view of American, and especially CIA, intervention in the developing world. This is followed by two chapters considering two famous series from the early 1970s. Cécile Vaissié’s “False Nazis and True Chekists, Treacherous Allies and Close Enemies: The Soviet Series *Seventeen Moments of Spring*” and Lori Maguire’s “Treating the Nation’s Wounds: *M*A*S*H* 1972-75” provide a striking insight into the differences between the two countries and their media. Both take place in the past, during a time of war, and both use the past to make a rather subversive comment on the present. *M*A*S*H*, although set during the Korean War, is obviously fundamentally about Vietnam. It openly mocks the US military, the CIA, government bureaucracy, and the reasoning behind the war. *Seventeen Moments of Spring* clearly does not possess the freedom of expression of the American series, yet in some ways it is the more subversive of the two because it subtly equates Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, thus undercutting the nominally anti-American plot.

The next chapters consider the genre of the detective or crime story which may seem, at first appearance, more apolitical. Yet it also could carry very real Cold War overtones. Michael Vann explores this with reference to *Hawaii Five-0* in “A Cold Warrior in Paradise: American Cold War Masculinity, Race, and Empire in *Hawaii Five-0*”. In theory, crime should not exist in an ideal socialist society so the genre posed

problems in the Eastern Bloc. One way of escaping from the dilemma, as Andre Filler demonstrates in “Politics and Evil: Detective Stories on Soviet Television in the Cold War Context”, was to ascribe it to foreign agents. Finally Joseph Darowski looks at the Superman series from the 1950s in “Propaganda and the Atomic Age: *The Adventures of Superman* and American Cold War Rhetoric”, which does not, at first glance, look like a detective series but, because of budget constraints, effectively fell into that category.

After this we turn to documentaries and officially sanctioned dramas. Katerina Brezinova in “Cold War Edutainment: Understanding Czech Documentaries on Cold War Latin America” examines the ideological and propaganda dimensions of these works. In the following chapter, “*Men into Space*: The Space Race and Entertainment Television”, Margaret Weitkamp considers the attempt to present a realistic drama about space exploration (one that was endorsed by the U.S. Air Force) and the reasons behind it.

Our last pair of studies focus on a genre that at first glance seems far removed from the politics of the Cold War: music and variety shows. Irène Costelian in “Music on Romanian National Television: Between National Glorification and Demarcation from the West” shows how such programs could be used for propaganda purposes. Uldis Krūze in “Comedy on the Front Lines of the Cold War: Bob Hope’s Christmas TV Specials during the Vietnam War” examines a much more obviously politicized example of the genre. The final chapter “The Fall and Rise of the Cold War Masquerade: Magical Young Women on North American Television, 1964-2015” by Anne Rubenstein, takes us beyond the period under consideration, contrasting the presentation of powerful women during and after the conflict. For this reason it makes a fitting conclusion to our analysis.

CHAPTER TWO

FOREIGN ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMS ON SOVIET TELEVISION: DOSAGE AND CENSORSHIP

ANATOLY TOKMAKOV

In one of his speeches, Mikhail Suslov, the main ideologue of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) during the Cold War, stressed that: “The Party and its Central Committee have always considered the press, radio and television as powerful ideological weapons, an irreplaceable means of communist education and organization of the masses, and an important factor in the formation of public opinion.”¹ Soviet television, a state monopoly, was developed as a “weapon” and was never expected to be very entertaining. Television depended little on the popularity of programs (a rating system was only introduced after the end of the USSR) and only a modest selection of films, musical performances and games were designed for enjoyment. Even the word “entertainment” was not officially used in the field as it suggested something secondary and of little importance. Entertainment shows were designated and broadcast under dull labels such as “television concerts” and “festive programs”.

Under what form could foreign entertainment programs appear on the small screen behind the iron curtain? Could they be presented in a general way? Before answering these questions, we must first examine the period from the early 1960s to the end of the Soviet period. Earlier, for technical

¹ Report made at a meeting of the ideological division 16.10.1979, cited in Eduard Efimov, “Dva televideniia—dve kul'tury”, *Televidenie: vchera, segodnia, zavtra 1* (Moscow, Iskusstvo: 1981), 52.

reasons, Soviet television broadcast for only a few hours and had a very limited audience.²

The Inner Workings of Television Censorship

Even if during these three decades, state and media leaders gave priority to ideological education, the broadcast content could vary, as well as the strictness of control imposed on TV. Soviet television can act as an indicator of the time, allowing one to establish a relationship between the subject of the programs and the history of the country. After several years of “Thaw” under Khrushchev with an easing of restrictions, the Brezhnev era brought new prohibitions and a renewed strength in censorship. The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia, which marked the start of a crisis in the world communist system reinforced ideological pressure in the USSR. The Kremlin saw the Prague Spring as linked to too much freedom of the press and so became particularly suspicious of its own media.

On January 7, 1969, the secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPSU adopted a confidential decree, “On increasing the responsibility of leaders of press, radio and television organs and of cultural and artistic institutions with regard to the ideological and political level of publications and repertory.” In the context of new international tension, the Party was preoccupied by the fact that: “certain authors express ideas foreign to the ideology of socialism, abandoning Marxist criteria of analysis, while the media are lax in broadcasting ideologically flawed documents.”³

“Certain persons in charge”, the text of the decree specifies, “try to transfer their obligations to the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR”.⁴

² In 1960 Soviet Central Television only had two channels. The first channel broadcast around 10 hours one day of the week and the second channel for three hours. The total number of sets equaled around five million, or about 19 per thousand inhabitants. At the same time the figure was 41 in France and 310 in the US. *Statistics on Radio and Television 1950-1960* (UNESCO: 1963), 26.

³ *Istoriia sovetskoi politicheskoi tsenzury. Dokumenty i kommentarii* (Moscow: 1997), 188-191. The original is in the archives TsKhSD, F 5, Op. 19, D 131, L 2-6. The decree was prepared by the members of the secretariat of the Central Committee, CPSU, M. Suslov, D. Ustinov, B. Ponomarev, P. Demichev, M. Solomentsev, A. Pelse.

⁴ *Glavlit*, the official censorship organization, often changed names and rank in the power structure. At the beginning of the 1960s it came under the State committee on press affairs; from 1966 it obtained the status of Federal Ministry. Aside from

The goal of the document was clear—to tighten control over production and to impose responsibility on the chief editors. From then on, they were required to ensure the preliminary control on site and become the de facto censorship officers.⁵

In 1970, the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting (after the 1978 reorganization also called *Gosteleradio*), which was a federal ministry for broadcasting, was entrusted to Sergei Lapin. He would remain in this position for fifteen years and firmly put into effect the transformation of television into an ideological tool. The new head of the committee was a real pillar of the regime. His leadership was marked by the creation of a centralized system of television and radio broadcasting with the establishment of local committees directly subordinate to the federal structure. This system provided for a rigorous control at all stages of production and broadcasting. By applying new recording technology it minimized the number of live programs with the exception of televised news presented by announcers, sports and official ceremonies. Lapin's own personal preferences were the reason several entertainment genres, including pop music and rock, were blocked.

At the time of Sergei Lapin, Central Television, which produced the majority of programs shown in the country, was made up of ten broadcasting head offices, charged with preparing programming according to their profile: news, propaganda, literature, theater, cinema, music, sports, children's programs etc. The structure was vertical as was control, which was applied in the same way in all the departments. Each scenario responded to a pre-established and approved plan. It was first reviewed by the head of the section who signed it, then presented to the editor-in-chief of the broadcasting head office who expressed his criticisms before giving his authorization for production. At the end of editing, the program had to be accepted by the broadcasting head office and the production department head. For important programs, including those in the area of culture, the editor-in-chief had not only to view the product but also participate in its

protecting state secrets the *Glavlit* put up a barrier against information which might "be susceptible of confusing public opinion." See Zelenov M.V., "Polozhenie o Glavnom Upravlenii po okhrane gosudarstvennykh tain v pechati pri SM SSSR—pravovoe regulirovanie tsenzury v 1966 g.," *Istoriia knigi i tsenzury v Rossii: materialy mezhd. nauchn. Konferentsii* (St. Petersburg, LGU: 2013), 224-230.

⁵ See the memoirs of V. Egorov, former chief editor of the core writing committee for propaganda at Central Television: Vilen Egorov, *Lapin i televidenie. Mnogoseriinyi roman* (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 2011), 14.

making.⁶ Such “preliminary editing, associated with the editors’ control and the censors’ visa, protected against any surprises during broadcasting”.⁷

What was the place of actual censorship in the mechanism? According to the general rule, *Glavlit* (its sixth department) had offices in all media sectors, including television. Its agents had to verify that the scenarios did not contain anything from the “list of items not authorized for publication” –items relating to confidential information as well as to information judged “false” or “inappropriate”. Before the 1969 decree a large majority of the scripts due to be broadcast had to receive their approval. Yet, since being put into effect, if the censors remained strict in areas like the economy or military questions, the control in culture, sports or current affairs was mostly entrusted to party authorities and to editorial bodies made up of party members. Thus by closely examining the “broadcast files” –that is to say the scripts that had been validated–it is possible to see that if in 1965 the *Glavlit* censor checked the entirety of the programs from the Department of Music, five years later none of these shows would have been seen by the censor.⁸ For media like Central Television, controlled by Lapin, this was a characteristic feature⁹ resulting from applying the 1969 decree. But it is also possible that in view of the increasing volume of broadcasting, the censorship offices were overwhelmed by work. Arlen Blum, historian of Soviet censorship, confirms that during the “Thaw” and the “Stagnation”, the period of Khrushchev and Brezhnev respectively, *Glavlit’s* functions were reduced in favor of other types of control as well as self-censorship¹⁰ –a preventive censorship by the author, which was very common in media like television.

⁶ In this case, reception was controlled by the president of the Committee or one of his deputies. Egorov, *Lapin i televidenie*, 92.

⁷ Rudolf Boretskii, “Televidenie kak sotsial’naia tekhnologiia i sotsial’nyi institut”, *Teleradioefir: istoriia i sovremennost’* (Moscow, Aspekt-press : 2005), 31.

⁸ Archives GARF, F 6903, Op. 26, D 608 / D 788 / D 1228.

⁹ According to the account of Georgii Kuznetsov, in the 1980s, censorship was embodied by “two young ladies sitting in their inconspicuous office on the 11th floor of Ostankino”. See Kuznetsov, Georgii, “Pro tsenzuru”, *Tak rabotaiut zhurnalisty TV* (Moscow, MGU: 2004). An account of the unwillingness of censorship agents to deal with music was provided by T. Bodrova in an episode of the *Echo of Moscow*. See “Muzyka i tsenzura”, *Echo Moskvy*, February 7, 2013, <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/vinil/1005398-echo>

¹⁰ Arlen Blum, “Stat’i dlia entsiklopedii Tsenzura”, *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 112 (6/2011), <http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/1554>.

Imported Shows and the Programming Structure

In this closed context, it is not surprising that foreign productions shown in the USSR were the object of strict selection. In 1973 the percentage of imported shows on Central Television's First Channel comprised five percent of all programming.¹¹ It would reach eight percent ten years later.¹² For all this production there was another type of control, a preliminary selection made at the time of purchasing and trade procedures with *Gosteleradio's* international partners. The Department of International Relations (GUVS since 1970) was in charge of performing this task. The selection was based on several criteria, including, above all, that of the producing country. In line with the USSR's foreign policy where priority was given to "brother" countries, followed by developing nations, Soviet television favored the television production of the Eastern Bloc. According to a study for UNESCO in 1973 almost all of the programs imported by the Soviet Union came from the communist camp.¹³ With regard to the West, preference was given to the countries with which the USSR had the best political relations. In 1970 the GUVS reported the most active exchanges with Finnish and French television.¹⁴ As a result, entertainment programs of French origin were more available on the Soviet small screen than those produced across the Atlantic. Finland, moreover, was favored as a member of Intervision, an international organization which had brought together, since 1961, television from Soviet countries and a few non-allied countries. This organization provided the framework for members to exchange coverage and rebroadcast sporting events as well as entertainment programs and children's shows.

Apart from political reasons, these restrictions in the importation of foreign programs were also based on economic motivations. According to a former employee of *Gosteleradio's* international relations department, her committee's foreign currency reserves were mainly used to buy

¹¹ 17 percent in Poland, 27 percent in Romania. The test week analysis of the First program of Soviet television gives an estimated 5 percent of foreign programs, but the amount may have been smaller when no major sports occasions were taking place. Kaarle Nordenstreng, Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic: a One-Way Street?* (UNESCO: 1973), 14.

¹² Tapio Varis, *International Flow of Television Programmes* (UNESCO: 1985), 37.

¹³ Kaarle Nordenstreng, Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic*, 25.

¹⁴ Archives GARF, F 6903, Op. 2, D 619, L. 17. Only documents from GUVS from before 1970 are available to researchers.

equipment.¹⁵ Lack of means was a factor reducing the number of orders for television productions and favored free transactions, notably direct exchanges. However swapping shows with western countries remained limited and importing generally implied a currency payment that was not always considered a disadvantage. In fact, the Soviets preferred to remain free from any engagement. To this effect we can cite a document that does not have a direct link to the purchasing policy, but reveals a great deal about the relation *Gosteleradio* had with its partners. In 1969, in a confidential letter addressed to the USSR's representative at the UN, N. Mesyatsev, the president of the Radio/Television Company, asked the ambassador to refrain from acting as an intermediary between his organization and the American distributors since this could give the State Department a reason to demand access to Soviet media space.¹⁶ The tactic of unilateral decisions in their relations with the West left Soviet television with freedom of choice and maneuverability.

In any case, the volume of transactions was not important, so in 1970 the Central Television bought nine programs from the BBC. That same year the GUVS confirmed having received 88 productions (including eleven documentaries, a feature-length motion picture, six films on music and 70 animated films) from American partners such as CBS, MGM, NBS, NBC and UPITN. After making their selection, Soviet television acquired the rights to 40 cartoons¹⁷, a feature length picture and seven films about travel, sports and nature.

In regard to the type of shows imported by the USSR during the Cold War, the range depended in large part on priorities chosen by the broadcaster. Importing foreign productions depended to a great extent on the programming structure of Central Television which can give us an idea of the distributor's priorities. On the Soviet small screen, documentaries (10 percent), educational programming (10 percent), children's shows (11 percent), fictional films (11 percent) televised theatre (9 percent), sports (9 percent) and even the news (6 percent) came in far ahead of variety shows

¹⁵ Ludmila Zolotareva, "Vostok-zapad. Etapy teleobmenov", http://www.tvmuseum.ru/catalog.asp?ob_no=12896

¹⁶ "Pis'mo predsedatelia Gosteleradio N. Mesiatseva Postoiannomu predstaviteliiu pri OON Ia. Maliku", Archives GARF, F 6903, Op. 2, D 595, L. 24-26. This letter concerns the plan to offer American distributors Soviet programs without any obligation of reciprocity.

¹⁷ Archives GARF, F 6903, Op. 2, D 619, L. 35. The contract with CBS Europe to broadcast 40 episodes of *Mighty Mouse Cartoons* over a period of 40 years was valued at \$20,000. One episode of *One Pair of Eyes* ("Washington, a City of Magnificent Intentions") from the BBC cost \$525. (F 6903, Op. 2, D 616).