

# Television Beyond and Across the Iron Curtain



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Edited by

Kirsten Bönker, Julia Obertreis  
and Sven Grampp

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# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

## KIRSTEN BÖNKER AND JULIA OBERTREIS

“This, Mr. Khrushchev, is one of the most advanced developments in communications that we have, at least in our country. It is color television, of course. It is, as you will see, [...] one of the best means of communication that has been developed. And I can only say that if this competition which you have described so effectively, in which you plan to outstrip us, and particularly in the production of consumer goods, if this competition is to do the best for both of our peoples and for people everywhere, there must be a free exchange of ideas. There are some instances where you may be ahead of us, for example in the development of the thrust of your rockets for the investigation of outer space. There may be some instances, for example, color television, where we’re ahead of you.”<sup>2</sup>

This was at the beginning of a heated exchange between Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev and US Vice President Richard Nixon that took place in July 1959. The so-called “kitchen debate” on the occasion of the opening of an American trade exhibition in Moscow has since become a famous episode of Cold War diplomacy. It publicly promoted the peaceful competition between the Cold War power blocs in the field of consumer goods and interiors for the first time. In front of TV cameras Nixon and Khrushchev engaged in a witty verbal exchange about whose

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<sup>1</sup> This volume is the outcome of an international conference that took place in Erlangen in December 2013. We are very grateful to our co-convenor and co-editor Sven Grampp (Erlangen) for his thoughts, ideas, advice, and especially for his contribution to this book. We would also like to thank the speakers and discussants who enriched the conference and certainly those who contributed to this volume. Further, we owe thanks to our student assistants, Diana Schwindt (Bielefeld) and Jakob Rauschenbach (Erlangen), for revising the articles and preparing the printing pattern. Last but not least, we are happy that Catherine Marshall helped us so much with her very careful and excellent proofreading of this volume.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6RLCw1OZFw>, 0:20 – 1:32 min., accessed November 03, 2015. For a transcript see <http://www.TeachingAmericanHistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=176>, accessed November 03, 2015.

country was more successful in providing labour-saving and recreational devices for ordinary people. Asked to describe his impressions of the exhibit, Khrushchev said that the Soviet Union would catch up with the United States in the coming seven years.<sup>3</sup> As the quotation given above shows, Nixon responded to this challenge by presenting an American colour TV set as one of the latest technical achievements to affirm how far ahead of Russia his country's consumer industries were. As Nixon mentioned, the debate with the Soviet premier was recorded on colour videotape, produced by Ampex, one of the most advanced American companies in audio tape technology. Khrushchev, however, interrupted Nixon claiming that "in rockets we've left you behind, and also in this technology (he referred to colour television) we've outstripped you."<sup>4</sup> Thus, Khrushchev himself deemed television as playing a major role and to be the benchmark of the peaceful coexistence of the two superpowers. As Western mass media widely covered the "kitchen summit"—newspapers published photographs of the exhibition and the meeting, American and Soviet television broadcast parts of the dispute between Nixon and Khrushchev—, the world's public was able to witness the significance ascribed to (colour) television from both sides. Henceforth, television was a prominent symbol of social, cultural, and technological progress in both East and West. It became the object of international negotiations and mutual observations.

## **The Rise of Television across the Iron Curtain: State of the Art, Research Perspectives and Questions**

This volume's concern is to provide more empirical ground to include socialist television into a European and global media history. It is not only the "ping-pong communication"<sup>5</sup> across the Iron Curtain that is an important point of interest, but the aim of this volume is also to

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<sup>3</sup> Greg Castillo, *The Cold War on the Home Front. The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), X-XIII, XXII, 140, 160-169; William Safire, "The Cold War's Hot Kitchen," *New York Times*, July 23, 2009, accessed February 23, 2014, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/24/opinion/24safire.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/24/opinion/24safire.html?_r=0).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6RLCw1OZFW>, 1:33 – 1:45 min., accessed November 03, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Badenoch, Andreas Fickers, and Christian Henrich-Franke, "Airy Curtains in the European Ether: Introduction," in *Airy Curtains: European Broadcasting during the Cold War*, ed. Alexander Badenoch, Andreas Fickers, and Christian Henrich-Franke (Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlag, 2013), 13-14.



complement the Western-dominated perspective on Cold War mass media with a specific focus on the spaces and actors of Eastern European communication.

It is striking that the rise of television as a mass medium took place in many Eastern and Western European countries at approximately the same time, starting in the mid-1950s. The changes television brought about were not only of technological, but also of societal nature. Television affected most people's daily life by transforming lifestyles and domestic material culture. People furnished, for example, their apartments with the new media technology, often placing the television set in the centre of their living rooms.<sup>6</sup> The most influential mass medium of the Cold War represented the specific consumerist life styles on both sides of the Iron Curtain—the American and the new socialist way of life.

Television also changed the public and private spheres. Contemporaries perceived that people were retreating from the politicised public sphere into 'their' private spheres, a process for which television became a symbol. Conceptualising private, private-public and public spheres, scholars have noticed a gradual expansion of the private sphere since the 1950s that was not least brought about by the construction of millions of apartment houses. Recent studies have questioned the traditional binary model and antagonistic demarcation of the public and the private. Instead, new contributions on the Soviet 1950s and 1960s have stressed the strong interconnectedness of the public and the private.<sup>7</sup> These obvious changes

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<sup>6</sup> Kirsten Bönker, "'Muscovites are frankly wild about TV'. Freizeit und Fernsehkonsum in der späten Sowjetunion," in *Entwickelter Sozialismus in Osteuropa. Arbeit, Konsum und Öffentlichkeit*, ed. Nada Boškowska, Angelika Strobel, and Daniel Ursprung (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2016), 173-210; Susan E. Reid, "The Meaning of Home: 'The only bit of the world you can have to yourself'," in Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ed., *Borders of Socialism. Private spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 144-170, esp. 164; idem, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review*, 61, 2 (Summer 2002): 211-252.

<sup>7</sup> Ingrid Oswald and Viktor Voronkov, "'Licht an, Licht aus!'. Öffentlichkeit in der (post-)sowjetischen Gesellschaft," in *Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten. Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs*, ed. Gábor T. Rittersporn, Malte Rolf, and Jan C. Behrends (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2003), 37-61. See also Reid, "The Meaning of Home"; Kirsten Bönker, "Depoliticalisation of the Private Life? Reflections on Private Practices and the Political in the Late Soviet Union," in Willibald Steinmetz, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, eds., *Writing Political History Today* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2013), 207-234; Juliane Fürst, "Friends in Private,

in the functioning of the late socialist societies, in public and private communication practices and media consumption urge us to draw our attention to the communicative mechanisms that contributed to the socio-political stability of the socialist regimes—all these were processes in which television became deeply entangled as the rising key medium.<sup>8</sup>

However, mass media and especially television are seldom regarded in this context. This might come as a surprise, because Cold War American sociologists Alex Inkeles and Raymond Bauer observed in their study of Soviet public opinion in the 1950s that the “*nature of the Soviet Union is such that the communications behavior of citizens must be regarded as one of the dimensions of their relations with the regime.*”<sup>9</sup> This statement points to what we now understand as communication processes that have been conceptualised as subjects of both media studies and of history. The analysis of mass media, of communication structures and processes of negotiation including various kinds of actors, platforms, and communication channels, contribute to the history of public spheres and its different segments (*Teilöffentlichkeiten*) in socialist societies. While in general models of public spheres generated on the example of Western societies can be applied to socialist societies as well, there were obvious differences between them, including censorship, bans and taboos in the case of the latter.<sup>10</sup>

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Friends in Public: The Phenomenon of the *Kompaniia* Among Soviet Youth in the 1950s and 1960s,” in *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. Lewis H. Siegelbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 229-249, esp. 244.

<sup>8</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything was forever, until it was no more: The last Soviet generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, Introduction, in *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. Lewis H. Siegelbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1–21, esp. 3; Ekaterina Emeliantseva, “The Privilege of Seclusion: Consumption Strategies in the Closed City of Severodvinsk,” in *Ab Imperio: Studies of New Imperial History and Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Space* (2011) 2: 238–259, esp. 238–244; Bren, Paulina. *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); Mary Fulbrook, *The people’s state: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); Kirsten Bönker, “‘Dear television workers...’: TV consumption and Political Communication in the Late Soviet Union,” in *Cahiers du monde russe* 56 (2015), 2-3: 371-399.

<sup>9</sup> Alex Inkeles and R. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen: Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society* (New York: Atheneum 1968), 165.

<sup>10</sup> Jörg Requate, “Öffentlichkeit und Medien als Gegenstände historischer Analyse,” in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 25 (1999): 5-32; Michael Meyen, “Öffentlichkeit in der DDR. Ein theoretischer und empirischer Beitrag zu den

Censorship was undoubtedly stronger and more invasive in socialist states than in democratic countries. Nonetheless, the etatist concept of government-related television channels in de Gaulle's France or similar ideas of restrictive media politics in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s suggest that bipolar models which contrast the "dictatorial" East with the "democratic" West are too undifferentiated and should at least be carefully refined.<sup>11</sup> They did, however, with a slight relaxation during the 1970s, more or less dominate research on mass media in socialist Europe at least until the early 1990s.<sup>12</sup> The totalitarian approach is based on a dichotomous model of party-state versus population. Contemporary Western social and media scientists have made considerable efforts to explore especially the Soviet system of political communication during the Cold War that had been exported to the Eastern bloc states. These investigations highlighted the regime's monopoly on mass media, reducing them to seemingly persuasive propaganda channels. In the early Cold War, the press and the radio in particular were perceived as instruments of thought control and brainwashing.<sup>13</sup>

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Kommunikationsstrukturen in Gesellschaften ohne Medienfreiheit," in: *Studies in Communication / Media (SCM)* 1 (2011): 3-69; Monica Rütters, "Öffentlicher Raum und gesellschaftliche Utopie. Stadtplanung, Kommunikation und Inszenierung von Macht in der Sowjetunion am Beispiel Moskaus zwischen 1917 und 1964," in *Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten. Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs*, ed. Gábor T. Rittersporn, Malte Rolf, and Jan C. Behrends (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 2003), 65-96; Julia Obertreis, "Massenmediale Öffentlichkeit, Unterhaltung und Politik: "Das Kabarett der älteren Herren (Kabarett Starszych Panów) im polnischen Fernsehen," in *Entwickelter Sozialismus' in Osteuropa. Arbeit, Konsum und Öffentlichkeit*, ed. Nada Boškovska, Angelika Strobel, and Daniel Ursprung (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2016), 143-171.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, "Télévision et espace public sous De Gaulle," in *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique* 86 (2002): 49-61; Aude Vassallo, *La télévision sous de Gaulle. Le contrôle gouvernemental de l'information (1958/1969)* (Bruxelles: De Boeck Supérieur, 2005); Meike Vogel, *Unruhe im Fernsehen. Protestbewegung und öffentlich-rechtliche Berichterstattung in den 1960er Jahren* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 39-47.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Hopkins was one of the more leftist Anglophone social scientists who drew on the idea of convergence between the ideological systems with regard to communication and media mechanisms. Cf. Mark W. Hopkins, *Mass Media in the Soviet Union* (New York: Pegasus, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> Gayle Durham Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda since Stalin* (New York, Washington, London: Praeger, 1972); Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia: A Study in Mass Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1950); Paul Roth, *Die kommandierte*

However, the extent to which social reality was conveyed and shaped by technical mass media was hardly less than in Western countries, and it grew in a similar way over the decades. This is why we need to integrate mass media and their consumption into models of Socialist societies and their public spheres, which are subdivided into segments, such as scientific, literary, artistic, political, religious etc. The parallels within Europe and across the Iron Curtain regarding the rapid spread of television towers, television sets, programme development etc. are still not as familiar to us as the better researched ideological differences in media politics. Similar enthusiasm and anxieties in the face of the new mass media could be observed in both Western democratic and Eastern state socialist countries.<sup>14</sup> Across the boundaries of the Iron Curtain, those in power regarded television as a symbol of modernity and a rising living standard for ordinary people. The renowned media sociologist Boris Firsov spoke of an ‘*expansion*’ of TV sets during the 1960s, a time in which the TV programme was steadily expanding.<sup>15</sup> Party leaders who—much like Western politicians—had kept a distance from the new medium during the 1950s and early 1960s gradually realised the propaganda potential of television, as Kristin Roth-Ey convincingly argues.<sup>16</sup> After the mid-1960s communist party members viewed the new medium as an opportunity to bring ‘culture’ to every home, to educate the ‘new man’ and to demonstrate technical progress in the competition with the West.

With regard to the mass media of the Eastern bloc and the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, Western historiography, media and cultural studies initially concentrated on the relatively easily accessible periodical press, newspapers and journals, while television has been rarely investigated.<sup>17</sup>

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*öffentliche Meinung. Sowjetische Medienpolitik* (Stuttgart: Seewald 1982); with regard to the GDR rather exemplary for a strict sender-receiver model: Gunter Holzweißig, *Zensur ohne Zensor. Die SED-Informationsdiktatur* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1997); idem, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei. Eine Mediengeschichte der DDR* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> With regard to cultural-critical attitudes towards the new medium of television in the Soviet Union see Kirsten Bönker, “Das sowjetische Fernsehen und die Neujustierung kultureller Grenzen,” in Igor Narskij ed., *Kultur für das Volk*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2016 (forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> Boris Firsov, *Televidenie glazami sotsiologa* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1971), 105.

<sup>16</sup> Roth-Ey, *Moscow*, 208–222.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Socialist Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Ludmila Pöppel, *The Rhetoric of Pravda Editorials: A Diachronic Study of a Political Genre* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2007); Nikolaus Heidorn, *Das Westdeutschlandbild in der Pravda: die Darstellung der Bundesrepublik*

Historians and media scholars using historical methods long ignored the socio-political and cultural impact of television on socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Here as well, the major exception to this general trend is the television of the GDR, which has already been broadly explored with regard to its technical infrastructure, programming, development of genres, the communication with the audience, audience tastes and uses of the medium, censorship and journalism etc.<sup>18</sup> In many of these respects, GDR television is the most thoroughly researched of the socialist states so far. Scholars focusing on the GDR, however, definitely benefit from well-organised archives. The archives offer a wide variety of written documents and a paradise of digital records in the *Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv* (DRA) in Potsdam. Contributions to GDR television history can serve as examples for research on other countries. Unfortunately, language skills often seem to prevent this, at least Anglophone research literature usually neglects the relevant German research.<sup>19</sup>

Although international media history is a growing field reaching beyond the GDR for about a decade now, many—including German—historians have long been and still are reluctant to include mass media and popular culture into broader research perspectives of socio-political history. However, we are witnessing a new scientific trend at the moment. For some time now state socialist television other than the East German case has captured rapidly growing attention in the fields of history and historically working media studies. This proliferation has already led to the

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*Deutschland und West-Berlins in der sowjetischen Presse* (Hamburg: Kovač, 1993); John Murray, *The Russian Press from Brezhnev to Yeltsin: Behind the Paper Curtain* (Aldershot: Elgar, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> To mention just a few studies from the broad field: Michael Meyen, *Einschalten, Umschalten, Ausschalten? Das Fernsehen im DDR-Alltag* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003); Heather Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism: Television and the Cold War in the German Democratic Republic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Uwe Breitenborn, *Wie lachte der Bär? Systematik, Funktionalität und thematische Segmentierung von unterhaltenden nonfiktionalen Programmformen im Deutschen Fernsehfunk bis 1969* (Berlin: Weißensee Verlag, 2003); Claudia Dittmar, *Feindliches Fernsehen: Das DDR-Fernsehen und seine Strategien im Umgang mit dem westdeutschen Fernsehen* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010); Claudia Dittmar and Susanne Vollberg (eds.), *Zwischen Experiment und Etablierung. Die Programmentwicklung des DDR-Fernsehens 1958 bis 1963* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2007); idem eds., *Alternativen im DDR-Fernsehen? Die Programmentwicklung 1981 bis 1985* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Heather Gumbert's book *Envisioning Socialism* is in this respect a very welcome exception to the rule.

publication of some edited volumes containing empirical and conceptual contributions.<sup>20</sup> Particular mention should be made of new and thrilling results for several countries: the CSSR,<sup>21</sup> Poland,<sup>22</sup> Romania,<sup>23</sup> Yugoslavia<sup>24</sup> and the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup>

Drawing on cultural studies and interdisciplinary approaches, recent research analyses structures and strategies of programming, addresses media contents, the flow and seriality of television, the development of genres and aesthetic forms as well as gender aspects. Thus, the shaping role of television within the field of entertainment and popular culture has become evident. Additionally, scholars discuss its relation to ideology and

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<sup>20</sup> Badenoch, Fickers, Franke, *Airy Curtains*; Aniko Imre, Timothy Havens and Katalin Lustyk eds., *Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism* (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2012); idem, “Audience history as a history of ideas: Towards a transnational history,” in *European Journal of Communication* 30 (2015), 1: 22–35.

<sup>21</sup> Bren, *The Greengrocer*; Irena Reifová, “A study in the history of meaning-making: Watching socialist television serials in the former Czechoslovakia,” in *European Journal of Communication* 30 (2015), 1: 79-94.

<sup>22</sup> Patryk Wasiak, “The Great Époque of the Consumption of Imported Broadcasts: West European Television Channels and Polish Audiences during the System Transition,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014) 5: 68-68; Michael Zok, *Die Darstellung der Judenvernichtung in Film, Fernsehen und politischer Publizistik der Volksrepublik Polen 1968-1989* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2015); idem, “Das polnische Fernsehen in den 1980 Jahren. Polska Telewizja als Gegenstand und Austragungsort politischer Konflikte,” in *Rundfunk und Geschichte* 39 (2013), 3-4: 25-34.

<sup>23</sup> Dana Mustata, “‘The Revolution Has Been Televised...’: Television as Historical Agent in the Romanian Revolution,” in *Journal of Modern European History*, 10-1 (March 2012): 76-97.

<sup>24</sup> Sabina Mihelj, “Negotiating Cold War Culture at the Crossroads of East and West: Uplifting the Working People, Entertaining the Masses, Cultivating the Nation,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 53 (2011), 3: 509–539; idem, “The Politics of Privatization: Television Entertainment and the Yugoslav Sixties,” in *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World*, ed. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 251-267.

<sup>25</sup> Christine Evans, “The ‘Soviet Way of Life’ as a Way of Feeling: Emotion and Influence on Soviet Central Television in the Brezhnev Era,” in *Cahiers du monde russe* 56 (2015) 2: 543-569; idem, *Between Truth and Time: A History of Soviet Central Television* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); 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); Bönker, “Muscovites”; idem, “‘Dear television workers...’”; idem, “Das sowjetische Fernsehen”.

the political system. Viewers no longer appear as mere passive receivers, but rather as active participants in communication processes voicing their preferences. In general, recent research supposes the production and consumption of TV programmes as being negotiated between media producers, viewers, state institutions and the regime.<sup>26</sup>

The new approaches have already borne fruit in the broader context of recent research on the period of “developed socialism”. It is interested in the stability and instability of the late socialist regimes and focuses on the societal processes and practices. Consumerism, leisure time activities, tourism, and sports in state socialist societies have become very productive fields of research.<sup>27</sup> They bring to light complex relations and negotiations between state policies, activities of mass organisations, individual and group practices. Well-known contributions to socialist popular culture have posed the question how Western influences and the “imagined West” were perceived and adapted in socialist societies.<sup>28</sup> Obviously, a strict juxtaposition between Western influences and the validity of socialist values cannot be stated. Rather, the adoption of elements of Western culture was able to easily coexist with established norms and power structures. This is an important insight for television studies as well: the consumption of Western films, of foreign radio stations like *Radio Free*

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. for example Meyen, *Einschalten, Umschalten, Ausschalten?*; Mihelj, “Negotiating Cold War Culture at the Crossroads of East and West”; Bren, *The Greengrocer*; Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*; Evans, *Between Truth and Time*; Bönker, “Dear television workers...”.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. recently Nada Boškovića, Angelika Strobel, and Daniel Ursprung eds., *‘Entwickelter Sozialismus’ in Osteuropa. Arbeit, Konsum und Öffentlichkeit* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2016); Luminita Gatejel, *Warten, hoffen und endlich fahren. Auto und Sozialismus in der Sowjetunion, in Rumänien und der DDR (1956-1989/91)* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2014); Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker eds., *The Socialist Sixties: Crossing Borders in the Second World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013); Natalya Chernyshova, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013); Milena Veenis, *Material Fantasies. Expectations of the Western Consumer World among East Germans* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012); David Crowley and Susan E. Reid eds., *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston/Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2010); Patrick Hyder Patterson, *Bought and Sold: Living and Losing the Good Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011); Breda Luthar and Maruša Pušnik eds., *Remembering Utopia: The Culture of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia* (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Yurchak, *Everything was forever*; Sergei I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dnipropetrovsk, 1960–1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

*Europe* or *BBC World*, and of television programmes did not automatically lead to a rejection of socialist culture or the socialist system of governance.<sup>29</sup> However, the question remains in which ways television contributed to the decomposition of socialist rule—as a medium perceived as state-controlled coming under fire especially during the 1980s, or as a medium providing critical information accelerating tendencies of erosion.<sup>30</sup>

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, media and social scientists directed their attention to the post-socialist changes in communication, staging of power and the democratisation processes in which mass media played a crucial role.<sup>31</sup> Thereby, post-socialist television, the restructuring of ownership, political influence and changes within the profession of journalists have gained explicit research interest.<sup>32</sup>

We are now aware that television triggered new practices of consumption and media production, of communication and exchange. Recent research has painted an initial picture of how television promoted new technical infrastructures, developments, and institutions. The new studies of television history have also indicated that Cold War television potentially became deeply entangled in cross-border interactions and international collaborations. A few studies have already established how

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. concerning the GDR: Michael Meyen, “Haben die Westmedien die DDR stabilisiert? Zur Unterhaltungsfunktion bundesdeutscher Rundfunkangebote,” in *SPIEL* 20 (2001) 1: 117-133; concerning the Soviet Union: Bönker, ““Muscovites””, 199-201.

<sup>30</sup> James Dingley, “Soviet Television and Glasnost’,” in: Julian Graffy and Geoffrey Hosking eds., *Culture and the media in the USSR today* (London/New York: St. Martin's Press 1989), 6-25. Cf. also: Ellen Mickiewicz, *Split Signals: Television and Politics in the Soviet Union* (New York/Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> John Downey and Sabina Mihelj eds., *Central and Eastern European Media in Comparative Perspective: Politics, Economy and Culture* (Farnham/Surrey, Burlington: Ashgate, 2012); as an earlier overview on Eastern Europe see: Barbara Thomaß and Michaela Tzankoff eds., *Medien und Transformation in Osteuropa* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001). On Russia see: Julie A. Cassidy and Emily D. Johnson, “Putin, Putiniana and the Question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality,” in *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88 (2010): 681-707; Kaarle Nordenstreng, Elena Vartanova, and Yassen Zassoursky eds., *Russian Media Challenge* (Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. for example: Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova eds., *Television and Culture in Putin's Russia: Remote Control* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009); Ellen Mickiewicz, “Excavating Concealed Tradeoffs: How Russians Watch the News,” in *Political Communication* 22 (2005), 3: 355-380; Sarah Oates, “The Neo-Soviet Model of the Media,” in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59 (2007), 8: 1279-1297.



these entanglements and interdependencies were shaped by institutional actors like the national television services, the international broadcasting agencies *European Broadcasting Union* (EBU) and *Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision* (OIRT), or private companies selling television sets.<sup>33</sup> Television stations further set up direct cooperation across the Iron Curtain. Helena Srubar has, for example, explored collaborative television productions of the *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR, West German Broadcasting) and the Czechoslovak television. They co-produced children's programmes like "Pan Tau", which became very popular in both East and West. This cooperation has to be seen against the background of the West German "new eastern policy" (neue Ostpolitik), that opened up new spaces for convergence across the Iron Curtain. It also reflected an anti-American stance and a tendency towards a critique of capitalism among leftist programme makers in West Germany, who had a stronghold in the WDR.<sup>34</sup>

The cooperation across the Iron Curtain and the already mentioned fundamental East-West parallels in spread, significance and social implications of television practices challenge us to ask to what extent the Cold War media culture was a shared one. Prisms of a shared media culture were big media events broadcast all over the world, such as the first one, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. the chapter of Andreas Fickers in this volume; Christian Henrich-Franke, Regina Immel, "Making Holes into the Iron Curtain? – The Television Programme Exchange across the Iron Curtain in the 1960s and 1970s," in *Airy Curtains: European Broadcasting During the Cold War*, ed. Alexander Badenoch, Andreas Fickers, and Christian Henrich-Franke (Baden-Baden: Nomos-Verlag, 2013), 183-219; Heather Gumbert, "Exploring Transnational Media Exchange in the 1960s," in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014) 5: 50-59; Thomas Beutelschmidt and Richard Oehmig, "Connected Enemies?: Programming Transfer Between East and West During the Cold War and the Example of East German Television," in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014) 5: 60-67; Thomas Beutelschmidt, Richard Oehmig and Yulia Yurtaeva, "Grenzüberschreitungen. Internationaler Programmtransfer als transkulturelle Kommunikation zwischen West- und Osteuropa am Beispiel des DDR-Fernsehens," in *Rundfunk und Geschichte* 39 (2013), 3-4: 73-82.

<sup>34</sup> Helena Srubar, *Ambivalenzen des Populären. Pan Tau und Co. zwischen Ost und West* (Konstanz: UVK, 2008), 366-367. On the WDR cf. Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise. Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Henrik Örnebring, "Writing the history of television audiences: the case of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953," in *Re-viewing Television History:*

The interactions and interrelations between East and West cannot be sufficiently grasped in terms of propaganda and enemy surveillance, which included the phenomena of jamming foreign signals and the so-called “radio battles”.<sup>36</sup> Even propaganda, technical rivalry, and mutual media broadcasts to enemy populations point to aspects of a shared media culture in the context of the Cold War. Instead, we need to further develop concepts that highlight the complex interdependencies and convergences of the East and West, their cooperation but also as their competition, mutual adoptions, imitations, and alienations.

### **Television beyond the Iron Curtain: Research Interests and Approaches**

Especially with regard to the media rivalry between FRG and GDR, several studies have already established that the media competition about meanings and interpretations was based on entangled communication and mutual observation. Consequently, it also had a strong impact on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the authors of this volume take a close look beyond the Iron Curtain by focusing on state socialist television. The contributions thus explicitly cover Albania, the CSSR, the GDR, Russia and the Soviet Union, Serbia, Slovenia and Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the volume compiles not only various national examples, but also presents interdisciplinary perspectives applied by historians, media, cultural and literary scholars. The authors choose different approaches by focusing on structures, actors, flow, contents or the reception of cross-border television. Some chapters explicitly cover the new cultural practices television has made possible, as well as the negotiations on political attitudes in the disguise of linguistic preferences and changes, cultural specificities, of entertainment and popular culture.

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*Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. Helen Wheatley (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 170-190.

<sup>36</sup> A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta eds., *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: A Collection of Studies and Documents* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2010); Michael Nelson, *War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Dittmar, *Feindliches Fernsehen*; Heiner Stahl, *Jugendradio im kalten Ätherkrieg: Berlin als eine Klanglandschaft des Pop (1962 - 1973)* (Berlin: Landbeck, 2010); concerning the Soviet radio station Maiak and Soviet TV see Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, chapters 3-5; concerning the CSSR see Srubar, *Ambivalenzen*.

In addition, the volume takes a long-term perspective beyond the fall of the Iron Curtain. It does not end with the collapse of state socialist regimes, because many trends of the post-socialist period are directly linked to earlier developments or pick up socialist traditions. In some post-socialist states, recently including Poland and for a longer period now Russia, the re-establishment of state hegemony over television channels and programme contents can be observed. The Russian TV channel *Rossia Kul'tura* benefits from nostalgic trends in Russian society and serves its audience by broadcasting popular Soviet films, serials and features. At the same time, however, the last 25 years were a period of growing Americanisation and globalisation in Eastern Europe with many Western media products consumed and with the globally felt structural changes brought about by satellites, private broadcasters and the Internet.<sup>38</sup>

The volume also aims to elaborate transnational perspectives on convergence zones, observations, collaborations, circulations and entanglements between Eastern and Western television. It rests upon the long neglected fact that even during the Cold War television could easily become a cross-border matter. It bridged not only the ideological gap between the Cold War blocs but also cultural, social, and economic, as well as spatial borders on both sides of the Iron Curtain, between peripheries and centres, between local and national levels. It can be supposed that public spheres of communication at least overlapped in certain areas. In the long run, these spheres of communication became—whether officially intended or not—increasingly entangled. More often than not, television potentially created ambiguity by importing films and serials from the other side of the Iron Curtain or interconnecting the live signals of Eurovision and Intervision, i.e. the East and the West European Broadcasting Unions for the exchange of TV and radio programmes.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Patryk Wasiak, “The Great Époque of the Consumption of Imported Broadcasts: West European Television Channels and Polish Audiences during the System Transition,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014) 5: 68-68.

<sup>39</sup> Lars Lundgren, “Live From Moscow: the Celebration of Yuri Gagarin and Transnational Television in Europe,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 1 (2012), 2: 45–55; Henrich-Franke, Immel, “Making Holes into the Iron Curtain?”; Beutelschmidt, Oehmig, “Connected Enemies?”; Anna Wiehl, “ARTE: French-German Experiments in Crossing the Borders. ‘One Media – Three Screens’ Convergence and Interactivity at its Full Potential?,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014), 6: 78-94; Mari Pajala, “East and West on the Finnish Screen. Early Transnational Television in Finland,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014) 5:

Despite the attempts to jam foreign radio and TV signals, media consumers living in the peripheries and border regions had the opportunity to watch foreign, in many cases capitalist television programmes. Sitting in their living rooms, they were able to transgress the national borders and even the Iron Curtain virtually. This phenomenon has been especially highlighted for GDR citizens watching West German television, but the transfer was not restricted to a simple West-East model. Romanian viewers, for example, were able to watch Bulgarian, Yugoslavian, Hungarian or Soviet television, depending on their place of residence.<sup>40</sup> Initial steps have been taken for the Soviet periphery with regard to Estonia.<sup>41</sup> One aspect of this ‘transnationalisation’ of television contents was—except for the German case—that transnational television obviously attributed new importance to language skills in border regions. The impact of language, the ability to create cultural meanings to foreign media contents and to relate them to the country’s own national or perhaps even regional context certainly gained a different emphasis in each society. Also societal meaning and the politicisation of the public language use may have differed considerably according to the ethnic setting of a country. Contemporaries seemed to have attributed high socio-political importance to transnational television consumption in the border regions of the Eastern bloc. Thus, watching foreign television might have been a suitable practice not only to gain alternative or complementary information, but also to complement the cultural capital with foreign languages. Both aspects remind us to analyse the impact of language issues in the context of television, strategies of promoting and the actual use of local languages on television in multi-ethnic settings in greater detail than so far.

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88-99; Yulia Yurtaeva, “Intervision. Searching for Traces,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 3 (2014) 5: 23-34.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Michael Meyen, “Die ARD in der DDR,” in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (2010), 20: 28-34; idem, *Hauptsache Unterhaltung. Mediennutzung und Medienbewertung in Deutschland in den 50er Jahren* (Münster: LIT, 2001), 229-245; idem, *Einschalten, Umschalten, Ausschalten?*; Hanno Hochmuth, “Feindbild und Leitbild. Westfernsehen in der DDR,” in *Vom Gegner lernen. Feindschaften und Kulturtransfers im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Martin Aust and Daniel Schönplflug (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2007), 271-292; Dana Mustata, “Within Excess Times and a Deficit Space: Cross-border Television as a Transnational Phenomenon in 1980s Romania,” in *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Andreas Fickers and Catherine Johnson (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2012), 89-102, here 90.

<sup>41</sup> Annika Lepp and Mervi Pantti, “Window to the West: Memories of Watching Finnish Television in Estonia during the Soviet Period,” in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 2 (2012), 3: 76-86.

Thus, television as a complex ensemble of institutions, producers, and audiences can be a heuristic prism of transnational history that allows for several perspectives on Cold War societies, cultures, and political arenas. This is, however, a rather new approach: Although television has partly been a transnational medium at least from the 1950s on, television history has long been told in national frames and narratives. Without denying that the Cold War nation state was the legal, political and cultural stronghold of television, this volume aims to revise the methodological nationalism and to contribute to the transnational television history especially from the perspective of the long if not ignored, then at least neglected Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. It shows how the use of the medium contradicted any strictly dichotomous world views, how it on the contrary entangled them, and how it yielded structural and cultural similarities of Eastern and Western practices. An important question is also, to what extent television might have thwarted ideas of a televisual West-East imperialism and established new convergence zones of transnational or transcultural encounters bridging the Iron Curtain.

In the end, the history of Cold War television should highlight several narratives. It is not only a history of dichotomous representations and narratives of communication spaces divided by the Iron Curtain, but also of transnational transfers, collaboration and observation crossing the Iron Curtain. Further, it is a history of competing “Eastern” and “Western” television cultures fighting for cultural and political hegemony of the respective bloc. The hegemonic position was hardly to be determined objectively. However, both sides strove to paint a televisual picture of their society, of their social order and values that aimed to convince the domestic audience, the international bloc audiences, and the audiences of the developing world. The question of persuasiveness and response is perhaps the most challenging perspective and would call for a story of consumer attitudes and practices on the basis of contemporary sources, as well as oral history interviews working out retrospective stances.<sup>42</sup> The question of TV contents and its reception is closely related to the history of programme exchanges and trade beyond and across the Iron Curtain. Last but not least, the history of Cold War TV is the history of technical development, competition, and collaboration. Cold War television objected to the territorial logics of binary bloc thinking: As the chapters demonstrate, it went beyond the Iron Curtain.

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<sup>42</sup> There are first studies that demonstrate the persistence of different media cultures on different levels, as for example within united Germany or between the former Eastern bloc states.

## The Volume's Contributions

### *Transnational Perspectives and Media Events*

The first section of this volume is devoted to conceptual thoughts on transnational European TV history and on media events whose analysis helps to understand Cold War media culture. Media historian *Andreas Fickers* aims to present a new view on European television history transcending the Iron Curtain. He questions the usual East-West divide and the binary model of a 'capitalist' television culture in Western Europe and a 'socialist' one in Eastern Europe. Rather, his approach is a regional-topographical one. Therefore, he focuses on cross border-transmissions and points to the existence of "numerous zones of convergence". Concentrating on concrete phenomena of exchange, interactions, and transfer, he regards these as characteristic of the "European broadcasting landscape" in the Cold War period. Summarising the state of research on the important spheres of exchange and sale of television productions which could cross the Iron Curtain, Fickers clearly distinguishes between free exchange and commercial trade. In the context of a rising global TV market, the latter became more dominant in the 1970s and 1980s. With regard to television and in contrast to radio, the economic benefit of programme exchanges was very important. What concerns exchange and trade, however, is the relationship between East and West which is, according to Fickers, characterised by "asymmetrical interdependencies" as the West could provide higher qualitative standards and exported more to the East than vice versa.

Transnational and even trans-bloc media events have been common almost since the beginning of mass TV broadcasting in Europe in the 1950s. Political and cultural events were reported simultaneously on both sides of the Iron Curtain, often implying observations and reporting about the reports on the other side. Despite the Cold War separation of blocs and political influence spheres, there was sufficient cooperation on a technical and institutional level to provide transmissions to a global TV public that transcended political borders.

Media events are an established and comparably well-researched subject in media studies. The in-depth analysis of specific events, most prominently the first moon landing of 1969, shows how television as a mass medium has developed along the lines of major events.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Lorenz Engell, "Das Mondprogramm. Wie das Fernsehen das größte Ereignis aller Zeiten erzeugte," in Friedrich Lenger, Ansgar Nünning eds, *Medienereignisse in der Moderne* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2008), 150-172.

Furthermore, in the context of the Cold War, media events provide an abundance of source material to show mutual East-West perceptions and rivalry as well as national and international institutional structures.

In this volume, two contributions closely examine the mutual East-West observation and referencing in the example of divided Germany and thus enrich our understanding of East-West interactions. Media scholar *Judith Keilbach* discusses the Eichmann trial as a transnational media event in the context of divided Germany. The Eichmann trial, which Hannah Arendt made a subject of discussion, took place in Israel in 1961 after Mossad had captured Adolf Eichmann, a former SS-Obersturmbannführer and one of the main organisers of the Holocaust. The judges in Jerusalem regarded him as one of the key perpetrators of the Holocaust and sentenced him to death. In the following year, he was executed. In the history of television, the Eichmann trial was the first trial to be televised, and it also became a global event in the persecution of Nazi crimes. Needless to say, reporting on the trial was very important and very critical for both FRG and GDR. The highly contested Nazi past of the country was fundamental for the self-understanding of both German states, and it was a subject which mutual accusations and propaganda centred around. Germany can be seen as a focal point of the mutual East-West propaganda and observation. It presents a case of an unusually intense media rivalry because of the common language and the central position of Germany in the East-West divide.

As Judith Keilbach's contribution shows, both sides reacted to one another directly. The author shows in detail how these references to the other German state were directed and enacted. To this end she analyses not only the well-known and long-enduring GDR propaganda programme "Der schwarze Kanal" (*The black channel*), but also its West German, rather short-lived counterpart "Die rote Optik" (*Red Lenses*). These were programmes which were entirely devoted to dealing with media output from the other side. Keilbach's contribution also embraces other GDR and FRG political programmes as well as films. Only through this encompassing view does the campaign character of the news coverage become evident. In the end, however, the impact of the propaganda on both sides was rather limited.

Media scholar *Sven Grampp* contributes to this perspective by analysing the TV broadcasts of the first manned moon landing in both the FRG and GDR in a conceptually rich text. Drawing on the notion of observing as conceptualised in systems theory (Niklas Luhmann), the author presents the space race as a system of second order observation characteristic of the Cold War. Television and especially live reports

became a central reference point in this system. Again, the German-German split serves as an exciting focus of the Cold War. Grampp analyses in detail several programmes of the West German major broadcaster ARD (Consortium of public broadcasters in Germany) and the East-German DFF (German Television Broadcaster) with ambivalent results. In particular, the ARD coverage doesn't fit very well into the expected Cold War mutual accusation and enemy-description scheme, with the Soviet side being treated by the West German journalists with much respect and even sympathy, while the USA is subtly criticised, more or less. Drawing on conceptions of cultural comparison and societal self-descriptions, the author is able to show that, besides the West-East conflict, the German national perspective also comes into play, with references being made to the technical and engineering groundwork for the moon landing that Germans were said to have accomplished. This serves as a formidable example of how broadcasts, through televised cultural comparisons, formed not only bloc, but also national identities.

The mutual observations of first and second order and the critical references (including ignoring) to what was being observed were an integral element of the international system. But Grampp also sees the Cold War in a historical perspective: it was a period in the history of international and global communications during which "a special observation and perception scheme" was established and practiced, which has further shaped global media culture.

The text also reflects on the relation between local and global understanding and applies "glocalisation" as a dialectical concept: against the backdrop of a globalising world, the search and specification of the local becomes relevant in a new way. Combined with the approach of cultural comparison and the established second order observation scheme, the televisual coverage of the moon landing appears as an important "imagination agent" in a globalised media culture.

### ***Television and Popular Culture: Films and Serials***

As mentioned above, the relation between television and popular culture in socialist societies is a booming field of research. Western, and especially American influences and models have been taken up and reframed in Europe's East and West. In Central and Eastern Europe, serials were produced that can be classified as sitcoms or family serials. Drawing on established cultural forms and subjects in the respective national context, they staged the tension between emerging consumer cultures and socialist norms and values. Gender issues were often centre



stage in these productions, e.g. when a socialist super-woman represented an ideal that was permanently threatened by failure.<sup>44</sup> Remakes and continuations of these formats and products in the post-socialist period testify to their cult status, but also show how important the nostalgia for the socialist past can be for current societies and media cultures.

A film that outlived the end of the socialist period and that addresses gender relations is analysed by literary scholar *Hannah Müller*. The East German-Czechoslovak coproduction “Three Nuts for Cinderella”, a Cinderella variation from 1973 is still very popular today, not just in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also in the whole of Germany, in Switzerland and Norway. The film has gained cult status and is an integral part of Christmas celebrations in these countries. Many families and viewers arrange the schedule for the Christmas holidays according to its airtime.

The author explores the fairy tale genre in the socialist period, which was “characterised by its oscillation between educational mission and internal criticism”, and offered some artistic freedom for producers. Criticism of the socialist system could be elegantly interwoven with fairy tale interpretations. Regarding its class policy message, “Three Nuts for Cinderella” could be read by viewers in different, diverging ways: as an anti-capitalist critique and rebellion of the working class (Cinderella’s emancipation from the oppression by her step-mother and step-sister), as a re-establishment of the traditional social order with Cinderella’s return to her rightful social position in nobility, and even as critique of the existing socialist system with her greedy, egoistic relatives symbolising the abuse of power within this system. This variety of possible interpretations was one reason for its positive reception across the Iron Curtain. As Müller explains, the re-interpretation of the female protagonist, Cinderella, was more unequivocal and equally contributed to the film’s popularity. It presented Cinderella as a gender non-conforming young girl who surpassed her future husband, the prince, in hunting, shooting, and horse riding and who was unusually self-determined. This emancipation figure

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<sup>44</sup> The Czechoslovak serial “The Counter Lady” (*Žena za pultem*, 1977/78) is a prominent example. Jakub Machek, “‘The Counter Lady’ as a Female Prototype: Prime Time Popular Culture in 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia”, in *Medijska istraživanja/Media research* 16 (2010) 1, 31-52. See for a deconstruction of this kind of audiovisual representation of the socialist super-woman in subversive documentary films of the 1970s produced in Leningrad: Aglaia Wespe, *Alltagsbeobachtung als Subversion. Leningrader Dokumentarfilm im Spätsozialismus* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2014), especially 209-239.

attracted female viewers and could be perceived as a counterweight to role models offered by American films.

Media scholars *Nevena Daković* and *Aleksandra Milovanović* present the series “Theatre at Home” (*Pozorište u kući*) that premiered in 1972 on Yugoslav television as a prototype of the “socialist family sitcom”. The serial was produced by TV Belgrade and the story set in Karaburma, a middle-class district of Belgrade. The adventures of three generations living in a small apartment were very popular while at the same time Western productions including “Dynasty” were being broadcasted in Yugoslavia. The socialist family sitcom developed as a combination of an American TV format and the depiction of everyday life in a socialist society. Typical juxtapositions played out in “Theatre at Home” were the rural, patriarchal tradition versus the modern, urban life, and West versus East. The sitcom is understood as a reflection of current social, economic and cultural change in society including the advance of socialist modernity. The spread of a (partly Western-induced) consumer culture is reflected in the sitcom in a harmonising way, reconciling it with a socialist social system, thereby “denying the logic of the East-West divide”. This is interpreted as fitting neatly with Yugoslavia’s special position as it was situated between the two blocs during the Cold War and was exposed to Western (popcultural) influences much more than most other socialist countries. Furthermore, the sitcom’s fate is seen as symptomatic of socialist modernity, with its golden age in the 1970s, the turbulences of the 1980s and an unsuccessful remake in the 2000s marking the final end of socialist modernity and denoting the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Slavicist *Maria Zhukova* takes us to the late Soviet Union. She offers a fresh insight into the ‘televisionised’ changes within the popular culture of the *perestroika* in the second half of the 1980s, a period known for its rapid expansion of critical comments in all kinds of media. Examining the blockbuster *Igla* (The needle), her paper analyses the film’s observation and deconstruction of television as the most important reference medium of late Soviet popular culture. The film was directed by Kazakh filmmaker Rashid Nugmanov in 1988. One of the main characters was Viktor Tsoi, the extremely popular singer of the Soviet rock band “Kino”. Tsoi was a hero of late Soviet rock culture who expressed the feelings of the young generation with his songs. Nugmanov’s film shows television in at least two very different perspectives: as a (deconstructed) powerful propaganda machine controlling a passive audience, and as a working medium for the rock music scene which gained in significance as a counter-culture in those years.

Zhukova introduces us to a rich system of cultural and subcultural references. The film title, “The needle”, alludes not only to drug addiction, but also to Moscow’s TV tower Ostankino with its thin, pointed construction. This again points to a common understanding of Soviet television serving as a means to spread ideology and propaganda, which was of course viewed critically by dissidents. After the 1960s, TV critics made a connection between TV watching and drug addiction.

Soviet television is deconstructed visually in the film, as well as audibly. TV sets are to be seen in various constellations, and collages of TV and radio sounds convey the impression of a meaningless sonic background. This reflects a common cultural practice: the TV was often switched on, but not really watched or listened to attentively and served as a mere acoustic backdrop to everyday life. Another example of the reflection of Soviet cultural practice in the film is a sequence showing three TV sets operating simultaneously. This alludes to the symbolism of the Holy Trinity and the sacred status of the TV set, which was often placed in the living room like an object of worship.

The deconstruction of Soviet television in the late 1980s, as shown in Zhukova’s contribution, was followed by the actual disintegration of socialist state broadcasting with the regime changes in 1990/1991. The institutional reorganisations that went along with the latter were most dramatic in the cases of the disintegrating multinational and federal states, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, where the central broadcasting stations lost their dominant position and national broadcasting stations emerged out of the former republican ones. With the end of the communist era and its official reservation towards Western productions, the import and adaptation of Western programmes, including serials, increased, and the much discussed processes of globalisation and glocalisation had a more immediate impact in Eastern Europe.<sup>45</sup>

The last contribution to this section by slavacist *Theodora Trimble* traces tendencies of more recent developments in Russian serials. She analyses a Russian version of the famous US serial “Sex and the City” entitled “The Balzac Age or All Men are Bast...” (*Bal’zakovskii vozrast ili Vse muzhiki svo...*), produced by the well-known director Dmitrii Fiks

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. the following contribution in which the authors stress the importance of regional television in Russia in the context of glocalisation: Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova, “Introduction,” in *Television and Culture in Putin’s Russia*, idem eds. (London, New York: Routledge, 2009). Existing research has concentrated on political domination of the mass media, e.g.: Birgit Beumers, Stephen Hutchings and Natalia Rulyova eds., *Globalisation, Freedom and the Media after Communism: The Past as Future* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

from 2004-2007. “The Balzac Age’s” characters and plot are modelled quite closely on the American original with four female protagonists. On second glance, however, several specific features can be detected. While in “Sex and the City” the relation between class and family is played out, these issues come up in the Russian serial as well but get a different twist: The serial broaches the issue of the ongoing economic and social transition after the fall of socialism. Class and consumer culture are represented, but not as affirmatively as in the American counterpart. The (alleged) female liberation tendencies are overshadowed by a reinforcement of patriarchal values and norms. In the end, the conventional American promotion of the nuclear family is ridiculed. The sceptical attitude that Fiks’ production has towards the American original is, it can be assumed, typical for a very ambivalent Russian-American cultural relationship. Furthermore, “The Balzac Age” is a good example of how a global media product is received and adapted in a very specific context.

### ***Television and the Transgressing of Language Borders***

The next section takes us to the Southeast of Europe and addresses the interrelation between politics, language, and television (consumption) under socialist regimes. The linguist *Lucia Gaja Scuteri* regards television as a spoken medium: its language usage is expected to train viewers in using the ‘correct’ language and is therefore constantly scrutinised by the public. In her contribution, the author examines the usage of Slovenian, a South Slavic language, as the national language of the Slovenian republic in Yugoslavia. After the spread of television, Slovenian elites deplored the deterioration and marginalisation of Slovenian and the dominance of Serbo-Croatian. The Slovenian Association of Slavistics (SDS) was one of the main players in the struggle to carve out more broadcasting time and space for programmes in Slovenian. As the issue was picked up by politicians, regular broadcasting of news in Slovenian was introduced in 1968. The relevance of national-linguistic politics and TV language was acknowledged by linguists and other intellectuals, but also by the audience and to some extent by political functionaries.

The preoccupation with Slovenian was not restricted to television, and Scuteri considers all other mass media as well and shows that ‘language columns’ in newspapers and on the radio, as well as on television aimed at improving and correcting the usage of Slovenian. The author highlights the 1960s and the 1980s as two periods of intensified inter-republic tensions and conflicts, which found their expression in language policy struggles. She presents external initiatives related to the language used on television,

but also shows that different departments within the television apparatus were concerned with this issue, the most significant of which being a “Programme Council for Language”. Its establishment in the 1980s was a consequence of previous debates and showed that the medium itself had an increased interest in its own language. Scuteri wisely does not attempt to evaluate how much the TV language issue contributed to the gradual dissolution of the Yugoslav federation, but rather stresses the co-evolution of inter-republic conflicts and language policy debates.

However, the debates about the status and correct usage of Slovenian persisted after the republic became independent in 1991, even if under different conditions. There was, though, another problem in the socialist period that Scuteri also addresses and that was not at all restricted to the Slovenian case: the typical communist apparatchik-style language characterised by very long sentences, little content and hollow phrases that very much influenced language of mass media, especially in news programmes.<sup>46</sup> The usage of this language contributed to the dullness of television (news) programmes in socialist regimes in general, it seems.

The unalluring contents of socialist television programmes applied to Albania as well, a country which was a latecomer and an exception to the rule of the synchronous spread of television as a mass medium in Europe. The communist regime was keeping the country in isolation, not only from Western, but also from other socialist countries and adhered to an economic model of autarky. Historian *Idrit Idrizi* reminds us of the strictly political and power-related aspects of television consumption in the example of Albania. He draws on concepts from social and political history and assumes an “asymmetric power relationship” between “ruling” and “ruled” actors. Other than in models influenced more strongly by the totalitarian approach, the power relation described here is characterised by interaction and complexity. Idrizi draws on the German historians Alf Lüdtke, Thomas Lindenberger, and others. With a rich source base ranging from archival material to interviews and focussing on the late 1970s and early 1980s, Idrizi applies this concept to Albania in an attempt to understand socialist rule more deeply.

The way the regime dealt with foreign TV broadcasts points to paradoxical and hypocritical aspects of communist rule. Italian, Yugoslavian and Greek programmes could be received in different parts of Albania, and the regime continuously ran campaigns against these foreign

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Daniel Weiss, “Prolegomena zur Geschichte der verbalen Propaganda in der Sowjetunion,” in *Slavistische Linguistik* 1994. Referate des XX. Konstanzer Slavistischen Arbeitstreffens, Zürich 20.-22.9.1994, ed. Daniel Weiss (München: Sagner 1995), 384.

broadcasts, evaluating Yugoslav (at least half-socialist) as even worse than Italian (non-socialist) ones because Tito's Yugoslavia was deemed the main enemy of Albania. At the same time, the country's elites did consume foreign TV, which thus appeared as a kind of luxury good. For them, it was interesting as the much-cited window to the world in an isolated country. The consumption of foreign TV shows a deeply segregated society. The majority and especially the villagers showed no interest in the outside world which—according to Idrizi—remained outside of their imagination, and they were also intimidated by the regime's counter-campaigns. The knowledge of foreign languages, which is so important in Scuteri's contribution, is not essential in this context. Foreign programmes were consumed even without understanding the language. It was sufficient to see 'nice' things that depicted a totally different reality than the everyday life in Albania.

The present volume is completed by media scholar *James Schwoch's* contribution in an essayistic and very creative approach. He returns our attention to big TV events referring to the moon landing in 1969 and the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Schwoch introduces "fragments" and "milliseconds" as analytical tools as he explores the spatiality and temporality of the TV experience. He points to the fact that in most of the Cold War period receivers were fixed to certain locations (the television set at home) while afterwards receivers became more and more mobile and, consequently, borders played a less and less important role. At the same time, every media user nowadays is beleaguered by data gatherers of various kinds, a blend of state and commercial institutions and companies that he terms "the coterie". While the moon and the Berlin wall were fragmented into pieces in their time, today's media user is also fragmented and surveyed by this quest for data. Schwoch thus reminds us of the basic infrastructural and technical changes TV has undergone since the 1990s (with forerunners), e.g. the introduction of satellite TV and the merging of Internet and TV. The contribution does not end in a pessimistic vein, though, but proposes to use defragmentation as a counterpoint to the fragmentation problem (as in 'cleaning' a computer's hard disk). The author encourages us to go on with the collective research adventure devoted to global TV history and closes his text and this volume with an open end.

This open end can be understood as an invitation to continue creative, innovative research on the issues presented in this volume. Concerning the history of television in (post-)socialist countries and in transnational perspectives, we are still in the exciting early phase of exploration and accumulation of knowledge. If this volume achieves its aim of enriching