

Notes taken by: Sonja Fritzsche, Illinois Wesleyan University, E-mail: sfritzsc@iwu.edu

Presentation: *Television in the GDR*

Presenter: Henning Wrage

Date: June 7, 2004

A) Presentation: *TV in Germany*

Presenter: Prof. Dr. Knut Hickethier

Date: June 11, 2004

A)

Henning Wrage – “Television in the GDR” Monday June 7, 2004

Hitchhiker’s guide to German TV – Lecture in 3 parts

- 1) basic background, history and most famous programs
- 2) results of research
- 3) film clips “Das unsichtbare Visier” “Schotte und Ginster” (Gravel and Broom)

East Germany TV History – source: *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens* – Hoffmann?

4 historical periods

- 1) 1952- 1961
- 2) 1961- 1971
- 3) 1971 - 1989
- 4) 1989 - today

1951-1961 Reestablish working radio broadcast system – centralist model

Cold War fought from radio stations in the occupied zones at this point

1949 – first plans for television

Dec 21 1952 – 1st test of GDR TV

Program – *Intro to Fernsehzentrum Berlin Atlashof*

Aktuelle Kamera

Fernseh aus der Nähe betrachtet

Short film congratulating Stalin on his birthday

Later official broadcast claimed to be on December 30 after Khrushchev’s attempt to revise history

1955 - 15,000 TVs registered in the GDR

Model Leningrad T2; 1 b/w channel; 2 hours per day except Monday

Fernsehkabinette – created public TV viewing rooms to increase reception

1956 end of test period/ founding of Deutscher Fernsehfunk; TV went mobile to broadcast sports

TV Politics 1952-1968 Staatliches Rundfunkkomitee in Ministerat (state broadcasting committee)

GDR - *Schwarzer Kanal* – moderator Karl E. v Schnitzler (clips from FRG TV with commentary)

FRG – *Rote Optik* – Thilo Koch? Clips from East German TV with commentary

1961-1971 Deutscher Fernsehfunk Berlin Wall to Honecker

Stable weekly structure of programming

Program before noon was a repeat of the previous evening for shift workers
Presents an outline of programming
Realization – TV can reach many people in their private home
After the construction of the wall propaganda lessened
New programming – *Tausend Teletips* (kitchen show targeted at women)
Prisma Objektiv – some news youth programming – *Hallo junge Leute*

1962 – *Sandmännchen* 6:45 p.m.

1961-62 New open mindedness ends with 1965 XII Party Plenum – speak out against aesthetics – all experiments not considered Socialist Realism to be banned
Kunert TV program banned, but no other program - focus was more on film

1968 – State Broadcasting TV Committee founded – strict control devastated TV ratings and most people switched to western TV

1969 – founding of the 2nd channel – introduction of color; intended only for GDR citizens; no formal programming concepts; only 1% of GDR citizens owned a color TV; called the rerun channel (of programs on the 1st channel); later started (1972) showing Soviet programming for Soviet soldiers stationed in GDR.

1971 – 1989

Honecker era – need to “overcome a certain type of tedium”
- “take certain time (type?) of entertainment “ into account

Needs of audience – “range of diversity” a new slogan
Station renamed – Fernseh der DDR

Polizei 110 – outlived the GDR
“Ein Kassel buntes” was broadcast into the West

Able to adapt certain techniques to shows from the West

1976 – revoking of singer Wolf Biermann citizenship
Manfred Krug leaves the GDR – Armin Mueller Stahl
Great brain drain – all films of those who had left could not be broadcast
Greatly killed viewer ratings

1983 – New policy “Click” and “F1999” – new youth magazines
New trend to eliminate role as producer and rather become distributor for international programs

Goals changed from trying to influence audience to trying to get them to watch TV at all.

1989-1992 Disintegration of GDR TV

Literary Adaptations in GDR television

- hope that GDR TV would be able to create new culture of the working class
- fictional productions – many literary adaptations
- *Der Bär* (The Bear) Anton Chekov adaptation 3/18/53
- Production – difficulty with only one camera for filming
- TV plays were performed live again and again- no reruns

- End of 1950s cooperation with DEFA (East German film studio) – later 50% of films for TV made by DEFA.
- TV often accepted projects rejected by DEFA
- *Nackt unter Wolken* Ap 10, 1960 very successful – DEFA later created the film by Beyer based on the TV production
- Miniseries

1962 – Gunther Kunert – adaptation for TV “something? Flucht” an opera award-winning in the West and banned in the East

1964 – Kunert – *Monolog für ein Taxifahrer* banned in 1964

1978 Gottfried Keller’s *Ursula* – viewer protests staged and forbidden to show again

Methods for the research project on Literary Adaptation in GDR television – archival research; interview producers; create database of all shows

Top 20 list of most adapted authors (Top 5 – Brecht, Gorki, Molière, Shakespeare, Chekov)

Now in the process of discourse analysis

Comparative studies of East/West adaptation

Dec. 26, 1973 *The Invisible Eye Das unsichtbare Visier*

Armin Mueller-Stahl main character; like 007; GDR vs. Nazis in the FRG; good against evil; western genre pattern with East topics

Schotte und Ginster (Gravel and Broom)

“Wir stellen vor” series that introduced new forms – very slow, realistic documentaries; guy reading a story

Book – Thomas Beutelschmidt and Henning Wrage

Das Buch zum Film – der Film zum Buch

Annäherung an den literarischen Kanon im DDR-Fernsehen

Serie – Programmgeschichte des DDR-Fernsehens a comparison

9-2004 Leipziger Universitätverlag www.ddr-fernsehen.de ISBN 3-937209-19-0

B)

Development of television in US in 1935

Nazis developed low standard 180 lines, very small pictures

Britain – 480 lines

After end of WWII

Hamburg – developers of TV go there

Broadcasting established by occupiers

Americans – one station for each state; Britain – Hamburg for the entire British zone

French – one station for whole zone

Broadcasting established as a public service; not commercial or propaganda

Federal system of broadcasting

10 channels divided in ARD – 1950

die deutsche Welle (the German wave) to foreign countries

Everyone who has a receiver must pay for radio and TV; it doesn't matter if you watch or not; today 14 Euros together

1948 ARD – Hamburg; biggest station, most money, most experienced TV personnel who worked under the Nazis, also many new faces; game shows, artistic shows
stories about soldiers and WWI, young soldiers; SS shooting people

1959 – adaptations of plays on Holocaust “Am grünen Strand des Spree”

1975 – American series “The Holocaust”

1984 – “Heimat” (Homeland)

1959 – case brought against state that they shouldn't make own programs, but that private companies should produce state programming (speaker wasn't clear here) This case wasn't successful

From 1959-1984 only public broadcasting

1984 ZDF (second German station) established – central station funded by government – public “öffentlich”
– not state funded

1961-63 ARD – critical Magazin – new programming – this television was critical of the existing government
NDR “Panorama” 11/1962

Clip showing protest through interviews – *Spiegel* was in opposition to the government

Strauß prohibited publication of the *Spiegel* for 2 weeks and NDR reported on this; opened up the story for everyone to see.

This started much more complicated programming

70s speaker showed clip of forced animal transport and torture from Asia
Marked the coming of social programming to German TV

TV programming became a window to society

1972 – documentary fiction “Smog”

After this one was shown there was great debate about the portrayal of fiction and reality. The documentary with reaction on smog in the city

Television cooperation with film starts around this time; new opportunities for film makers

Beginning of the New German Cinema (Fassbinder, Schlöndorff and others); (BBC eventually took up the same model)

- TV documentary makers – new way to see Germany
- 1983 Eberhardt Fechner – new generation
- “Comedian Harmonists” – “Die Liebe der Matrosen” singing
-

In the 80s many historical documentaries – ZDF made many

Clip on arrest of Jewish students – Dir. Head of ZDF Knopp documentaries
Ordinary family remembering arrest of Rosenberg

1981 – New TV technologies –

high power – technical advancement allows the expansion of channel offerings

paid advertising “duales System” dual system – balance between commercial and public

Greatest contribution of TV to formation of public opinion – ARD, ZDF – 40% of market
2 special channels for children; 2 for politics; 5 digital channels

RTL, SAT 1 private channels hold 60% of the viewers – 9 special channels; 2 special for news

Premiere 1 – one pay channel

News – speaker shows clip of 1st ARD broadcast 9/11 – “Brennpunkt”

No entertainment on this day in Germany – just news reports of NY/D.C.

This particular speaker was very quiet, so I took the best notes I could. Please take this into account when relying on the notes.