Envisioning Socialism

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INTRODUCTION

1. See, for example, work such as Günter Holzweissig, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002).


4. This is also noted by Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London: Arnold, 2002); Mary Fulbrook, “Approaches to German Contemporary History since 1945,” *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 1 (2004); and Geoff Eley, “The Unease of History: Settling Accounts with the East German Past,” *History Workshop Journal* 57 (2004): 175–201, here page 188. The early work of the Enquete commission also exemplified this tendency.


13. Arguing against what he calls the “Fulbrook School,” Eli Rubin argues that “there was a distinctly East German society; it was not just the state or the party, but it was constituted and shaped by the economic processes put in motion by the state.” Eli Rubin, Synthetic Socialism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 7.


15. Mary Fulbrook summarizes recent historiographical trends, including the emergence of a “new paradigm” normalizing GDR history, in Fulbrook, “Approaches to German Contemporary History,” 31–50. See also Mary Fulbrook, The People’s State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 11.

16. Susan Buck-Morss, Dreamworld and Catastrophe, xii.

17. Pence and Betts, eds., Socialist Modern, 7–8.

18. For Buck-Morss, “the construction of mass utopia was . . . the driving force behind industrial modernization in both its capitalist and socialist forms . . .” and “the mass democratic myth of industrial modernity—the belief that the industrial reshaping of the world is capable of bringing about the good society by providing material happiness for the masses—has been profoundly challenged by the disintegration of European socialism, the demands of capitalist restructuring, and the most fundamental ecological constraints.” Buck-Morss, Dreamworld, ix–x. Pence and Betts “hope to shift the way modernity is assessed from the achievement of particular standards of industrialization or political structures to the examination of a commitment to the full reshaping of society.” Pence and Betts, Socialist Modern, 8. The definition of modernity is contested, but whether you define it as Buck-Morss and Pence and Betts do, or as Detlev Peukert did (see note 22), most scholars can agree that its central characteristic is not sheer adherence to political liberalism.

19. I am referring here to Thomas Lindenberger, who argues it simply is no longer enough to undertake a narrow, political history of a society without considering the “audiovisions” of that political and social world. Thomas Lindenberger, “Vergangenes Hören und Sehen: Zeitgeschichte und ihre Herausforderung durch die audiovisuellen Medien,” Zeithistorische Forschungen (2004): 1. Lindenberger borrows the conception of “audiovisions” from Siegfried Zielinski. Please see Siegfried Zielinski, Audiovisions: Cinema and Television as Enrat’actes in History (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999); originally published in German: Zielinski, Audiovisionen: Kino und Fernsehen als Zwischenspiele in der Geschichte (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1989).

20. Italics mine. Pence and Betts, Socialist Modern, 10, 12.

21. In Habermas’s view, the public sphere is space between state and private life where “people came together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public
authority to legitimate itself before public opinion” (26). Cultivated in the social institutions of the salon, the coffeehouse, and secret societies, these private people formed a “public opinion” that held the ruler accountable to the people and influenced his decision-making power. But this public sphere, which had once facilitated participation in the political process, decayed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, monopolized by corporate media. In the twentieth century, the public sphere was increasingly dismantled while maintaining the illusion of integrity, depriving the public of participation in public life, and denying true “public opinion” in favor of “public relations.” Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

22. Detlev Peukert (and others) challenged the view that National Socialism resulted from Germany’s lack of modernization—its social and political “misdevelopment”—in the nineteenth century, arguing instead that it emerged out of the “crisis of classical modernity” that could not be overcome in the Weimar period. Nazism was “an exaggerated development of Nazi Germany’s dark side.” Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992). In his analysis, Peukert “reclaimed” Max Weber to present “an ambiguous and contradictory ‘modernity’” characterized by the “progressive rationalization of everyday life through the processes of secularization and bureaucratization that threaten(ed) to produce the complete ‘disenchantment of the world’ and the growth of a misplaced faith in the capacity of rational science to solve all human problems.” David Crew, *Germans on Welfare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4.


24. Similarly, in a historiographical survey of scholarship entitled “Media and the Making of British Society,” James Curran identifies a strong liberal narrative that casts the history of British media since the eighteenth century as the story of how “a succession of media became independent over two centuries, and contributed to the cumulative empowerment of the people. The media exposed government to public scrutiny. They enlarged the political community, and facilitated public debate. They spoke up for the people, and increased public influence over government.” He contrasts this with other narratives, including “feminist,” “populist,” “radical,” and “libertarian” interpretations. James Curran, “Media and the Making of British Society,” *Media History* 8 (2002): 137. In the context of the GDR, scholars have long seemed convinced that any real challenge to the state was made through literature or, to a lesser extent, film. Television, still understood as a less legitimate object of study and a conduit of SED propaganda, plays no part in this vision. Goodbody et al. claim, for example, “If television emerged from the Eleventh Plenum relatively unscathed, this was because it was practically insignificant as a channel for social criticism. . . .” Yet “(t)he Eleventh Plenum for Christa Wolf was a traumatic experience, which resulted in months of depression. The bitterness of her disillusionment . . . is reflected in her next novel. . . .” Alex Goodbody, Dennis Tate, and Ian Wallace, “The Failed Socialist Experiment: Culture in the GDR,” in *German Cultural Studies*, ed. Rob Burns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

25. Gramsci argued that, although coercion was an important component of rule by a dominant social group, particularly in authoritarian societies, the power to rule could
not be reduced to force. Instead, the ability to rule resulted from a complex combination of factors that allowed the ruling classes to take a hegemonic position in society. The battle for hegemony—or the ideological dominance of a particular social system—was waged in particular on the field of civil society. The dominant social group ruled “political society” by coercion, establishing its authority by means of force and “repressive bodies” such as the police, government, or judiciary. But they derived as much or more of their power by generating consent to legitimate their rule among those they subordinated. They accomplished this by organizing consent through the institutions of “civil society,” or “the ensemble of organisms commonly called private,” including educational or religious institutions, trade unions, or the media. David Forgacs, ed., *An Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), 227, 304.

26. In post-socialist works, Cold War triumphalism has corrupted “civil society” to the point where it stands so amorphously for concepts of liberal institutions and political forms that it has come to mean nothing. John Downing, *Internationalizing Media Theory* (London: Sage, 1996).

27. Where Adorno and Horkheimer tended to focus on the authoritarian tendencies of modern mass culture, Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer were more ambivalent. Bourdieu’s concepts of “cultural capital” and “habitus” have been influential in cultural history and cultural studies (as well as television studies). Scott Denham, Irene Kacandes, and Jonathan Petropoulos, eds., *A User’s Guide to German Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997). One of the purposes of the volume is to collect some good, recent work and bring greater profile to this emerging field.


32. Thankfully I worked on a national television service that was centrally organized, administered, and, most important, archived, unlike the West German system of federated television broadcasters, for example.

33. Jason Jacobs described the difficulty of dealing with the scraps of information in thin files containing the “residue of artistic endeavor” he found in his first trip to the archive. In fact, it seems there was much more in (some of) his files than mine: he was able to consult “studio plans indicating various camera positions,” for example, that allowed him to ask questions about “how creative practitioners practically and intellectually deal with a new medium.” As in other historical work, these documents needed to be read against the grain. Jacobs noted, “there was a debate about the aesthetics of this new medium but it was couched within the pressure of production. Complaints about the lack of camera practice time, for example, were part of legitimate bids to explore the mobility of televisions mise en scène rather than simply a ruffled producers gripe.” Jason Jacobs, “The Television Archive: Past, Present, and Future,” *Critical Studies in Television* 1 (2006): 13–20.

34. Williams compares television to cinema, which existed “on the margins” (in variety shows, for example) until the construction of film theaters allowed it to be capitalized (10–11). He argued, in 1974, that television served the purpose of “mobile privatisation,” which “resolved the contradictory pressures of . . . industrial capitalist society,” which he identified as mobility on the one hand, and the “apparently self-sufficient family home” on the other. Television, which provided “news from the ‘outside,’” was one of the important elements that maintained the illusion of self-sufficiency of the postwar (suburban) Anglo-American home. Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 20–21.

35. One of television’s most defining characteristics, Williams argued, was the introduction of almost endless sequence and flow. That is, one could not consider television programs as discrete units, as was commonly the case in contemporary television criticism and in the average TV guide; instead, the “constant interruptions” of commercials, for example, were central to the operation of the medium and its programming.

36. Williams identified as particularly (potentially) innovative those programs that blurred the line between drama and reality, provided “education by seeing,” opened up space for sustained “discussion,” embraced the intrinsic sequential nature of television, and “features” that “combine(d) and extend(ed) elements of the essay, the journal and the film documentary.” Williams, *Television*, 71. To be sure, Williams saw innovation in what we have come to call “reality TV,” which, in 2013, is often derided for its distortion of reality. But Williams argued, perceptively, that “(s)ome of the complaints about ‘confusion between reality and fiction’ is naïve or disingenuous. This attempt hold a hard line between absolutely separated categories seems to depend on a fiction about reality itself. It depends also on the convention that ‘factual’ television simply shows, neu-
trally, what is happening. The real engagement of every observer in the events he or she is observing is doubtless a matter of degree. But it is so crucial and general a fact that its possibilities for creative television drama, of a new kind, ought to be directly examined rather than ruled out by an ultimately untenable classification.”


38. Mass communications scholarship initially posited the “direct effects” understanding of television—that, like a “hypodermic needle” or “transmission pipe,” television could transmit stable messages to unsuspecting viewers. Mass communications researchers were set on identifying and quantifying who watched television, when, and to what effect. Due, in part, to the difficulty of proving such a hypothesis, “direct effects” eventually gave way to more nuanced work speculating that audiences played a more active role in making meaning, exemplified by the “uses and gratifications” approach. Robert Allen, *Channels of Discourse Reassembled* (London: Routledge, 1992), 13–14.

39. Research on television took some time to emerge from the shadow of the better-established fields of film and media studies. By the 1980s, television had arrived on American college campuses, though courses on the subject still fought for legitimacy among scholars and even practitioners. In 1986, one professor of mass culture claimed of television that “everybody watches it, but no one really likes it. . . . Its only champions are some executives, the advertisers who exploit it, and a compromised network of academic boosters. Otherwise, TV has no spontaneous defenders, because there is almost nothing in it to defend.” As late as 1990, the former head of the American network NBC, Brandon Tartikoff, dismissed television courses as without academic rigor: “When I hear about college professors writing books about people who do prime-time shows, my natural cynicism says there’s got to be courses for all these athletes to make them academically eligible to play football.” Mark Crispin Miller and Brandon Tartikoff, respectively, cited in David Bianculli, *Teleliteracy* (New York: Continuum, 1992), x, 284.


44. For example, the British government financed a research working group on Television Drama in the late 1990s; the French government— unlike most— has taken steps to make the French audio-visual heritage widely available through a digital archive and website (http://www.ina.fr/); and the German Research Society (DFG) financed the research project “Program History of GDR Television— comparative” (2001–2007) (which followed on the DFG project “Aesthetics, Pragmatics, and History of the Screen Media” of the Federal Republic, begun in the mid-1980s).


47. When I began this project, there was not much historical scholarship (in English, certainly) on television in Eastern Europe and, in general, media research on the area was still mired in the mass communications approach of an earlier era. This work was hampered by a lack of access to and, often, a deep skepticism about sources from the countries of the Soviet bloc. According to Karol Jakubowicz, for example, “by the early ‘fifties media no longer represented reality, but rather replaced it.” Jakubowicz, “From Party Propaganda to Corporate Speech? Polish Journalism in Search of a New Identity,” _Journal of Communication_ 42 (1992): 65. There were a number of studies from mass communications researchers concerned with the general problem of press freedom, but few works that dealt primarily with television broadcasting. Tomas Goban-Klas, _The Orchestration of the Media_ (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). Goban-Klas was a former Polish journalist writing about the pressures that constrained and, at times, allowed some liberalization of the Polish media. Burton Paulu produced an informative reference work on broadcasting in the Eastern bloc. Burton Paulu, _Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe_ (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974). Political scientist Jane Leftwick Curry wrote a timely book that began to revise the Western view of a thoroughly controlled media and even break down the binary model of the state against society in Eastern Europe, opening up space to shed some of the assumptions of liberal scholarship that had defined Western research on communist media in the postwar period. Jane Leftwich Curry, _Poland’s Journalists: Professionalism and Politics_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). As the Cold War ended, media scholars tended to leave historical work behind and move directly on to post-socialist developments, such as how the media transformed during the fall of communism. See, for example, Ellen Mickiewicz, _Split Signals: Television, Power and


49. Hans Müncheberg and Peter Hoff, eds., Experiment Fernsehen. Vom Laborversuch zur sozialistischen Massenkunst (Berlin: Verband der Film- und Fernsehchauffenden der DDR, 1984).

50. See, for example, Peter Hoff’s chapters in Knut Hickethier, Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens (Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 1998).


52. See, for example, Nina Schindler, Flimmerkiste: ein nostalgischer Rückblick (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1999).

53. The group published early results of their work in a special issue of the Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 24 (2004). An overview of their results is found in Rüdiger Steinmetz and Reinhold Viehoff, eds., Deutsches Fernsehen Ost: Eine Programmgeschichte des DDR Fernsehens (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2008). The Leipziger Universitätsverlag is home to a series resulting from the project.

54. The preponderance of available sources on the DFF date from the period after 1965, which is reflected in the publications of the project.

55. This dilemma was discussed at “Aufgewickelt: Deutsches Fernsehen Ost,” held at the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek—Museum für Film und Fernsehen, in cooperation with the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (DRA), Potsdam-Babelsberg, 2 June 2007.


57. And television in the FRG may not even be the best context for comparison to the DFF. Historian of technology Raymond Stokes argued, for example, that the best way to draw conclusions about the (technological) development of the GDR was not to compare it directly to the FRG but to compare and contrast the trajectories of technological development to similar patterns and differences between the United States and the United Kingdom (that is, to compare each country not with its German “other,” but rather compare its relationship with its “other” to the corresponding partner in a similar geopolitical or economic relationship. Raymond Stokes, Constructing Socialism [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000], 8). I have often thought that the best comparison to make to the GDR–FRG might involve the Canada–United States relationship: both have the problem of cross-border programming, and Canada developed a small, but effective, public broadcasting service with a clear political mandate, whereas the United States built a sprawling system with (in its early days) significant regional
differences. The comparison is not perfect, but it suggests other ways of measuring developments in the two German states.


62. Authorities referred to Adlershof first as the “Central Television Laboratory” and later, the “Television Center.” By 1952 the television service was called Deutscher Fernsehfunk (“German television-radio communication,” reflecting the conceptual dependence of television on radio in those early years). After 1972, authorities renamed it “Television of the GDR” (Fernsehen der DDR), reflecting both the recognition of television as a medium independent of and different from radio, and the cultural demise of the SED’s “one Germany” policy. In the interest of clarity, though, I will refer to Adlershof as the Television Center, and the television service as the DFF throughout the book.

CHAPTER 1


3. Mechanical television used cameras with scanning discs mounted in front of a photoconductive “eye,” while electronic television used a beam of electrons to scan the image. The major advantages of electronic over mechanical television were light insensitivity (mechanical systems required lots of artificial light) and the ability to produce much higher definition images. One could say that mechanical television produced an image that was more of a shadow of the object, while electronic television could reproduce the interplay of light and shadow, and thus a better picture of the object.


13. Uricchio, “High-Definition Television,” 311–315; Manfred Hempel, “German Television Pioneers and the Conflict between Public Programming and Wonder Weapons,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 10 (1990): 123–162. William Uricchio argues that there was a considerable power struggle between industry and the Postal Service, which wanted to introduce home reception, and the Propaganda Ministry, which favored the ostensibly politically more valuable reception conditions of public viewing; William Uricchio, “Envisioning the Audience.” Laura Heins argues that Nazi-sympathizing television theorists envisioned television not as a mass medium to be consumed in public exhibition spaces, but rather as a “literate high art” that could achieve greater intimacy, realism, and spirituality than other media, making it “the most


16. Although he made great use of film appearances for propaganda purposes, television was not nearly well enough developed to be used in the same way. Hickethier, Geschichte, 37.


19. As in Germany, it was American radio manufacturers that first took interest in developing television, intent on capitalizing on the potentially lucrative new market in television receivers and maintaining (or expanding) their market share. Williams, Television. See the discussion over postwar television standards in Edgerton, American Television, 74–76.


22. Wired (as opposed to wireless) radio broadcasts signals through electrical or telephone lines. It is a popular choice in Europe: in 1992 estimates suggested there were 800,000 wired sets in Western Europe and perhaps 100 million in Eastern Europe. Wired radio was cheaper and, since it is hardwired, could not be jammed. Claude-Jean Bertrand, “Radio Beyond the Anglo-American World,” in Radio:The Forgotten Medium, eds., Edward Pease and Dennis Everette (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 113–114.

23. See, for example, Heide Fehrenbach, Cinema in Democratizing Germany (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).


29. The decentralized nature of the broadcasting system persisted as television developed, resulting in stations with very different personalities.” American media scholar James Schwoch questions contemporary American authorities’ characterization of NWDR as a “British” station, because so few scholarly studies refer to it that way, arguing instead that this was simply the rhetoric of policymakers in the Cold War. But scholarly studies tend to focus on the unifying and leveling impulse of the ARD; (German) studies of early West German television (and sometimes Germans today) very clearly identify NWDR this way, but less so after it split to become NDR and WDR.
30. “Muscovites” were (German) communists who emigrated to the Soviet Union during the Nazi period, most of whom returned with the end of the war. Eric Weitz reminds us that, during the early occupation period, the Soviets worked toward denazification and the spread of anti-fascism, while conservative “Muscovites” of the so-called Ulbricht Group instead worked toward realizing their goal of establishing communism in Germany. Moreover, documents that surfaced after the collapse of the GDR have “more fully demonstrated [that] . . . KPD/SED leaders sought the establishment of a separate socialist state in Germany far earlier, far more completely than their Soviet mentors.” Not until 1948 did Soviet and SED interests become much more consistent. Weitz, Creating German Communism, 341.
34. Schwoch, Global TV, 28.
36. Riedel argues that the major offenders were the Americans and Soviets, but that illicit use had been instigated by smaller states unsatisfied with their own frequency allotment. Riedel, Hörfunk, 117.
38. Heil, Fernsehen der SBZ, 35.
42. Peter Hoff in Hickethier, Geschichte, 98.
43. BArch (DH), DM3 BRF II/633, Untitled, December 1955, 2.
44. BArch (DH), DM3 BRF II/74, “Bericht über die Schwierigkeiten der Fernsehsenderbau im Planjahr 1954,” 29 September 1953, 3.
45. On the difficulties, both technical and political, facing industrial manufacturing in the GDR, see Stokes, Constructing, and Dolores Augustine, Red Prometheus (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).
47. Ibid.
Stokes, Constructing, 21.
49. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/6341, “Republikflucht im Funkwesen,” 1 December
1956.
51. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/1786, “Über den technisch-wissenschaftlichen
55. This according to Günter Puppe, cited in Müncheberg, Experiment, 26.
56. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/633, “Fragen des Genossen Horn,” [20 December
1954].
57. The average monthly salary was about DDM 256 in 1950, rising gradually to
about 354 DDM by 1955. Dietrich Staritz, Geschichte der DDR (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp,
1996), 55.
58. Authorities considered 800 DDM to be “affordable” due to an analysis of
receiver prices internationally that showed that it should be possible to manufacture
sets cheaply enough to offer them at this price. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/929,
“Beschluss über Massnahmen zur Verbesserung des Fernsehens in der Deutschen
Demokratischen Republik,” [January 1956], 3. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/604,
“Bericht über die Tagung der Kommission ‘Fernsehempfänger’ am 13.5.1953,” 14
April 1953.
61. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/49, “Entwurf einer Vorlage an das Ministerrates der
DDR über Ausbau und Verbesserung des Fernsehprogramms,” 14 January 1954. Amer-
ican media scholar James Schwoch reports that (American authorities thought that)
East Germans could buy sets on credit. Schwoch, Global TV, 37.
62. Herbert Köfer recalled that watching the Leningrad, “often . . . one could tell
only with great difficulty, whether [the person onscreen was] Quermann or Köfer.”
Köfer, cited in Jost-Arend Bösenberg, Die aktuelle Kamera (1952–1990) (Potsdam:
Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2004), 91n37.
64. BArch, DR 6/279, “Darstellung der derzeitige Lage im Fernsehen der DDR,” 20
November 1953, 4. In 1947, a “top-of-the-line” twenty-inch DuMont (American) tele-
65. A. Michael Noll, Principles of Modern Communications Technology (Boston:
Artech House, 2001), 117.


72. BArch, DM 3 BRF II/2431, “Jahresbericht für den deutschen Post für das Jahr 1959.”

73. Hoff in Hickethier, *Geschichte*, 186. Media scholars have historically, and rather arbitrarily, understood the one million mark as the point at which reception becomes a mass phenomenon.

74. With four times the population, West German ownership reached the million mark in 1959. Of course, viewership always exceeds ownership, and we can estimate that at least two and perhaps as many as four people watched any registered television set.

75. For American historians, these roots are often found in the Russian Revolution of 1917; European historians, on the other hand, point to the emergence of a Western habit of mind that defined “asian Russia” in opposition to their own, more developed “civilization.” Bernd Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003), 8.


81. Media scholars such as Peter Hoff have long recognized the importance of the emerging Cold War in driving the development of television in the GDR. Certainly, the potential loss of the VHF frequencies allocated at the Stockholm Conference was a decisive moment, which convinced Kurt Heiss of the SRK that the DFF needed to go on the air. And as I will demonstrate in chapter 3, it was the Hungarian uprising of 1956 that convinced the Central Committee that television was a medium worth their attention.

82. All quotes in Schwoch, *Global TV*, 35.

83. Hickethier, *Geschichte*, 76.
84. Hickethier, Geschichte, 78–79.
86. Cited in Schwoch, Global TV, 36.
87. Under the Nazis, audiences had watched television in a number of public viewing facilities in Berlin for not more than one (Reichs-) mark per visit, and it is possible they considered public viewing a more politically reliable environment for reception. But that was not to be the case in postwar East Germany.
89. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/604, “Plan zur Entwicklung des Fernsehens in Berlin für 1952,” 31 July 1952. In August 1952, the Central Committee prioritized the individuals and organizations that should receive television sets, starting with the Politburo and members of the Central Committee, followed by large businesses, hospitals, universities, and the party academy “Karl Marx.” SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 J IV 2/3/318, “Protokoll Nr. 189/52 der Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK am 21. August 1952,” 21 August 1952, 2. But this did not reflect, as Bösenberg claims, a collective ideology of socialism that privileged community viewing. Bösenberg, Aktuelle Kamera, 91.
91. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/74, “Feststellung über die Fernsehversorgung im Grossberliner Bereich,” [1954], 2.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., 2–3.
95. “It appears that the small antennas everywhere in the GDR serves the reception of transmitters in Band 3. Those kind of transmitters are not yet up and running in the GDR. Despite this, there are a whole bunch of this type of antenna. . . .” Ibid., 1.
96. Ibid., 3.
98. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/465, “Technische Entwicklung,” [1955]. Already in 1955 NWDR officials had begun to discuss the possibility of lining the border with small transmitters to protect their signal, a situation that would have saturated the border regions with ARD programming. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/633, [Beobachtungen in Westdeutschland], 8 November 1955.
100. Significantly, when GDR authorities were faced with a similar decision a decade later, this time about what standard to use for color programming, they came to a different decision. West German viewers, who by the 1970s were largely ignorant of DFF programming anyway, would have to watch DFF programming in black and white.
More important, East Germans would have to do the same with the more colorful West German television program.

101. On SED policymakers’ desire to compete with Western broadcasting, see Joseph Naftzinger, “Policy-making in the German Democratic Republic: The Response to West German Trans-border Broadcasting” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland at College Park, 1994).


CHAPTER 2


2. Williams, Television, 28.


6. This was also the case in early postwar radio. Adelheid von Saldern, “Radio in the GDR.”

7. She played the title character in “Bianca Maria and the Dripping Dagger,” for example. Müncheberg, Experiment, 46.


9. Whereas DEFA films could be denied exhibition rights, television programming was almost always transmitted. If, later, it was deemed a “negative result,” that could be discussed, rather than ignored (according to accounts from 1961). Thomas Beutelschmidt, Kooperation oder Konkurrenz? Das Verhältnis zwischen Film und Fernsehen in der DDR (Berlin: DEFA Stiftung, 2009), 77.

10. Walter Baumert in Müncheberg, Experiment, 9.

11. The date 21 December 1952 marked the beginning of the “official test program” in the GDR. Some make much of the fact that the program debuted on Stalin’s birthday; others concentrate on the fact that the DFF began broadcasting the “official test pro-
gram” only four days before the West Germans began their own official program. I have found no evidence that Stalin’s birthday drove the DFF to begin on 21 December; more likely, it was a matter of fortunate coincidence, since beating the West Germans to the punch was far more important.

12. BArch, DR 8/1, “Protokoll über die Abteilungsleiter-Besprechung am 26.1.53,” 26 January 1953. Although paper rationing can be politically motivated when regimes attempt to curb the media, in this case the DFF was simply not important enough to adequately provision, especially given the conditions of scarcity in other parts of the economy.


15. Film could be shown on television through the use of the “telecine,” which shone light through the film, turning the light into the electrical charges that could be read by the television transmitter.


26. According to this report from 1955, the DFF produced no original programming before December 1952, but they discounted the slide series. BArch, DR 8/3, “Über die Programmätigkeit des Fernsehens in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik,” [October 1955].


29. Ibid.

ferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 71. The use of videotape may have saved CBS $8,400 a week in film and film processing costs. Ibid., 78. Video recording technology arrived in Britain in 1958 but took some time to win over television producers. It was expensive and, though videotape could be reused, unlike film, it could not (at this early date) be edited. Turnock, *Television*, 93–97. The GDR did not acquire recording technology until the early 1960s.


34. Stemmler, “Bemerkungen,” 78.


47. A group of television workers, including Ernst Augustin, attended the filming of a soccer match in 1951 while on a trip to view the television center in Moscow. But Augustin and his colleagues were technicians interested in technology, not programming. Nor did they involve themselves in programming after their return. By the same token, camerawoman Christian had had plenty of opportunity to work with television technology in the studio. Yet the few cameras were housed in small studio spaces. Before August 1954, no studio existed that was large enough to get a 180-degree view through the camera. Hanna Christian in Müncheberg, *Experiment*, 72.

48. Extant film clips suggest that, in their broadcasts of Olympic soccer matches in 1936, the Nazis filmed most, but not all, of the action from positions behind the goal line at one end of the field. Michael Kloft, *Television under the Swastika: Unseen Footage from the Third Reich* (Chicago: International Historic Films, 2001). Cutting between those perspectives produced an astonishingly chaotic spectacle. But those transmissions likely were intended less to provide an intelligible representation of the game than to exploit the shock value of visual simultaneity by providing moving images for those who were watching from public viewing rooms in Berlin. Such conventions were not “natural” but had to be learned.


50. The DFF broadcast four hours daily in 1957, five hours in 1958, and seven hours


52. Fehlig distinguished this experience from that of theater, which he characterized as establishing a strong personal relationship with the audience over the course of a specific play. BArch, DR 8/3, “Gedanken zu einer Dramaturgie des Fernsehens,” [1955], 8–9.

53. BArch, DR 8/3, “Gedanken zu einer Dramaturgie des Fernsehens,” [1955], 6, 7, 10.


60. “Drama,” “topical” (or “political”), or “entertainment” programming were categories used by the television service. I am using them here because they reflect the ways in which television workers understood the programming they were creating. More important, these categories are not irrelevant, because a program defined as explicitly political often commanded more resources and greater attention from state representatives than other types of programming. So, these categories serve here not as interpretive categories but as a reflection of the administrative taxonomy mobilized by historical actors.

61. In her work on GDR radio, Monika Pater argues that the state tolerated entertaining genres in hopes of drawing audiences not just to the political message of the larger program but also to “high value” cultural edification. But state authorities always associated “entertainment” with mindless kitsch and could not recognize other, more profound effects, such as providing a release valve or “mood-management.” Monika Pater, “Auf der Suche nach sozialistischer Unterhaltung,” in *Zwischen Pop und Propaganda*, ed. Klaus Arnold and Christoph Classen (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2004), 94.


63. Television scholar John Caughie notes that, in Britain, early “television was a technology for relay and adaptation,” which reflected both an “instrumental view of the medium” and “a general mindset that placed television in a dependent relationship to the other forms which it served [sic].” John Caughie, *Television Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41.


69. This was performed in a newly finished, larger studio than the one described above though. It is apparent from a photo of the set that there were at least twelve actors working on the opera. Müncheberg, *Experiment*, 52.
76. BAch, DR 8/3, “Über die Programmtätigkeit,” [October 1955], 36.
77. DRA, Zuschauerforschung, H074–00-02/0003, 1956.
82. The Bitterfeld Conference marked the beginning of a cultural campaign to bring lay and professional artists into dialogue in order to create a new, socialist culture that was imbued with and reflected the people’s lives (see the end of chapter 3). David Bathrick notes that contemporary playwrights, such as Heiner Müller and Peter Hacks, were also doing this by the mid-1950s, and argues that the policy of the Bitterfeld Conference simply codified what was already happening in the East German arts. David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 120.
83. See, for example, DRA, H074–00-02/0002, “Bericht von der Dienstreise nach Erfurt, Suhl und Landkreise vom 26.3.–30.3.56.”
84. On socializing with television in the United States and Britain, see Lynn Spigel,
Notes to Pages 56–62


87. Quotes in this paragraph are from DRA, H074–00-02/0002, “Bericht ueber die Dienstreise am 30.11. bis 2.12. nach Leipzig und Halle,” 5 December 1956.

88. See also Beutelschmidt, Kooperation, 351–354.

89. DRA, Zuschauerforschung, H074–00-02/0002, “Bericht von der Dienstreise nach Erfurt, Suhl und Landkreise vom 26.3.-30.3.56.” The FDGB estimated they had between 250 and 300 sets.


91. In this way, the GDR television audience approximated contemporary audiences elsewhere. See, for example, Caughie, Television Drama, 38.


CHAPTER 3

1. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Briefwechsel Eisler-Sindermann, 27 November 1956, 1.

2. Italics original. Ibid., 2.


4. Quote from Hermann Weber, Geschichte der DDR (Munich: DTV, 1999), 138, but noted by others as well, for example, Thomas Lindenberger.

5. BArch, DR 8/3, “Über die Programmtätigkeit,” [October 1955], 1. It should be noted that although the holdings of DR 8 are attributed to the the State Committee for Television, between 1952 and 1968 this body was a “Television Council” that included members of the television leadership and liaised between television and its overseer, the State Broadcasting Committee. The SED established the State Committee for Television in the context of wider social and political upheaval in Europe in 1968, reflecting the desire for increased control over the organs of communication in the GDR.

6. At best, most East German leaders could have experienced the medium only at
technical fairs demonstrating mechanical television in the late 1920s, in public viewing rooms in Berlin and Leipzig in the 1930s, or in exile in London, Moscow, or parts of the United States in the late 1930s.


8. BArch, DR 6/1, “Protokoll der Leitungssitzung am 2.1.53,” 2 January 1953, 1–2.


13. Scholars estimate that the uprising involved anywhere from 300,000 to half a million participants, in at least 270 but perhaps as many as 700 localities across the GDR. Karl Wilhelm Fricke, “Die nationale Dimension des 17. Juni 1953,” APuZ 23 (2003): 5. The uprising was initially understood as primarily a workers’ revolt, spurred on by economic factors and demands of the demonstraters. Arnulf Baring, Der 17. Juni 1953 (Stuttgart: DVA, 1982), and Karl Wilhelm Fricke and Ilse Spittmann, 17. Juni 1953: Arbeiteraufstand in der DDR (Cologne: EDV, 1982). More recent scholarship argues that it was a much more widespread revolt in which political factors were more important. Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, Untergang auf Raten (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1993), and Gary Bruce, Resistance with the People: Repression and Resistance in East Germany, 1945–1955 (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). A recent work by Ulrich Mählert finds a convincing middle road, arguing that the uprising was an economic protest that turned political. Ulrich Mählert, Der 17. Juni 1953 (Bonn: Dietz, 2003).


15. Weber, Geschichte, 166. Scholarly interpretations of the significance of the uprising argue that it was the “beginning” or, alternatively, the “beginning of the end” for the GDR. For Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, Armin Mitter, and Stefan Wolle, June 1953 achieved an “innere Staatsgründung,” the moment that truly established the GDR, and as an authoritarian dictatorship. For Wilke and Voigt, Walter Ulbricht was able to consolidate his power in the aftermath of the failed uprising, which also resulted in a deeper divide between East and West Germany. Manfred Wilke and Tobias Voigt, “Neuer Kurs und 17. Juni Die zweite Staatsgründung der DDR 1953,” in Satelliten nach Stalins Tod, ed. Manfred Wilke and András Hegedüs (Berlin: Akademie, 2000). The GDR had faced a crisis of legitimacy that had made apparent that the GDR could not exist without the
Red Army. Michael Lemke, “Der 17. Juni in der DDR-Geschichte,” APuZ 23 (2003): 11. The GDR could not overcome this event; exposed as illegitimate, it was just a matter of time before it collapsed, and some scholars draw a direct line between the events of 1953 and 1989. Rolf Steininger, 17. Juni 1953: Der Anfang vom langen Ende der DDR (Munich: Olzog, 2003); Kowalczuk, Mitter, and Wolle, Untergang auf Raten. Torsten Diedrich and Kowalczuk assert that scholars writing on the uprising have historically identified it as one of the most important events (if not the most important event) in the history of the GDR, although it has yet to be convincingly located in the wider history of the GDR. A recent conference has begun to change that, as well as to revise the standard view in favor of a much more complex picture of the events and processes under way at the time. Torsten Diedrich and Ilko-Sascha Kowalczuk, Staatsgründung auf Raten? (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2005), 5–9. Christian Ostermann reminds us that 1953 was a crisis moment not just in the GDR but across the Eastern bloc. Ostermann, Uprising.

17. Pritchard, Making of the GDR, 208; W. R. Smyser, From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle over Germany (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 125.
21. Riedel, Hörfunk, 22. The Central Committee accused three more employees of “ideological carelessness” and “un-comradely behaviour” toward their Soviet colleagues. One defended herself vigorously, insisting that Schmidt had kept her from reading the Soviet press and rejected her suggestion to introduce Russian language training to the airwaves. Further, she claimed she had persistently tried to bring attention to “these developments” and even told deputy director Goldhammer, “we are covering things up here, that can no longer be covered up.” SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/ J IV 2/3/060, “Anlage 2 ‘Die Lage am Berliner Rundfunk’ zu der Protokoll Nr. 60,” 1. Corroborated by the Politburo in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/2/51, “Zum Protokoll Nr. 51,” Article 17 “Die Lage am Berliner Rundfunk, blatt 5.”
22. He required employees to participate in schooling in the basic principles of the politics of the SED and established more rigid rules governing the planning of radio broadcasts. Riedel, Hörfunk, 23. For Monika Pater, this is evidence that authorities believed messages could be unproblematically broadcast and monosemically received. See note 19.
23. Interview with Hans Mahle, in So dürften wir glauben zu kämpfen—Erfahrungen mit DDR-Medien, ed. Edith Spielhagen and Maryellen Boyle (Berlin: Vistas, 1993), 35. Mahle had returned to Germany with the “Ulbricht Group” in 1945 and was a member of the Central Committee until 1947. Soon after his return, Soviet occupation authorities appointed him the Director of Broadcasting with the mandate to reconstruct broadcasting services in the Soviet zone. Hoff in Hickethier, Geschichte, 97.


24. According to Riedel, the Agitation Commission fired Mahle on the pretext that radio listeners were bored with the program. Riedel, Hörfunk, 24. Mahle claimed, somewhat plausibly, in an interview in the 1990s that he had “built up the Television Center at Adlershof against the will of the Central Committee.” Mahle, cited in Spielhagen and Boyle, So dürften wir, 47.


29. BArch, DR 6/1, “Beschlussprotokoll Nr. 18a/54 der ausserordentlichen Leitungssitzung am 28.6.54,” 29 June 1954, 1. Adameck remained director of the service until the end of the GDR.

30. It was a “political institution, like the press and radio, [that serves] the consolidation of the Worker- and Peasant-power and with that the preservation of peace and the creation of a unified, democratic Fatherland.” BArch, DR 8/3, “Über die Programmtätigkeit,” [October 1955], 1.

31. See, for example, BArch, DR 8/2, “Protokoll Nr. 11/54,” 18 November 1954.


33. The SRK appointed Zahlbaum as Adameck’s deputy at the service; in 1953 he had been charged with finding a way to “build” propaganda shows into radio programming. BArch, DR 6/1, “Protokoll Nr. 58 der Leitungssitzung am 3.11.1953,” 2.

34. She had difficult working relationships with colleagues and had not informed Adameck promptly that a television worker had “left democratic Berlin.” BArch, DR 8/3, “Protokoll Nr. 1/55,” 28 January 1955.


36. BArch, DR 6/1, “Beschlussvorlage zur Durchführung der staatspoliti-

cischen Schulung.”

37. Cafeteria workers, janitorial staff, and security personnel were exempt from this. SAPMO-BArch, DR 8/2, “Beschluss Nr. 2: Zur Durchführung der staatspoliti-
den und fachlichen Schulung der Mitarbeiter des Fernsehzentrums Berlin,” 30 Sep-
tember 1954.

38. BArch, DR 8/3, “Vorlage für die Kollegiumssitzung der 26.1.55: zum 3. Tages-

ordnungspunkt, staatspolitischer und fachlicher Schulung,” 4.

39. There are veiled references to the flight of technical personnel in BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/1823, “Kommunique,” 1 September 1959.

40. BArch, DR 8/2, “Beschlussvorlage Nr. 2,” 15 December, 1954, 3 Article 3.f.

41. BArch, DR 8/2, “Beschlussvorlage für das Kollegium Nr. 5,” 23 September 1954.

42. BArch, DR 8/3, “Protokoll Nr. 6/55,” 31 March 1955. In this meeting, the Tele-
vision Committee decided to find someone to deal exclusively with film exchange with the “Eastern bloc” countries.

43. BArch, DR 8/7, “Entwurf: Auslandsreisen,” [January 1957]. A year later, the
Television Committee established a photo library. BArch, DR 8/12, “Kollegiumsvorlage Nr. 39/58: Bildung einer Foto-Abteilung,” 24 May 1958.


46. For example, they had difficulty with sound transmission: BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/484, “Tonsäge bei der Direktübertragung 'Frohe Burschen—frohe Mädchen’ am 22.3.56,” 28 March 1956. The MPF-BRF was separate from the DFF, but they had to work together and had a troubled relationship that worsened as pressure on the television service grew more intense. In mid-1957, for example, the BRF sent a detailed letter of complaint over conflicts between BRF and DFF staff over a broadcast from Leipzig. See for example, BArch (DH), DM 3 BRFII/484, “Bericht über den Einsatz des Ü-III vom 28.6.-1.7.1957,” 3 July 1957.


49. “The task was particularly difficult in that the pictures were commentated from the studio. It was not possible to let the athletes speak about their own development in original interviews.” But we should remember that these “weaknesses” are today standard operating procedure: most coverage of sporting events relies on the visual coverage provided by a host broadcaster, with audio commentary provided by the reporter of the network carrying the broadcast, who is likely not at the event. BArch, DR 8/4, “Beschlussvorlage Nr. 9/56: Bericht über die Auswertung der Übertragungen von den VII. Olympischen Winterfestspielen in Cortina d’Ampezzo,” 20 February 1956, 2.


51. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/1824, Letter to Heinz Geggel [Deputy Chairman of the State Broadcasting Committee], [March 1958].

52. From Intelligence Reports from the United States Office of Research and correspondence between NBC’s news director William McAndrew and reporter Romney Wheeler, cited in Schwoch, Global TV, 39.


56. Granville points to criticisms from Zaisser in 1953 and Schirdewan in 1956, for
example. Wolfgang Harich proposed a platform of liberalization and was imprisoned. Granville, “Ulbricht.” Michael Lemke argues that the Ulbricht group of the SED leadership feared Moscow would let go of the GDR in return for a neutral Germany and sought to stay firmly in the Soviet sphere of influence, making reunification less likely especially after 1953. Herrnstadt, Zaiser, and Grotewohl, on the other hand, argued against Ulbricht’s hard line. Michael Lemke, Einheit oder Sozialismus? Die Deutsch-


58. Schnitzler was a fervent advocate of socialism on the airwaves, broadcasting some of the DFF’s most ideological programming. He was also infamous for his penchant for expensive cars and a Western lifestyle, which, though troublesome, the SED often overlooked due to the “service” he provided otherwise. All quotes here from SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 J IV 2/3/534, “Protokoll Nr. 36/56 der ausserordentlichen Sitzung des Sekretariats des ZK am 5 November 1956,” 5 November 1956, 3.


61. There is no known extant copy of this report. The point I am making here is that television workers already had spent much time analyzing television’s deficits. Yet it was only in the aftermath of the Hungarian uprising that such information became important to the Central Committee.

62. In one such report the Postal Ministry, which was responsible for developing television technology, identified the lack of available resources as the cause of GDR television’s technical lag. The Ministry maintained that the decision to develop television technology in 1949 had not taken into account that indigenous East German industry could not yet develop or deliver the necessary technical equipment. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/465, “Technische Entwicklung,” [1955], 5. Furthermore, the Postal Ministry claimed that, “after small successes in 1950–1951, industrial interest in our developmental task essentially plunged to zero,” and it traced the East Germans’ lack of success in developing television technology to the fact that “the economic importance of the industrial production of radio and television equipment is not appreciated.” BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/465, “Zusammenarbeit mit der Industrie,” [1955], 1. But few, if any, of these reports had come to the attention of the Central Committee. The Committee’s discussions of Rundfunk (“broadcasting,” later “radio”) were restricted to the development of radio. For example, as late as 29 June 1956 they discussed a report entitled the “Verbesserung des Rundfunks,” which outlined a program of general tasks for the State Broadcasting Committee, the radio stations Berlin I and II, and the Deutschlandsender, but made no mention of television technology or the program. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 J IV 2/3/475, “Anlage Nr. 2 zum Protokoll Nr. 26/55 vom 29.6.1955,” 29 June 1955.


65. BArch (DH), DM3 BRF II/929, “Beschluss über Massnahmen zur Verbesserung des Fernsehens in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik: Begründung,” [December 1956], 2. They did not expect to be able to produce this technology domestically before 1959.

66. For example, they were considering a cable link with Czech television and possibly Polish and Soviet television. BArch (DH), DM3 BRFII/6341, “Bericht über den Stand der Entwicklung der Technik auf dem Gebiet des Rundfunks, Fernsehens und Kommerziellen Funks auf der Grundlage des Beschlusses vom 23.2.1956,” [1957], 14.

67. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Brief an das Politbüro des ZK der SED, 10 December 1957, 2.


69. Much of that “turnover” had to do with Republikflucht, especially at the Radio and Television Works around Berlin. Patrick Major, Behind the Berlin Wall (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Later, in 1959, the MPF-BRF still described occurrences of “technische Ausfälle” due to the fact that the “class enemy tries to lure away technical personnel.” (By this time they described television as the “most important tool (Werkzeug) of the government and Party.”) BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/1823, “Kom- munique,” 1 September 1959.


72. BArch, DR 8/5, “Protokoll Nr. 32/56,” 28 November 1956, 4.

73. Indeed, by 1958 the Television Committee had to address the problem of Republikflucht among DFF cameramen (in response to extreme overtime and low pay), which had begun to threaten continued television service. Vorlage Nr. 42/57 discussed in BArch, DR 8/6, “Protokoll Nr. 18/57 der Kollegiumssitzung des Deutschen Fernseh- funks,” 26 June 1957.

74. In the speech, given at Pula on 11 November 1956, Tito toed a fine line between the Soviets and the Hungarian reformers: he criticized the former for intervening in
what he characterized as a grass-roots revolution and the latter for endangering socialism in Hungary. Johanna Granville, “Hungary, 1956: The Yugoslav Connection,” Europe-Asia Studies 50 (1998): 498. There is no other extant evidence of this broadcast, but this testimony suggests that the DFF broadcast only remarks that suggested Tito was in favor of the Soviets and against the Hungarian “counterrevolutionaries,” omitting comments in favor of Hungarian liberalization.

75. All quotes from BArch, DR 8/5, “Protokoll Nr. 33/56,” 5 December 1956, 1–2.
78. Bathrick, Powers, 110.
80. Hermand, “Good New,” 73–74, and David Bathrick, “The Dialectics of Legitimation: Brecht in the GDR,” New German Critique 2 (1974): 96. Writing in 1974, Hermand characterized this as the “indiscriminate suppression of all avant-garde tendencies,” while Bathrick, by contrast, saw this also as a “plea for tradition as a means to legitimize the building of a socialist national state.”
81. Bathrick describes Heiner Müller and Müller Hagen-Stahl’s first attempt at “agiprop montage” as “at the dramaturgical level, somewhat of a theatrical disaster” but argues that it achieved the important step of “reawakening a revolutionary tradition. By deviating from the plot-, character-, and stage-centered ‘theater-works’ of conventional socialist realism . . . they offered new possibilities for the development of a more broad-based theatrical public life.” Bathrick, Powers, 110–112.
82. For media scholar Judith Kretzschmar, this new campaign instead represents the emergence of the GDR’s first indigenous cultural movement, unfettered by the example of Soviet cultural policy and the primacy of socialist realism. That was a clear shift from 1957, when socialist realism “could no longer be a future vision, but had to become reality.” Judith Kretzschmar, “Zwischen Schein und Sein,” in Dittmar and Vollberg, eds., Zwischen Experiment und Etablierung, 140–145.
86. One of television’s great advantages was that it could reach into the FRG. The SED planned the launch of a second program for the Western audience intended to reach that audience more effectively and counter the influence of the FRG’s planned second program (struck down by the FRG’s constitutional court in 1961). Claudia Dittmar argues that this cross-border mandate, so important in 1957, was no longer a priority by 1959. Claudia Dittmar, Feindliches Fernsehen: Das DDR-Fernsehen und seine Strategien im Umgang mit dem westdeutschen Fernsehen (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2010), 222–227.
88. SED, *Bericht des Zentralkomitees an den V. Parteitag der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Berlin: Dietz, 1958), 126. This campaign continued into the Bitterfeld Conference of 1959, where the SED challenged artists and East German workers to “overcome the gulf between art and life” and bring art closer to the people. This meant, on the one hand, that professional art should reflect everyday life, and do so in an accessible way, thus proscribing the visual language of abstraction. On the other hand, it called for workers themselves to become producers of art. Weber, *Geschichte*, 211.
90. See, for example, BArch, DR 8/6, “Protokoll Nr. 34/57 der Kollegiumssitzung des Deutschen Fernsehfunks am 9.10.57,” 9 October 1957 and BArch, DR 8/5, “Protokoll Nr. 10/56.”
93. Ibid., 3. This likely refers to the televised versions of the radio entertainment show *The Laughing Bear* and the “Distel” cabaret. On GDR cabaret see, for example, Sylvia Klötzer, *Satire und Macht. Film, Zeitung, Kabarett in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2005).
98. *Bildung* can be translated narrowly as “education” but is closer to “cultivation” or “cultural development.”
99. This show emerged in the context of a concerted push to finally collectivize agriculture. SAPMO-Barch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, “Übersicht über die Sendungen, die die Grundlage für die Schaffung einer Fernsehuniversität bilden können” [1960].
100. Hoff in Hickethier, *Geschichte*, 288. The DFF also provided programming on language instruction in English and Russian.

102. Ibid., 2.

103. Discussion of Current Camera is developed in chapter 4.

104. The first film segment appeared even before the “official” beginning of the test program, on 11 July 1952, which represented “an accomplishment, that television producers had taken a step into the unknown.” Bösenberg, Aktuelle Kamera, 89.

105. Despite this shift, the program still used filmed material extensively. Some segments simply broadcast excerpts of the People’s Chamber, Walter Ulbricht’s speeches, or speakers at party events such as the Youth Congress, while other filmed material continued to reproduce the style of newsreels. See, for example, Ulbricht’s appearance at the Jugendkongress Leipzig (and the anti-Radio Luxembourg comments of one East German youth). DRA, Fernseharchiv, “Aktuelle Kamera,” OVC 1542.


107. All quotes in this paragraph from BACh, DR 6/280, “Für ein interessantes, massenwirksames Fernsehprogramm,” [1958], 2.

CHAPTER 4

1. Williams, Television, 105.


4. Markus Schubert and Hans-Jörg Stiehler demonstrate the correlation between the expanding program (in the East) and rising viewership. Schubert and Stiehler, “Programmentwicklung,” 26. At this early date, though, DFF transmissions still reached far more East viewers than those of the ARD.

5. Heil, Fernsehen der SBZ, 93.

6. “Drama,” “entertainment” or “political” programming refer to categories used by the television service and thus reflect the ways in which television workers understood the programming they were creating. But what I am arguing here is how liminal the boundaries between programming they defined as “entertainment” or “political” were.

7. Raymond Williams, Television, or Lynn Spigel, Make Room for TV.


9. Haucke, “Träume,” 111–121. For specific ways in which this operated in the GDR see Heather Gumbert, “Cold War Theaters: Cosmonaut Titov at the Berlin Wall,”


12. A letter from a school principal asserted that *Black Channel* was popular with children (who must have known it from re-broadcasts at midday for shift workers) and requested that it be broadcast earlier in the evening. The DFF response allowed that while it was popular in the East, it was meant for the West. DRA, Sammlung Zeitgeist (1958–60), Box 2 Section 8.


14. Dittmar, *Feindliches Fernsehen*, 146. Wilke, “Arbeitsbericht,” 102–103. I think Wilke, in particular, takes this too much at face value from DFF documents stating intent. Dittmar argues that the cross-border mandate lost support by 1959, in part because this kind of attempt failed: there was no evidence that DFF programming had achieved the desired transformation of West German values. This goes, again, to the instrumental view of television held by authorities at the time—put a message out there and watch television work its “magic.” On the other hand, one might ask how they would know what kind of an impact it had on West viewers, given this view of television’s purpose and power. The SED (per Dittmar) measured it by the West German election results.

15. Hoff in Hickethier, *Geschichte*, 293. In 1965, however, a Stasi IM (unofficial collaborator) reported that the DFF continued to broadcast Monday evening films to keep the East German audience from watching the West German news shows *Panorama* and *Report*. Jochen Staadt, Tobias Voigt, and Stefan Wolle, *Operation Fernsehen: Die Stasi und die Medien in Ost und West* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 337.

16. It was one of two East German television shows to survive the *Wende*.


19. A report from the DFF Chefredaktion estimated that by 1955 the number of reports devoted to West German and West Berlin had fallen to 8 percent; of that, 3 percent of the reports now focused on the “activities of the working class” in West Germany. By contrast, 37 percent of reports examined “questions of the development of the GDR” and reportage concerning the people’s democracies had risen from 2 to 10 percent of AK reports. BAch, DR 8/3, “Zur Beschlussvorlage Nr. 9/55: Aktuelle Kamera,” 30 March 1955, 1.


24. Hope Harrison writes that although less studied than the Cuban Missile Crisis, “the Berlin Crisis lasted far longer than the Cuban Missile Crisis, witnessed the greatest post-World War II risk of direct US-Soviet hostilities, and had significant long-term effects on US-Soviet relations and on relations within the NATO alliance and the Warsaw Pact. Further, such observers as President Kennedy believed it may have been a key factor in the Soviet initiation of the Cuban Missile Crisis.” Hope M. Harrison, “Concrete Rose,” 5.


28. Sheffer details a wide variety of scenarios in which Germans found themselves on the “wrong” side of the border, including deliberate flight, daredevil exploits challenging border security, aggrieved relatives “fleeing” domestic disputes, and even completely inadvertent border-crossings (due to extreme drunkenness, for example). She also demonstrates how quickly the border became rhetorically (and actually) associated with crime after the Second World War. Sheffer, Burned Bridge, esp. chapter 3, 98.

29. Major demonstrates that the state differentiated between the “passive recruitment” made possible by the postwar economic boom in West Germany and more active recruitment strategies undertaken by, for example, businesses that relocated in the West, encouraging their former workers to follow. Major, Berlin Wall, 76.


31. Major, Berlin Wall, 93–96. See also Sheffer, Burned Bridge.


34. Harrison, Driving the Soviets, 184.


36. Harrison, Driving the Soviets, 189.


38. Indicated by BArch, DR 8/12, “Beschlussvorlage Nr. 40/58: Sendungen der Aktuellen Kamera und der Sportredaktion im Herbst- und Winterprogramm 1958/59,” 30 May 1958, 2, which reminds the Kollegium that Treffpunkt Berlin is no longer simulcast.


42. All quotes in this paragraph from DRA, Zuschauerforschung, H074–00-02/0003, “Analyse der Zuschauerpost Monat Mai 1956,” Article d: Aktuelle Beiträge, 6 June 1956.
44. Heil, Fernsehen der SBZ, 106.
46. Hoff in Hickethier, Geschichte, 283. Correspondence between viewers and the DFF indicated that Black Channel was not initially intended for East German viewers. See note 12 above.
47. USIA report, cited in Schwoch, Global TV, 40.
49. “Blue Light” is a reference to the flashing light on the roof of East German police cars.
51. Andrea Guder has noted that one of the programs catalogued as an episode of Blaulicht, “Schüsse in Kabine 7,” appears not to be part of the series. Guder, Genosse Hauptmann.
53. As expressed during a panel discussion at the “Lange Nacht der Fernsehkrimis,” Arsenal Berlin, 8 June 2002. Also Jörg Lingenberg, “Fernsehspiel.”
54. Although the forms were similar, the content, or the world represented within those forms, was quite different. Programs defined people not by their family, neighborhood, or region, but by their occupation—encouraging them to identify with their class interests.
57. See the ninth scene of the script for “Antiquitäten.”
58. DRA Babelsberg, Blaulicht, “Tunnel an der Grenze,” DFF, 20 August 1959. The promotional material for this episode published in the television magazine FF dabei included this speech in slightly revised form, according to Guder, 82.
60. Guder cites the example of Schwarzes Benzin (Bootleg Gas). Guder, Genosse Hauptmann, 87.
61. For examples, see the episodes “Zweimal Gestorben” (1959), “Kippentütchen”

62. In another exchange from the same episode, the fair and wise police captain, Wernicke (played by Bruno Carstens), scolds the youths for reading Western criminal novellas that dramatize shoot-outs with police officers. DRA Babelsberg, Blaulicht, “Kippentütchen,” DFF 14 January 1960.

63. See the twenty-fifth scene of the script “Kippentütchen,” 68.

64. DRA Babelsberg, Zuschauerforschung, Ho74–00-02/0004, “Auswertung zum Fragenkomplex Nr. 13,” (Sendereihe Blaulicht), 26 September 1960.

65. Even the flashing blue light and siren of the opening title of each episode could normalize the police presence in Berlin.


68. DRA Babelsberg, Zuschauerforschung, Ho74–00-02/0004, “Auswertung zum Fragenkomplex Nr. 13,” (Sendereihe Blaulicht), 26 September 1960, 4.

69. According to a contemporary newspaper, Lt. Thomas was coded as an intellectual.


71. In this case the authorities would refer to Heinz’s crossing as people-smuggling.


77. Berliners had seen television images of Berliners “protesting” before: in the context of the 17 June uprising the West German television station in Berlin had broadcast pictures from the streets of Berlin. They were, however, pictures of West Berliners, in West Berlin neighborhoods, and did not reflect the goings-on in East Berlin, despite those reports that claim Western television was “inside the mob” on 16 June (see, for example, Schwoch, Global TV, 37). Heinz Riek, comments during In geteilter Sicht: Fernsehgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte, Hans Bredow Institut, Hamburg, 5–6 December 2002. Some of the presentations and discussion are reproduced in Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, In geteilter Sicht: Fernsehgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2004).


79. Parts of some episodes are missing due to deterioration from mold or other conditions (13 August 1961 Hauptausgabe), while some episodes from August 1961 no longer have sound (e.g., 24 August 1961).
80. Sheffer argues that the August border closure provoked “nowhere near the level of opposition that either East or West German officials had anticipated,” and that, by this time, border events were “painful to witness, but not as shocking as the border closure in 1952.” Sheffer, *Burned Bridge*, 171–172.


83. Major, *Berlin Wall*, 95. This suggests significant continuities with Nazi attitudes toward stigmatized social groups (including legislation requiring Jews, homosexuals, and others to identify themselves by means of symbols attached to their clothing) among the East German population.


CHAPTER 5

1. In late August, *Aktuelle Kamera* reported the ongoing registration of former border-crossers: “Yesterday and today there were quite a few looking for honest work. Now those come too, who until now still believed in miracles and set all their hopes on [the American vice-president] Johnson’s visit with Adenauer in Berlin. They will all take up honest work that appeals to them and fits their capabilities in the numerous state- and privately-owned factories of our capital. The registration of border-crossers must be completed by 26 August . . . [by] those who have not yet registered or have tried to get around the laws of our state in other ways.” DRA Babelsberg, Ostaufzeichnungen, “Die aktuelle Kamera,” [25 August 1961] 3. The date on the transcript is 25.9.1961, but this and other entries indicate that the show was actually broadcast in late August.


3. See, for example, Mitter and Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten*, or a recent reconsideration, Diedrich and Kowalczyk, *Staatsgründung auf Raten*?

4. Major, *Berlin Wall*, 5. Edith Sheffer ably demonstrates, too, that the August 1961 border closure simply fortified an already well-developed boundary between East and West Germany, that had already manifested itself in a widespread “wall in the head” among Germans living on either side of the border. Sheffer, *Burned Bridge*.


6. On the Second Berlin Crisis, see chapter 4.


16. One can imagine adventurous teens, excited to scramble across East German rooftops. In such cases, it should come as no surprise that most residents returned their antennae to their original positions soon thereafter. But, keep in mind that, as others have pointed out, simply turning antennae was ineffective in large parts of the GDR where transmitters from East and West were very close and could be received no matter which direction the antenna was pointing.


24. In her account of the Ochsenkopf campaign, for example, media scholar Judith Kretzschmar reconstructs the events almost entirely from stories published in *Junge Welt*, replicating their pronouncements of success. But she admits that, due to the fact that “dismantled antennas were quickly reinstalled,” the SED could no longer rely on simple prohibitions. Kretzschmar, “Zwischen Schein und Sein,” 151–152 (see chap. 3 n. 82, this volume).


program was often held up as an example of the “operational effectiveness” of the medium of television. Hoff in Hickethier, *Geschichte*, 283.


35. Schwaen noted another example of the difficulties posed by the newly reinforced border while working on *Fetzers Flucht* in 1962: the “difficult commute” for members of the Leipzig Radio Choir—from East Berlin to Babelsberg, where they recorded the score—disrupted their rehearsals and recording sessions. On the other hand, it put an end to the *Republikflucht* of DFF cameramen that was such a concern in the 1950s.

36. Monika Pater, “Rundfunkangebote” (see chap. 3, n. 19, this volume); Hoff, “Von ‘da lacht der Bär,’” 86.

37. In this regard, the entire thrust of the show fell afoul of shifting SED policy, but it survived until 1965.


39. Quermann wrote: “Teacher 1: What do you think of the [Streuung]? / Teacher 2: Why, everything works out, what does Eberhard Cohrs say? A ship will come, and see there, it came. / Teacher 1: Wasn’t colleague Cohrs criticized for that? / Teacher 2: Why, is he now working in Trade and Supply? / Teacher 1: Oh, you prankster. But I didn’t mean the deviation, but rather the salting of the ice!” SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Letter from Herta Classen, director of Berlin Broadcasting (radio) to the Central Committee of the SED, 2 February 1962.

40. Ibid.

41. Classen described the discussion as “collegial.” She suggested that, although in Quermann’s view he was protecting his reputation, really he was trying to raise his own profile at the cost of state policy. Ibid.


43. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Brief Heinz Quermann an Horst Sindermann (Agitation), 28 February 1962, 1.
44. Eisler incident reported in Quermann, *Quermann-Buch*, 147.
45. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Brief Heinz Quermann an Horst Sindermann (Agitation), 28 February 1962, 1. Quermann’s concern for freelancers was not misplaced: Hans Bentzien, the last Culture Minister of the GDR, asserted that freelancers who looked to radio, film, and television for their next job were hardest hit after numerous works of art came under fire at the Eleventh Plenum of 1965. “3. Workshop 22.6.1992 11. SED-Plenum 1965,” in *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*, ed. Heide Riedel, 143.
46. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Brief Heinz Quermann an Horst Sindermann (Agitation), 28 February 1962, 2.
47. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Brief Wagner an Heinz Quermann, 15 March 1962.
48. Emphasis in original. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/84, Briefwechsel Norden an Eisler, 26 March 1962. It goes on: “In any case, someone has to speak to him in the upcoming days or weeks, who he recognizes as an authority figure and whose advice he respects; in doing so it is advisable that (due to the impression on Cohrs) no party functionary should appear. If [one were to appear], then he’ll stick to his opinion and will construct his future appearances accordingly, and it will then inevitably end in scandal, which will come down on Broadcasting and Television. Therefore I beg you, that a meeting with Cohrs be arranged as quickly as possible, in order to clarify these questions before the next ‘laughing Bear’” (emphasis in original). The following day Heinz Adameck reported on Cohrs’s continued recalcitrance to the Television Council, further indicating that Cohrs would have to meet with the head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda Horst Sindermann on 5 April. BArch, DR 8/24, “Protokoll Nr. 10/62,” 27 March 1962.
50. The “official” start of DFF broadcasts was Stalin’s birthday, 21 December 1952. With Stalin out of favor, the DFF pushed the anniversary forward a week, pegging the anniversary instead to Adameck’s birthday. Gerhard Scheumann in “3. Workshop,” 147.
56. Kurt Schwaen Archiv (KSA), Tagebuch, “Fetzer’s Flucht,” 1.1.59; the assertion that it was specifically composed for the 10th Anniversary of the GDR was made in *Sonntag*. KSA, Pressearchiv Fetzer, “Fetzer’s Flucht: eine Funkoper,” *Sonntag* 32/59, 1959. There are two sets of transcripts of the Fetzer excerpts from the diaries. In cases where the second, newer, transcript diverges from the first, I will indicate that.
57. For discussion of the radio production of *Fetzer*, see Ingrid Pietrzynski, “Im Orkus verschwunden: Günter Kunerts frühe Hörfunkarbeiten (1953–1962),” in *Litera-


61. Pietrzynski discusses the not-uncomplicated story of this prize in Pietrzynski, “Im Orkus,” 108n195.

62. Pietrzynski, “Im Orkus,” 109. One exception was critic Hansjürgen Schaefer writing in *Musik und Gesellschaft*. Schaefer argued that the music did not get enough of the blame for the wider criticism of the opera. He argued that the music was largely non-diegetic: it was mostly illustrative and fairly ineffective, which meant that many of the characters remain flat and schematic, especially Fetzer, who made an “unimpressive inner transformation.” “For some reason,” Schaefer lamented, “Schwaen gave up his strongly distinct musical language in this work.” Hansjürgen Schaefer, “Versuch einer Fernsehfilmoper,” *Musik u. Gesellschaft* 2 (1963): 78–80.


65. KSA, Tagebuch, “Fetzers Flucht,” 12 August 1960. The DFF’s Department of Music and Dance had first expressed interest in the opera in March 1959, but more than a year passed before they began to work with Kunert and Schwaen to get the project in the production pipeline. By June 1960, Stahnke had come onboard, writing a new version of the opera for television with Kunert, but Schwaen still complained to his diary that they had heard nothing from the DFF. Contentious negotiations began in July and continued through January 1962, when the head of dramatic programming, Werner Fehlig, dismissed the Department of Music and Dance from the project. KSA, Tagebuch, “Fetzers Flucht.” KSA, Fetzer, Briefwechsel DFF, letters from 21 July, 16 September, and 7 November.

66. See numerous references in Schwaen’s diary regarding their struggles to get contracts with the DFF. The DFF finally offered Schwaen a contract in January 1962, but finalizing it took weeks. The DFF reminded Schwaen that they “didn’t have the possibilities of DEFA,” likely referring to the lower level of compensation Schwaen would have to expect from the DFF. KSA, Tagebuch, “Fetzers Flucht” (second transcript), 17–31 January 1962, 12. They were not the only ones—the stars of 1961’s *Gewissen in Aufruhr* (discussed in the next chapter) would not consider working for the DFF rate and completed the project with supplements paid by DEFA. Beutelschmidt, *Kooperation*, 297n775.


68. “I regret it if you and Schwaen and Stahnke have had a falling out, but same time I have to emphasize that you cannot expect to have an opera filmed of which we do not have the complete music.” KSA, Fetzer, Letter from Nagel (DFF) to Kunert, 21 July 1960.


70. KSA, Fetzer, Letter from Nagel to Kunert, 21 July 1960.
71. KSA, Fetzer, Letter from Wambach (DFF) to Kunert, 16 September 1960.
72. Contractual negotiations and differences over the content of the opera took their toll. By November 1960, Kunert had tired of DFF notes on the script, and the Director of Music and Dance Nagel had to appeal to him to continue with the project. By the end of 1961 Schwaen was ready to see the end of it and move on to other things. In July he even rejected Director Klingner’s request to further develop Fetzer for the Frankfurt Theater. KSA, Tagebuch, “Fetzers Flucht.”
74. See, for example, Horst Knietsch in Neues Deutschland, 2 April 1962, or reviews in Das Volk (Erfurt), 7 December 1962, the Ostseezeitung Rostock 8 December 1962, or Sybill Mehnert in Junge Welt, 11 December 1962.
75. See, for example, the National Zeitung Berlin, which advertised Fetzer by invoking the fame of Ekkehard Schall: “Ekkehard Schall as opera hero—that’s how we’ll see him on Thursday . . .” 11 December 1962.
76. Knietsch, “Experiment.”
79. KSA, Pressearchiv, Knietsch, “Experiment,” “Fetzers Flucht.”
80. To contextualize: that Thursday evening program began with the ten-minute bedtime story of the East German Sandmann, a half-hour traffic-related show, the ten-minute weather report, and the nightly news Current Camera. The main event of the evening, Fetzer, aired at 8:00 p.m., followed by The Adlershof Treasure Chest (Die Adlershofer Rumpelkammer), a collection of “classic” television clips moderated by the beloved television personality Willi Schwabe, and, finally, the late news at 10:05 p.m.
82. KSA, Pressearchiv, Fetzer Flucht, Kurt Specht letter to the editor, Berliner Zeitung, 21 December 1962.
85. KSA, Tagebuch, “Fetzers Flucht,” 27 December 1962
88. Schwaen noted “Decadence—the old vocabulary.” KSA, Tagebuch, 24 December 1962. VDK colleagues, especially Notowicz, Bab, Lesser, Czerny, Köhler, and Schröter, used this language to discuss the work. KSA, Tagebuch, January 1963. Surprising fault lines appeared. One of Kurt Schwaen’s colleagues who worked in radio planned an entire broadcast devoted to Schwaen’s work, “out of protest against the Fetzer critiques.” Sometimes perfect strangers contacted the artists to express their support. Schwaen noted, “a woman unknown to me called and congratulated me on the piece in the newspaper [BZ Evening Edition—HG]. She hasn’t heard Fetzer, but knows my opinion, which convinced her that the work must have been great. . . .” Kunert received the Heinrich-Mann Prize of the Academy of the Arts, which he regarded only as a gesture of goodwill from his friend and director of the Academy, Stephan Hermelin. But former friends and colleagues were also turning away from them: a “long-time” friend of Kunert’s wife ignored her at a social gathering, “in order to preserve her position,” while Schwaen recalled a colleague who greeted him smugly, inquiring, “Are you still alive?” Kunert, Erwachsenenspiele: Erinnerungen (Munich: C. Hanser, 1997), 246. KSA, Tagebuch, “Über eigene Werke,” 8.-14.1.63.

89. Adameck appeared regularly on the Kleines Fernsehforum, literally a forum in which Adameck and a moderator discussed the issues of the television service, often answering questions posed by viewer mail. DRA Babelsberg, Ostaufzeichnungen, “Kleines Fernsehforum,” 15 December 1962. This time he appeared, possibly at the behest of the Agitation Commission, which had contacted him the day after the broadcast to register its displeasure. BArch DY 30 IV A 2/9.02/120 “Aktennotiz: Fetzers Flucht,” 1.


92. KSA, Tagebuch, 26 January 1963.

93. What follows is a fairly detailed plot description, which I have included so that the reader will be able to follow (perhaps even visualize for themselves) the opera and, below, the critique.


95. Smash cuts are quick cuts that do not use a fade—it can be a jarring effect for the viewer because there is no time between one shot or scene and the next to readjust to the new perspective. In swish pans the camera moves from one subject to another, sometimes in a circle, so quickly that the image blurs. A famous example of this in German film history is the “drunken” swish pan of the hotel doorman at his daughter’s wedding in Murnau’s The Last Laugh (Der letzte Mann), 1924.
96. Stahnke used this device again to represent Schall standing on the train bridge; in this case the “passing train” is projected behind him, to slightly less conspicuous effect.

97. In addition, a third-person narrator (singing) expressed many of the thoughts and emotions of the characters, and a Greek chorus narrated much of the action.

98. This is the scene the DFF filmed as a test scene, demonstrating to the DFF the general contours of the production. Wrage, Zeit der Kunst, 331n239.


100. Hoff, “Das 11. Plenum,” 101–102. Also, for example, Kretzschmar, “Zwischen Schein und Sein,” 150 (see chap. 3 n. 82).

101. In this interpretation, Ulbricht returned from a contentious meeting in the Soviet Union, at which he had discussed the problem of artistic formalism with Khrushchev and a number of Soviet artists. Upon his return his wife Lotte informed him of a new, modernist work she had seen on television the night before. Ulbricht realized he could make an example of the opera, heading off any further attempts by artists to go down this decadent path. To take care of the matter once and for all, he banned Fetzer and another work by the same artists—Monologue for a Taxi Driver set to air 23 December. This narrative fit larger scholarly claims in the early 1990s regarding the charismatic nature of Ulbricht’s rule over the GDR, on the one hand, and state control over the media and especially television, on the other. But the notion that Walter Ulbricht, or worse his wife Lotte, was responsible for banning Fetzer the day following its premiere originated in comments the director of the television film, Günter Stahnke, made in a 1990 interview with the television dramaturge and post-reunification curator of the DFF’s past Hans Müncheberg. See Günter Stahnke, “Als Lotte mich lobte. . . .” Filmspiegel 10 (1990): 18–19. Works by Müncheberg, Peter Hoff, Günter Agde, and the press then disseminated this narrative. See, for example, Ute Thon, “Defa-Schubladenfilme sorgen nach 30 Jahre für unfreiwillige Heiterkeit,” TAZ, 29 January 1990, and Müncheberg comments in “3. Workshop,” 150.

102. These were the principles governing GDR society promulgated by Walter Ulbricht at the Fifth Party Congress of 1958. They included values such as respect for the international solidarity of the working class and other socialist countries; love of fatherland and defense of the nation; respect for, and maximization of, the People’s property; a socialist work ethic; respect for one’s family; and living a clean and decent life. Cited in Mählert, Kleine Geschichte, 88. Translations by the author.

103. Kunert, Erwachsenenspiele, 244.

104. Wrage, Zeit der Kunst, 344.

105. Costabile-Heming argues that Kunert’s position in the GDR was always different from other writers in that he retained publication rights and could publish in the West with impunity. Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, “Censorship and Review Processes: The Case of Günter Kunert,” in What Remains? East German Culture and the Postwar Republic, ed. Marc Silberman (Washington, DC: AICGS, 1997). Kunert asserts that he was able to retain his licensing rights because Aufbau Verlag “gave up on him” during the 1963 crisis (discussed in chapter 6) and gave them back to him rather than be forced to represent him. Kunert, Erwachsenenspiele, 263.


112. Stahnke was a first-time director when *Fetzer* was broadcast, and it seemed at first that he might not overcome the scandal. In the spring and summer of 1963, he had had to confess the “mistakes” of *Fetzer* and *Monologue*. He could not seem to get work directing—the DFF had passed on his television plans. KSA, Tagebuch. But Stahnke returned to television after the disastrous reception of his film *Der Frühling braucht Zeit*. Beutelschmidt, *Kooperation*, 73n190.


115. Media critics Heinz Linde, Robert Richter, and Manfred Heidel continued to publish reviews in support of the work.

116. Sybill Mehnert (*Junge Welt*) wrote, “experiments always make for a healthy and fruitful climate for artistic work, although a single attempt may backfire. *Fetzer*, an attempt to create a new type of television opera, backfired without doubt. Whether *Fetzer* can communicate some kind of new impulse from the musical interpretation to modern operatic theater, more competent people will have to decide. Kurt Schwaen’s music rushed by me; it seemed to me more conventional than modern, more illustrative than dominating . . . . The banality of some passages of text were doubly conspicuous in Günter Stahnke’s completely stylized staging/production. The cameraman did the best; he found filmic answers that interpreted the events way over the literary and musical original [sic].” Sybill Mehnert, “Guter Start mit dem Ungeheuer,” *Junge Welt*, 18 December 1962. “Pantomime with Music,” from Christoph Funke, “Geschichten um Fetzer und Poldy: Fernsehoper von Schwaen und Kunert/Bildschirmspass von Radetz,” *Der Morgen*, 15 December 1962.

117. The chorus set the scene: “Where Germany lay, lie two countries / two countries lie there, and it is divided / it is divided / more than a border / They speak the same language / the same / but can’t understand each other because / they speak another language / another / because they are two countries, two countries / they are and lie, where Germany lay.” KSA, Fetzer-Funkoper, script. In the television version we hear the first words of the opera two minutes in: “Where has the murderer disappeared to. . . .”


120. Ibid.
CHAPTER 6


5. Hoff in Hickethier, Geschichte, 294. Also, in part, in Müncheberg, Blaues Wunder, 166.
6. DEFA collaborated on the television production but kept a “strict division of labor” to limit their culpability. Beutelschmidt, Kooperation, 292–293.
8. SED, V. Parteitag, 126.
15. Literature critic Horst Redeker, cited in Demetz, “Galileo,” 244.
18. DY 30 IV 2/9.02 120, 1. The television weekly continued to publicize Monolog even after Fetzer.
19. They declared it “objectively, a reactionary message directed against the state, which is no different from the bourgeois philosophers Jaspers or Heydecker [sic],” referring to the existentialist philosophers Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV 2/9.02/120, “Aktennotiz: betr. Fetzers Flucht/Monolog für einen Taxifahrer von Kunert,” 20 February 1963.
20. This according to Kunert, who remembers this happening after the Party Congress. Kunert, *Erwachsenenspiele*, 256–257. In 1992, Gerhard Scheumann publicly apologized to Kunert for his role in the meeting. At Horst Sindermann’s request he had read the *Monolog* script (though not seen the film), and read up on Kierkegaard, Camus, Sartre, and Jaspers to find examples of ways in which they matched, then spoke against the film at the meeting. Scheumann recalled, “When I saw the film, a year and half ago [in 1990—HG], then I understood what a disservice (*Unfug*) I had perpetrated back then . . . I’d like to take this opportunity to apologize to Günter Kunert, in every way, for the events of thirty years ago.” Gerhard Scheumann, comments at “3. Workshop,” 147.


22. Ibid., 2.


26. Ulbricht is referring to the publication of Jean-Paul Sartre’s work on ideological coexistence, published in the GDR in *Sinn und Form*.


28. They could stake their reputations on this, he promised. Even world-renowned, modernist composer Dmitri Shostakovich had “stepped into the arena, in the service of entertainment,” composing an operetta for a popular audience.


30. Former culture minister Hans Bentzien claimed in 1992 that dividing the artists had been the goal of the SED. Bentzien comments, “3. Workshop,” in *Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit*, ed. Riedel, 147.


32. KSA, Fetzer, “[Erstinformation über] die Reaktion von Kulturschaffenden der DDR auf den VI. Parteitag der SED,” 23 March 1963, 11. Kunert quotes his Stasi file, which reported that informants “told him negative facts about people that Kunert criticized (Geerdts, Melcher).” Kunert *Erwachsenenspiele*, 258. Hans Jürgen Geerdts accused Kunert in the *Ostseezeitung* of “backwardness and confusion,” a lack of loyalty, of “feigned talentlessness,” and so on. Geerdts seemed particularly incensed that Kunert would allow his poetry to be published just days before the VI. Party Congress. Kunert felt so strongly about this incident that he reproduced the article seemingly in its entirety in his memoir, published in 1997. Kunert, *Erwachsenenspiele*, 246ff.


40. Lutz Haucke, Nouvelle Vague in Osteuropa? (Berlin: Rhombos, 2009), 564–566.
41. All quotes from SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV A 2/9.02/67, “Einschätzung der Arbeit des Deutschen Fernsehfunks,” 23 March 1963, 8. Perhaps surprisingly, the representational style of Fetzer’s Flight, Monologue, or even this Romanian film was not exceptional for DFF programming. A scholarly work describing the development of socialist film and television published in the GDR in 1979 noted that “(w)hat is remarkable is that in the majority of the television plays and television films in the first half of the 1960s the subjective narrative form is used.” Italics mine. Thurm cites several examples. Thurm, “Die erste Hälfte des Jahrzehnts,” in Film und Fernsehkunst, ed. Rülicke-Weiler, 208.
42. Position taken by Central Committee member responsible for Agitation, Albert Norden, reported by Stasi IM in 1966, cited in Staadt et al., Operation Fernsehen, 337.
44. Staadt et al., Operation Fernsehen, 337–338.
50. Both measures brought the DFF closer in line with the broadcasting principles of early West German television, which was mandated to include citizen advisers from relevant interest groups (except that in the case of the West Germans, most important were the religious groups). SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 IV A 2/9.02/67, [2. Deutscher Fernsehfunk, 1963].
51. That said, its popularity ebbed and flowed over the course of those decades. It was initially quite popular. Though it was never openly critical of the SED, by the 1970s it had become markedly docile. By the 1980s it focused increasingly narrowly on economic-political issues and lost the interest of the viewers. Susanne Pollert, “Wo Li-
cht ist, fällt auch Schatten: das zeitkritische Magazin ‘Prisma’ im Kontext der DDR-Fernsehgeschichte,” in Zwischen Service und Propaganda, ed. Helmut Heinze (Berlin: VISTAS, 1998), 50. During the Wende, the DFF produced Prisma live for the first time since the 1960s and, in an atmosphere of openness and greater criticism, rapidly regained viewer support; see Hoff in Hickethier, Geschichte, 507.

55. Ina Merkel, Wir sind doch nicht die Meckerecke der Nation! Briefe an das Fernsehen der DDR (Berlin: Schwartzkopf & Schwartzkopf, 2000), 34.
59. Viewers complained, for example, that the laundries took too long (sometimes three weeks passed before customers received their linens) or damaged the family linens. These complaints were answered, onscreen, by the responsible parties.
62. Of the topical shows, Prisma was the one that received the most viewer mail in early 1964. So, for example, Ruth T. from Halle wrote: “your show appeals more and more not only to my family, but I find that this opinion is confirmed among my work colleagues after every episode.” Fernsehzuschauer 3 (1964): 14.
66. Scheumann, Articles 8 and 9, “Prisma Testament” in Riedel, Mit uns zieht die neue Zeit . . . , 137.
67. Merkel, Meckerecke, 44.
68. Ibid.
69. This led to the Fernsehurteil of 1961 and the creation of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF). A similar, if earlier, situation in Britain led to the 1954 Television Act mandating the creation of Independent Television (ITV) in 1955.
71. Anthony Smith, cited in Brian McNair et al., eds., Mediated Access: Broadcasting and Democratic Participation in the Age of Media Politics (Luton: University of Luton Press, 2003), 26. On American television news, see Thomas Doherty, Cold War,


74. Haucke, “Träume,” 117 (see chap. 4 n.8).

75. Hoff, “Von ‘da lacht der Bär,’” 90.


82. Hoff, “Von ‘da lacht der Bär,’” 90.


91. In Hoff’s view after 1963 a certain “political wishful thinking” hampered the ability of the state leadership to undertake necessary reforms, both political and economic (296). Further, “with the Eleventh Plenum of 1965 began the ‘Aufbruch in die Illusion’ of Honecker’s politics, an illusion that burst [when faced with] reality in Fall, 1989.” Hoff in Hickethier, Geschichte, 302.


**CONCLUSION**

2. Leonie Naughton’s work typifies this narrative, which considers a few reports from the 1970s (usually presenting the most dire analysis of the situation) and then moves quickly to 1989.
9. BArch (DH), DM 3 BRF II/1824, Letter to Heinz Geggel [Deputy Chairman of the State Broadcasting Committee], [March 1958].
10. This also helps explain the dynamic second lease on life GDR programming enjoyed after 1990 in broadcasts especially from Middle German Television (MDR).
13. In this, television followed a trajectory similar to that of American blockbuster films: to pay for such expensive spectacles, the industry relies on foreign distribution sales, which means that such films are really made not for the domestic American audience but for a large transnational one: “They are oriented towards spectacle and hyperbolic special effects because these translate very well cross-culturally. No subtitles are required for a viewer in Thailand to enjoy the basic premise of Jurassic Park III, which is ‘run from the dinosaurs.’” Stephen Prince, “World Filmmaking and the Hollywood Blockbuster,” *World Literature Today* 77 (2003): 5.

14. See Boddy’s discussion of a similar trajectory in the United States, during which shifting economic practices undermined the supposed “golden age” of television. Boddy, *Fifties Television*.

15. Fensch, *So und noch besser*, 150.


18. See chap. 6.


22. See chapter 3, note 58.

23. And, as the reader likely has noted, I have deliberately not used the term “propaganda,” which has become so imprecise, especially in its usage to “describe” media in socialist societies, as to have no meaning. It has become a bludgeon to castigate non-liberal societies (democratic or otherwise), as if the “market mechanism” somehow allows a “free interchange of ideas.” There might be a case to be made that the term works when used in reference to, for example, wartime propaganda posters produced by the state to sway public opinion against the opposing force, but even that likely should be defined as advertising.

24. Adelheid von Saldern notes that, in the early occupation period, German radio personnel objected to Soviet authorities’ instructions to rely on folk music (*Volksmusik*), to help coalesce the nascent (East) German state. In their view, that was a Nazi method unsuitable to reconstructing the values of the German nation; they acquiesced anyway. See also chapter 6.
