

INTERVISION

SEARCHING FOR TRACES

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Abstract: Researching Intervision - the Eastern European organization for television program exchanges between 1960 and 1993 – relies on examining primary sources spread over several archives throughout Europe. It requires collecting structural and administrative data, doing interviews with contemporary witnesses and evaluating statistics on a topic that was formerly either focused on the nation or described from a Western perspective. This article makes an overview of the primary sources available for researching the history of program exchange in Eastern Europe during the Cold War and singles the archival challenges one is confronted with in this type of research.

Keywords: Intervision, Archival research, Primary sources, Eastern Europe

When one uses the German, English or Russian-language search engines on the Internet to search for the term Intervision — here referring to the Eastern European organisation primarily responsible for the exchange of television programs and information from 1960 to 1993 — one is confronted with rather meagre results that hardly rise above paltry, marginal descriptions of the organisation. Links to further sources or secondary information regarding the Intervision network and its umbrella organisation, the OIRT (Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision, also known as the International Radio and Television Organisation) are equally rare.

This paper is based on the archival work conducted for a research project that aims to examine the international exchange of television programs in Eastern Europe during the Cold War through the lens of the activities carried out by Intervision from its establishment in 1960 to its dissolution or rather its integration with Eurovision in 1993. In order to quantitatively and qualitatively review and/or reappraise the structural, functional and operational mechanisms of Intervision and the OIRT and their related international exchange of programs (primarily between the states of socialist Eastern Europe), it is necessary to undertake a search for primary sources, an act comparable to an archaeological endeavor.

This article sheds light on the preliminary steps undertaken within the above-mentioned research project and aims to provide an overview of available sources on the Intervision network. The questions this paper brings to the fore are: What are the archival difficulties one encounters when researching Intervision? What are the relevant sources available on this topic? What is the state of the art of the archive material available about Intervision?

1. Research Context

Analysing Intervision as a case study of intercultural communication and program exchange between the East and the West of Europe relies primarily on the critical investigation of primary sources spread between multiple archives in Europe. First, one needs to collect structural and administrative data available as well as statistical figures in order to have a quantitative overview of the program exchanges within this organization. In addition to this, interviews with experts and contemporary witnesses are necessary in order to further contextualize the factual data and open up new perspectives on the subject.

The current state of research on the topic of Intervision exhibits a discernible imbalance: on one hand, there has been scarce attention given to Intervision and, on the other, the better-researched Western European counterpart of Intervision - Eurovision and the EBU (European Broadcasting Union)¹ - was still regarded few years ago as insufficiently researched.

Although the Eurovision is mentioned in overviews of European history cursorily as an example of a successfully institutionalized cultural transfer, we know just a little about the technical, institutional, political and cultural contexts of its creation and development.²

By comparison, it can be safe to say that the OIRT and Intervision have been much less researched than its counterpart, the EBU. Although both of these umbrella organisations and their respective networks started cooperating at the beginning of the 1960s, studies so far only mention OIRT to the extent that is relevant to the founding of the EBU in 1950. Examining the primary sources available on the topic of Intervision and the OIRT, and the archival practices behind them, can be a first step towards resolving the scarcity of attention for this organization and can offer an incentive for exploring the broadcasting landscape of the socialist Eastern Europe.

In Eastern European media history in general, there has been an ongoing and lively debate about the transformations of the media landscape in Eastern Europe since the fall of the Iron Curtain. The research that has been carried out after 1990 has primarily addressed the upheavals in these media systems in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Such research has focused on individual countries (e.g. Russia/Soviet Union, Romania) or has addressed the changing media landscape of East Europe in general.³ Another direction of research has focused on different historical periods or on the evolution of cinematography in the context of the Cold War, without much attention for television-

¹ See for example: Wolfgang Degenhardt et.al., *Europäisches Fernsehen bis 1970. Eine Idee wird zum Laufen gebracht. Eine kleine Geschichte der Europäischen Rundfunkunion und der Eurovision*, Arbeitshefte Bildschirmmedien 61, 1996; Wolfgang Degenhardt and Elisabeth Strautz, *Auf der Suche nach dem europäischen Programm. Die Eurovision 1954-1970*, Nomos, 1999; Rüdiger Zeller, *Die EBU. Internationale Rundfunkkooperation im Wandel*, Nomos, 1999; Christian Henrich-Franke, 'Creating Transnationality Through an International Organisation?' In: *Media History* 16 (1), 2010, p. 67-81; Christian Henrich-Franke, 'Eurovision: Europäischer Fernsehprogrammaustausch in seinen Anfangsjahren', in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*, 2011, URL: http://www.europa.clio-online.de/site/lang_de/ItemID_501/mid_12210/40208773/Default.aspx. (Access on 25.04.2014)

² Andreas Fickers, 'Eventing Europe. Europäische Fernseh- und Mediengeschichte als Zeitgeschichte', In: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 49, 2009, p. 392-393.

³ See for example: Gerd Hallenberger and Michael Krzeminski, eds, *Osteuropa. Medienlandschaft im Umbruch. Berichte und Analysen aus neun Ländern. Tschechische Republik, Slowakische Republik, Slowenien, Albanien, Rumänien, Ukraine, Rußland, Estland, Lettland*, Vistas, 1994; Audivisuelles Eureka, ed, *Mittel- und Osteuropa: Audiovisuelle Landschaften und Sachlage beim Urheberrecht*, Nomos, 1994; Ljuba Trautmann, *Die Medien im russischen Transformationsprozess. Akteur oder Instrument der staatlichen Politik*, Peter Lang Publishing, 2002; Helena Srubar, *Ambivalenzen des Populären. Pan Tau und Co. Zwischen Ost und West*, UVK, 2008; Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV. The Culture of Communism After the 1968 Prague Spring*, Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 2010; Dana Mustata, *The Power of Television: Including the Historicizing of the Live Romanian Revolution*, Utrecht, 2011; Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2011; Heather Gumbert, *Envisioning Socialism. Television and the Cold War in the German Democratic Republic*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2014

related events and developments.⁴

The few studies that do analyze the international cooperation between the East and the West, and their corresponding networks, are by now outdated. They document what were then, at the time of writing, current processes, but do not account for subsequent caesura.⁵ Examining Intervision and its program exchanges with historical distance is necessary.

Recently there has been more focused interest in Intervision and program exchanges in Europe during the Cold War,⁶ as well as in the analysis of some of OIRT's and Intervision's areas of activity like the Eurovision and Intervision Song Contests (albeit, through the lens of national broadcasters, such as Finnish television, for instance⁷).

The archival work in this area of research remains a challenge nonetheless. The fact that historical documents on this topic have been archived by nations and media systems that ceased to exist or were revolutionized in the 1990s, the changing political alliances are all factors that tend to complicate the research of and access to the source materials.

2. Accessing Sources

Primary sources need to be evaluated, analyzed and interpreted. Moreover, making a critical overview of existing sources is central for historical research.⁸ The analysis of sources requires constructing a meta-text around them that allows deriving certain reasonings.⁹ This applies to all historical sources. They are "solely fragmented legacies calling for the contextualization and the visualisation of their 'modulations.'" For sources provide their informational value to historians' matters and historical significance not per se, but upon request."¹⁰

Limited accessibility to source material is often inherent to historical research. This is the result of several factors.¹¹ Access to producing an inventory of archival data may depend on pragmatic issues such as the opening times of an

⁴ See for example: Lyn Gorman and David Mclean, *Cold War and Communication in Media and Society in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Introduction*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009; Thomas Heimann, 'Television in Zeiten des Kalten Krieges. Zum Programmaustausch des DDR-Fernsehens in den 60er Jahren' in: Thomas Lindenberger, ed, *Massenmedien im Kalten Krieg. Akteure, Bilder, Resonanzen*, Böhlau, 2007, p. 235-262; James Schwoch, *Global TV. New Media and the Cold War, 1946-69*, University of Illinois Press, 2009; Thomas Lindenberger, 'Looking West: The Cold War and the Making of Two German Cinemas', in Karl C. Führer and Corey Ross, eds, *Screening the Media: Mass Media and Society in 20th Century Germany*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 113-128; Lars Karl, ed, *Leinwand zwischen Tauwetter und Frost. Der osteuropäische Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm im Kalten Krieg*, Metropol, 2007.

⁵ See for example: George A. Codding, *Broadcasting Without Barriers*, UNESCO, 1959; Burton Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting on the European Continent*, University of Minnesota Press, 1967; Burton Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, University of Minnesota Press, 1974; Nordenstreng Kaarle and Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic, a One Way Street? A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television Programs Material*, Unesco Reports and Papers on Mass Communication 70, UNESCO, 1974 ; Tapio Varis, *Television News in Eurovision and Intervision*, University of Tampere Press, 1975; Tapio Varis, *International Flow of Television Programs*, University of Tampere Press, 1985; Ernest Eugster, *Television Programming Across National Boundaries: The EBU and OIRT Experience*, Artech House Inc, 1983; Jörg Becker and Tamás Szecskö, *Europe speaks to Europe. International Information Flows between Eastern and Western Europe*, Pergamon Press, 1989.

⁶ See for example: Christian Henrich-Franke and Regina Immel, 'Making Holes into the Iron Curtain? – The Television Program Exchange across the Iron Curtain in the 1960s and 1970s', p. 183-220 and Mari Pajala, 'Finland: Building bridges or fostering divisions? Finnish television at the Eurovision and Intervision song contests' p. 221-246, in Alex Badenoch, Andreas Fickers and Christian Henrich-Franke, eds, *Airy Curtains in the European Ether: Broadcasting and the Cold War*, Nomos, 2013; Lars Lundgren, 'Live From Moscow: the Celebration of Yuri Gagarin and Transnational Television in Europe', in *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 2012, 1 (2), p. 45–55; Katalin Miklóssy, 'Competing for Popularity: Song Contests and Interactive Television in Communist Hungary', in Catalin Miklóssy and Melanie Ilic: *Competition in Socialist Society*, C.H. Beck, 2014.

⁷ Mari Pajala, 'Finland: Building bridges or fostering divisions? Finnish television at the Eurovision and Intervision song contests', p. 221-246, in Alex Badenoch, Andreas Fickers and Christian Henrich-Franke, eds, *Airy Curtains in the European Ether: Broadcasting and the Cold War*, Nomos, 2013.

⁸ Pascal Cziborra, *Frauen im KZ. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der historischen Forschung am Beispiel des KZ Flossenbürg und seiner Außenlager*, Lorbeer, 2010, p. 244.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Alun Munslow quoted in Nic Leonhardt, *Pictorial dramaturgy: Visual culture and theatre in the 19th Century (1869-1899)*, Transcript, 2007, p. 39.

¹¹ Cziborra, 2010, p. 247.

archive, rules of access to the database or relying on the willingness of archivists. In comparative or transnational historical research, language can become a barrier. For instance, the official documents of OIRT and Intervision and their *Radio & Television* magazine were written in English, German, Russian - and partly, especially in the early days - in French. To overcome this, resorting to external translators may be necessary, which requires extra time and finances.

The research project that this paper is based on focuses on the activities of Intervision in general, without any emphasis on a specific Intervision member or on any specific bilateral cooperation. The research project is based in Potsdam, Germany, which made access to the local archives containing GDR-related material easier. Being a Russian native speaker and working on this project, allowed me to consult the Intervision documents and other source material in this language. My fluency in Russian also helped me avoid the language barrier when interviewing contemporary witnesses, such as former employees of Russian television and Intervision, which was essential to the whole oral-history approach.

My long journey through the sources began at the School for Film and Television 'Konrad Wolf,' located in Potsdam-Babelsberg Media City. The school library holds most editions of *Radio and Television* and the *EBU Review*, as well as the Russian magazine *Television and Radio Broadcasting*.

My archival research continued then at the German Broadcasting Archive in Potsdam and the Federal Archive in Berlin. Both these archives have an extensive inventory of documents on GDR television as well as the State Committee for Television and Radio of the GDR.

Due to the merger of EBU and OIRT in 1992, the EBU archive partly took over the OIRT archival legacy, which is why my archival research continued at the EBU archive in Geneva. We expected a part of the historical documents of OIRT and Intervision to be preserved in the former headquarters of the two organizations, namely at the archive of Czech Television in Prague. Archival research conducted in these countries was complemented throughout the work process with data gathered from relevant technical libraries in Germany.

Nowadays the work of historians is influenced more and more by changes in the digital age.¹² "Digital born" source materials and the implications they come with, need to be considered.¹³ These are sources that emerge and spread via digital networks and can be reproduced daily, for example, via platforms like YouTube and Twitter. The Internet itself is a "digital born" source.¹⁴

Within the context of this research project, it was particularly difficult to rely on "digital born" source materials on the Russian Internet. As mentioned in the beginning, hardly any information on OIRT/Intervision can be found there. Doing a broader and more indirect search, several search results could be retrieved, for example interviews with artists and media professionals, few relevant Internet platforms and blogs. However, the retrieved texts and videos lacked any metadata about the author, the publication date and place, or links to any reference sources. The missing metadata made it hard to attest the historical relevance of these sources.¹⁵

There was one webpage (in Russian), however, of a virtual museum for television and broadcasting, which was of value for our research: www.tvmuseum.ru. It was founded in 2001 with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and several archives – namely the State Archive of the Russian Federation – and presented itself as a mixture between a virtual museum, a library and a rudimentary online archive. In its portfolio, there was an extensive collection of photos from private people such as former film, television and radio employees. A lot of articles and interviews were published exclusively for this platform or were endorsed by the authors' or publishers' permission, something unfortunately uncommon in Russia.

¹² See for example: Andreas Fickers, 'Der ultimative Klick? Digital Humanities, Online-Archive und die Arbeit des Historikers im digitalen Zeitalter', in *Forum für Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur*, Nr. 337 (February 2014), p. 27.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

After the corpus of sources has been selected, a careful evaluation and analysis required that the specifics of each type of source be taken into consideration and accounted for.

3. The Corpus of Sources

In the project, the following corpus of sources was singled out as relevant for researching Intervision and the OIRT:

- Archive documents of GDR television as well as documents of the party apparatus, such as the Department of Agitation and Culture, State Departments of Ministers, competent ministries (Culture, Post and Telecommunications, Foreign Affairs) and the State Radio/TV Committee. Source material on the GDR television included documents of the Department of International Relations and the Department for Program Exchange and Film as well as documentation on the broadcasting management.
- Press reports. The analysis of primary sources was supported by relevant articles in the GDR press, including publications such as the *Fernsehdienst*, *Funk und Fernsehen in der DDR (FF)* and the *Neue Deutsche Presse*.
- Interviews with experts and contemporary witnesses.
- OIRT and EBU publications.

For the remaining of this article, I will focus in more detail on the last two types of primary sources, namely the OIRT and EBU publications and the interviews with experts and contemporary witnesses.

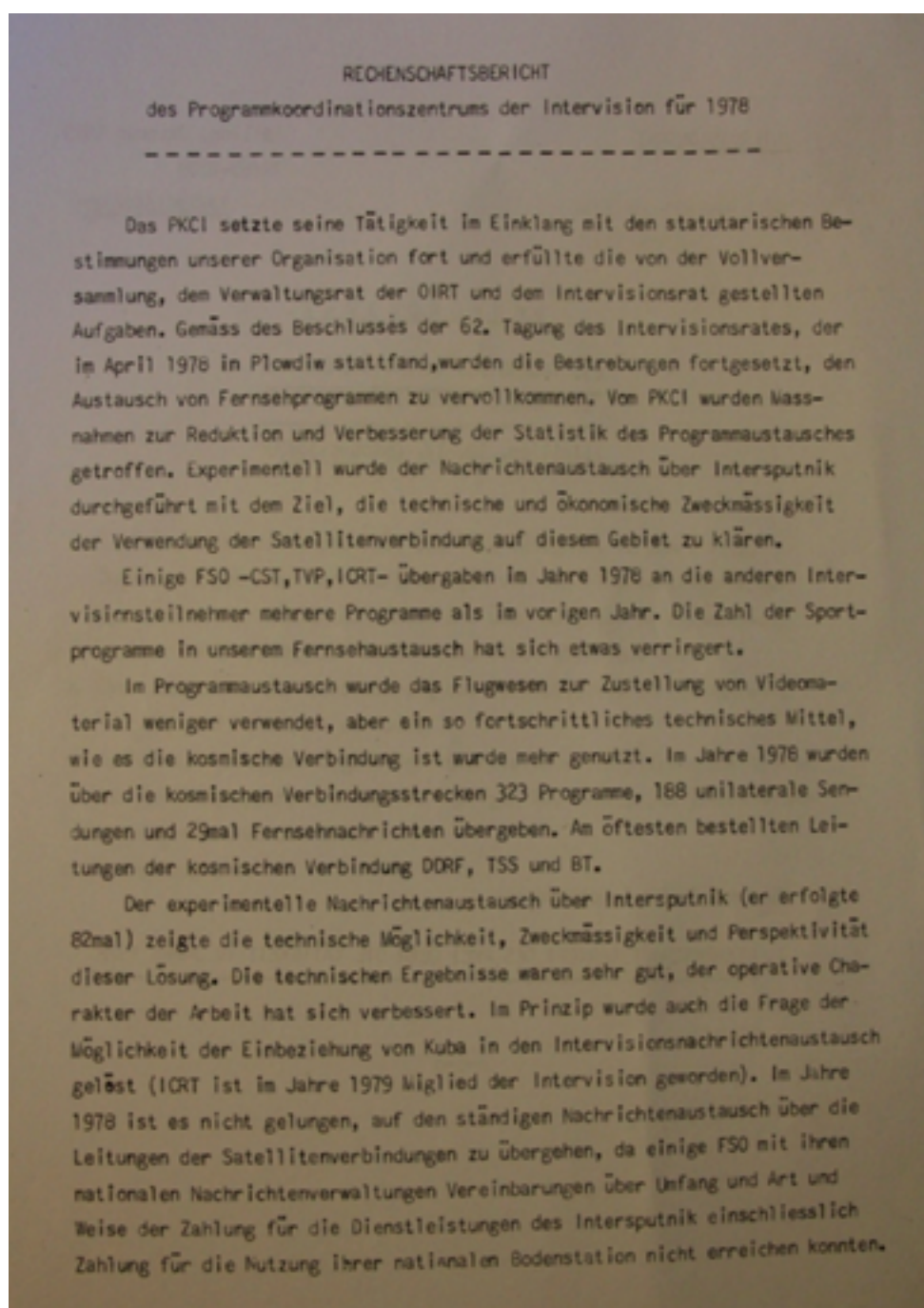
4. An Overview of OIRT and EBU Publications

Among the relevant OIRT publications there are the OIRT anthologies containing reports on its governing bodies, such as documents about the sessions of the General Assembly (which occurred every two years) and the meetings of the Board of Directors. They also contain documents on the Intervision Council, the executive organs of Intervision, the Television Program Commission, and the Technical, Legal and Economic Commission, documents dating until 1992. Besides these, there was also extensive internal, written material including protocols, resolutions, concepts, correspondence and plans spanning for over thirty years.

Important are also the OIRT periodicals, published under the names *OIRT Information* until 1986, *Radio & Television* until 1990, and EBU's *EBU Review*, Part B published until 1990. The latter two series of publications include contributions on organisational development, program highlights, technology-related documentation, reports on various international events where both organizations participated as well as statistics of program exchanges. Last but not least, there is also the Russian-language journal *Телевидение и радиовещание* ('Television and Radio Broadcasting'), which was published until 1990 by the USSR State Committee of Ministers for Radio and Television. Intervision's highest-ranking governing body was the Intervision Council, which met twice a year, in spring and autumn. The Intervision Council comprised of two major organizations, which were responsible for coordinating program preparations and all the technical, financial and legal issues relating to television broadcasting. These two constituent organizations were the Technical Coordination Centre (TKCI) and the Program Coordination Centre (PKCI), both based in Prague. The spring meetings of the Intervision Council hosted the sessions of the Television Program Commission of the OIRT (from May 1971), which dealt directly with activity assessments as well as with general Intervision issues. The documents of both of these constituent organizations represent a valuable

primary source. Worth mentioning in this respect are the periodical reports of the Program Coordinating Centre of Intervision and the reports on Intervision's activity results.

Below are samples of some of these documents:



This is an account statement of the Program Coordination Center of Intervision for the year 1978, reporting on the satisfactory experiences with 'Intersputnik' and the experimental news exchanges. Work reports of various experts provide qualitative insights into program exchanges.

SAMMELBAND DER DOKUMENTE

der 70. Tagung des Intervisionsrats
/Bukarest, 2.-4. September 1986/

Punkt der Tagesordnung	I n h a l t	Dokument Nr.
	Teilnehmerliste	IR-70/1/86
	Tagesordnung	IR-70/2/86
Punkt 3	Rechenschaftsbericht über die Tätigkeit des PKCI 1985-1986	IR-70/3/86
	Statistik des Aktualitätenaustausches	
	Statistik des Programmaustausches	
Punkt 4	Erhöhung des Programmaustausches	IR-70/4/86
Punkt 5	Gemeinsamer Vorschlag des CST und des DDR-F zur Nutzung der Rechentechnik	IR-70/5/86
	Dokument von DDR-F und CST	IR-70/6/86
	Projekt "Satellit" vom TKCI Dok. TKCI 05/86	IR-70/7/86
	Informationssystem der OIRT /Vorschlag des TKCI/	IR-70/8/86
Punkt 6	Information über die Tätigkeit der Inter- visionsarbeitsgruppen	IR-70/9/86
	A/ Rechenschaftsberichte der Vorsitzen- den der Arbeitsgruppen:	IR-70/10/86
	für Aktualitätenaustausch	IR-70/11/86
	für Sport	IR-70/12/86
	für Bildungsprogramme	IR-70/13/86
	für literarisch-dramatische Programme	IR-70/14/86
	für Musik	IR-70/15/86
	für Gesundheits- und Umweltschutz	IR-70/16/86
	für Programmplanung und -austausch ...	siehe P. 4
	B/ Billigung der Protokolle der Arbeits- gruppen:	IR-70/17/86
	für literarisch-dramatische Programme, Plowdiw 1985	IR-70/18/86
	für Bildungsprogramme, Helsinki 1985 .	IR-70/19/86
	für Programmplanung und -austausch, Moskau 1985	IR-70/20/86
	für Sportprogramme, Warschau 1986	IR-70/21/86
	für Musikprogramme, Budapest 1986	IR-70/22/86
	für Aktualitätenaustausch, Piestany 1986	IR-70/23/86
	für Bildungsprogramme, Weimar 1986 ...	IR-70/24/86

- 2 -		
	Büro der AG für literarisch-dramatische Programme, Prag 1986	IR-70/25/86
	Büro der AG für Sportprogramme, Moskau 1986	IR-70/26/86
	Büro der AG für Kinder- und Jugendprogramme, Budapest 1986	IR-70/27/86
	Büro der AG für Programmplanung und -austausch, Prag 1986	IR-70/28/86
	C/ Billigung der Vorsitzenden und Büromitglieder der Arbeitsgruppen	IR-70/29/86
Punkt 7	Programm- und technische Aspekte eines perspektivischen internationalen Fernsehprogramms	IR-70/30/86
Punkt 8	Informationen der Leiter der OIRT-Operativgruppen für die Berichterstattung von der Fussball-WM in Mexiko und von den Spielen des guten Willens in Moskau	IR-70/31/86
Punkt 9	Plan der Tagungen und Beratungen 1987 ...	IR-70/32/86
Punkt 10	Verschiedenes:	IR-70/33/86
	1. Information über den Wettbewerb "Goldene Antenne /BT/ - siehe Beschluss zu Punkt 10	-
	2. Vorschlag des CST zur Schaffung des Grossen Preises der OIRT auf dem Wettbewerb "Intertalent"	IR-70/34/86
	3. Mitteilung über die Durchführung der internationalen Vorführung von Schulprogrammen in Eger, VR Ungarn	IR-70/35/86
	4. Bestätigung des Planes der OIRT-Zeitschrift	IR-70/36/86
	5. Plan der Wettbewerbe um den Intervisionspokal in der rhythmischen Sportgymnastik	IR-70/37/86
	6. Informations des Intersputnik-Vertreters	IR-70/38/86
	7. Billigung des Entwurfes der Aktualitätenaustausch-Regeln	

BESCHLÜSSE DER 70. TAGUNG DES INTERVISIONSRATES		
zu Punkt 1 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/39/86
zu Punkt 2 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/40/86
zu Punkt 3 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/41/86
zu Punkt 4 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/42/86
zu Punkt 5 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/43/86
zu Punkt 6 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/44/86
zu Punkt 7 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/45/86
zu Punkt 8 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/46/86
zu Punkt 9 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/47/86
zu Punkt 10 der Tagesordnung		IR-70/48/86

Table of contents of the omnibus of documents of the 70th Session of Intervision Council in Bucharest, September 2nd-4th, 1986.

This type of sources provides an insight into internal documents and document anthologies that are not intended for the public and which capture the work processes behind Intervision's operations. The body of information is very large and diverse and offers an internal – albeit official – perspective on Intervision and the OIRT. These sources can be supplemented with further documents dealing with national interests and potential conflicts, in the case of our project, documents on the International Relations and the Program Exchange and Film Department of GDR television. When analyzing these sources, a critical distance is necessary in order to account for the political context in which these documents have been produced.

The OIRT was also in charge of two international publications that covered developments in radio and television broadcasting in Eastern Europe, as well as in countries outside the socialist bloc, namely the *OIRT Information* (1960-1985) and the magazine *Radio and Television* (1960-1990).

Radio and Television was a magazine mainly addressed at a professional audience and was launched in 1960. It was a successor to the information bulletins of the OIR (Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion) published since the late 1940s: *La Radio dans le Monde: Bulletin de Documentation et d'Information / OIR. Radio and Television* was published in three languages (English, German and Russian), it has the declared function to be a “major press organ,”¹⁶ and contribute to the “spread of the idea of peaceful cooperation among nations,” “which is reflected in the radio and television organisations of the member countries of the OIRT.”¹⁷ The magazine was received – according to its own information– in the USSR, but also in Great Britain, Japan, Austria, the USA, Switzerland and the FRG.¹⁸ The editors of the magazine were based in Prague and were only a few of them (four in 1979).¹⁹ Authors were selected on a rotating basis from the employees of radio and television organizations within the OIRT. Each issue was divided into two sections: radio and television broadcasts and sound and television broadcasting techniques. Each issue contained three types of material: “[t]heoretical and information articles in the field of television program creation, articles on the activities of broadcasting organisations and material devoted to the experience and prospects of television and radio technology development”.²⁰

The focus of this magazine was also to cover various cultural events such as the Television Festival ‘The Golden Prague’ in Prague, Czechoslovakia, ‘Prix Danube - International Festival of TV Programs for Children and Youth’ in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia and ‘Man and the Sea’ in Riga, Latvia. The reports on these events proved relevant for our research project, as these provided insights into Intervision's involvement not only with program exchanges, but also with the cultural life of its members.

This magazine allows for an in-depth historical insight into the Intervision programming, which favoured prearranged ‘general topics’ on socialist screens, such as: broadcasts and television films of an anti-fascist nature, programs eulogizing the achievements of the labour movement, programs on international understanding or commemorations of the Great Socialist Revolution.

Despite their ideological slogans and self-praise, the reports on the OIRT and Intervision management are still of interest in this magazine.

Given that this publication was deemed to be the “main press organ,” assessing the visibility of *Radio and Television* beyond its targeted professional audience seems a futile endeavour today. Nevertheless, the discourses within this circle of radio and television specialists are useful for revealing the political currents on the OIRT's agenda. It is not surprising that the political turning points in Eastern Europe, such as the *Prague Spring* or the *Solidarnosc* movement, were barely addressed in this publication.

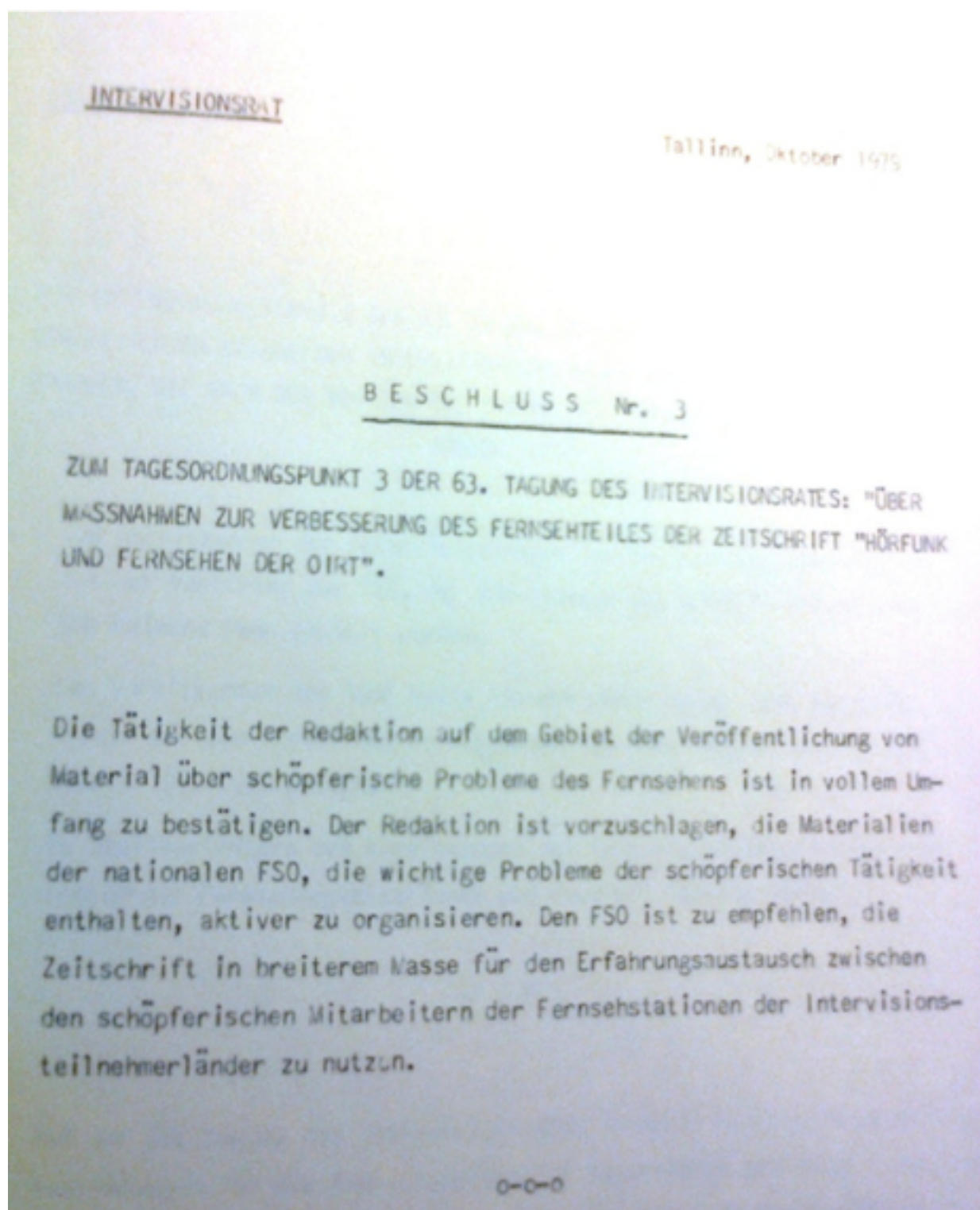
¹⁶ On measures to improve the content of the television part of the magazine “Radio and Television of the OIRT”, in *Compendium of documents of the 63th Meeting of the Intervision Council* (Tallinn, 10-12 October 1979), German Broadcasting Archive Potsdam-Babelsberg, SGFS-Intern. Verb. 07-folder 240, p. 1-5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.



This is a document entitled 'Resolution No. 3 for agenda item 3 of 63. Session of Intervision Council: About measures for the improvement of the television section in the magazine Radio and Television.' In this document, it is recommended that television organizations make a better use of the magazine for the exchange of creative views.

5. Interviews with Experts and Contemporary Witnesses

Oral history interviews with former employees of OIRT and Intervision, as well as with former employees of related television organisations (especially in the GDR) were useful to further contextualize the factual information collected from archival sources. The challenge in this case was to locate and identify these employees and many of those identified turned out to be either deceased or at advanced age.

Generally speaking, such interviews revealed rather personal opinions, insider's knowledge, anecdotes and at times contextual information.

The interviews we've done so far have shown that the interviewees have a patchy memory, which made it necessary for us to have several interviewing sessions with them so as to be able to gradually reconstruct their stories. In this case, "memory loss"²¹ comes as no surprise and this needs to be taken into account in the subsequent reconstruction of meaning.²²

While the Internet portal www.tvmuseum.ru provides further personal testimonies and memoirs of television professionals of the Soviet Union, these stories carry the same stigma of "memory loss."

However, the usefulness of these complementary oral history sources should not be ruled out completely. Even if they contain "anecdotal appetizers," "excessive and embellished self-representations" and "factual inadequacies,"²³ these should not obscure the potential added value of such sources. Personal accounts are seldom part of official documents and they can bring new perspectives on the research being carried out.

6. Conclusion

Logistic and linguistic challenges are part of researching Intervision. Sources are spread across various locations, each with their own rules of access and archiving systems. Most of the documents on Intervision are housed in archives where public access is not regulated, making it necessary to rely on individual contacts.

Despite these challenges, we have compiled an extensive corpus of sources, which allowed us to explore the emergence and the development of the Intervision network. Different sources needed to be used complementary to one another, so as to gain multiple perspectives on the issues at stake and compensate for missing information in individual sources. In oral history interviews, for instance, it is rare for specifically requested information to be recalled and rendered useful.²⁴ When it comes to "digital born" sources, Andreas Fickers notes that the "distant reading" of sources available online must still be subject to a "close reading," which enables a scientifically accurate criticism of the source.²⁵

The interpretations assigned to an individual source always depend on the questions being asked and the interests of the research being carried out because "strictly speaking, a source can never tell us what we ought to say." However,

²¹ Uwe Breitenborn, *Wie lachte der Bär? Systematik, Funktionalität und thematische Segmentierung von unterhaltenden nonfiktionalen Programmformen im Deutschen Fernsehfunk bis 1969*, Weißensee, 2003, p. 26.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For the difficulties of interviews see Jonathan Sterne, 'Rearranging the Files On Interpretation in Media History', in *The Communication Review*, 13:1, 2010, p. 75–87.

²⁵ Andreas Fickers, 'Der ultimative Klick? Digital Humanities, Online-Archive und die Arbeit des Historikers im digitalen Zeitalter', in *Forum für Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur*, Nr. 337 (February 2014), p. 26.

it may prevent us from “issuing statements that we should not be.”²⁶ Our aim through the archival journey was to try and look inside the “black box” of these organisations, “to try to find documents that will unveil the decision-making process” within OIRT/Intervision.²⁷

Biography

Yulia Yurtaeva studied History, Film and Media in Berlin and Potsdam. She works as a research fellow at the Film School HFF Konrad Wolf in Potsdam, Faculty of Media Studies and is currently doing her PhD on the Intervision network and its activities during the Cold War.

²⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Standortbindung und Zeitlichkeit. Ein Beitrag zur historiographischen Erschließung der geschichtlichen Welt’, *ibid.* and Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jörn Rüsen, eds, *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit, Theorie der Geschichte. Beiträge zur Historik*, Vol. 1, p. 45f.

²⁷ John Nerone, ‘Genres of Journalism History’, in *The Communication Review*, 13:1, 15-26, 2010, p. 18.