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# TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BBC AND THE WDR (1960-1969)

## THE CENTRAL ROLES OF HUGH GREENE AND KLAUS VON BISMARCK

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**Abstract:** This paper addresses the relationship between the BBC Director-General Hugh Carleton Greene and the director of the West German Broadcasting Corporation (WDR) Klaus von Bismarck between 1960 and 1969. The thrust of the article is to point out the great potential of evaluating interpersonal relationships and their contribution to European perspectives on television history. The research is situated within transnational television historiography and it argues that the relationship between the two key personalities is manifested in multiple interdependencies, exchanges, visits and correspondences that exemplify the long-term British impact on the German broadcasting system as well as the bilateral cordial relations between the BBC and the WDR.

**Keywords:** BBC, WDR, Hugh Carleton Greene, Klaus von Bismarck, transnational television history

### 1 Interpersonal Relationships and Transnational Television History

In many cases transnational actors and personalities played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of television. Some recent studies, embedding the micro level as a spatial variant of analysis into broader contexts, have, for example, proved this by referring to examples from Britain, the USA, Canada and the Netherlands. With regard to Britain, Collins (2012) elaborates on John Reith's journey to five Commonwealth countries in 1945, arguing that it epitomizes Britain's attempt to hold back the decline of the Empire, which was brought about by the rise of global telecommunication.<sup>1</sup> Hilmes' work (2012) focuses on the central role of individuals for transnational television exchanges between Britain, the USA and Canada during the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> Similar actor-centred approaches are followed by de Leeuw (2012), whose study focuses solely on the Dutch case in the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, and Potschka, who compares the impact of two key personalities in the marketization of British and German

<sup>1</sup> Richard Collins, 'The Reith Mission: Global Telecommunications and the Decline of the British Empire', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 32, 2, 2012, pp. 167-185.

<sup>2</sup> Michele Hilmes, 'The "North Atlantic Triangle": Britain, the USA and Canada in 1950s Television', in: Andreas Fickers and Catherine Johnson, eds, *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 67-88.

communication sectors from the 1970s onwards.<sup>3</sup>

Also this article focuses on Britain and Germany, the two countries with the strongest tradition of public service broadcasting in Europe. Applying an actor-centred perspective, the paper addresses the British-German relationship between Hugh Carleton Greene and Klaus von Bismarck. Greene had been the Chief Controller of the North West German Broadcasting Service (NWDR) (1946-1948) and, as such, the key personality in implementing the British notion of freedom from state interference into the post-war German broadcasting ecology. At a later stage, during the peak of his career in broadcasting, Greene served as BBC Director-General (1960-1969) and Vice-President of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) (1965-1968).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, von Bismarck had been director of the West German Broadcasting Corporation (WDR) (1961-1976), the larger of the two broadcasting organizations that emerged from the NWDR after it ceased to exist, in 1955.<sup>5</sup> Von Bismarck was also Chairman of the Consortium of Public-Law Broadcasting Institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany (ARD) (1963-1964).

The actor-centred approach used in this article is situated within the emerging body of transnational television history, the recent turn in television historiography. One strand of research in television historiography, followed, for example, by Chalaby (2009, 2005), relates transnationality with the period from the 1980s onwards, when issues of Europeanization and globalization, brought about by the end of spectrum scarcity and the emergence of commercial broadcasting operators, came to the fore.<sup>6</sup> Other authors, as mentioned in Fickers' and Johnson's edited volume *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach* (2012) follow a different approach, arguing that television had already become a transnational medium in its formative years.<sup>7</sup> In this respect, they offer alternative perspectives on the transnational circulation of television, retracing respective paths of transnationalization and places from where these processes originated.

While the argument brought forward in this article links up to the underlying assumptions in Fickers and Johnson's *Transnational Television History*, the method used here is distinctive from previous research. I will investigate the transnational ties between Greene and von Bismarck on the one hand, and between the BBC and WDR, on the other, by focusing on three layers of comparison: the media system layer, the broadcasting organization layer and the layer of interpersonal relations. I argue that the relations between the two central actors have had an impact on the BBC and the WDR and fostered cordial relations between the two broadcasters, which led to closer coordination and cooperation in programme exchange. To start with, however, in the following section I briefly introduce the sources used in this research.

## 2 Archival Sources

According to Paddy Scannell, "histories are as good as the archives on which they depend".<sup>8</sup> Two sources of archival data proved vital for this research: first, written records of the Historical Archive of the WDR (hereafter WDR HA) and, second, files of the BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter BBC WAC).<sup>9</sup> None of these files were available in

<sup>3</sup> Sonja de Leeuw, 'Transnationality in Dutch (Pre) Television: The Central Role of Erik de Vries', in: Andreas Fickers and Catherine Johnson, eds, *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 49-66; Christian Potschka, 'Broadcasting and Market-Driven Politics in the UK and Germany: The Peacock Committee in Comparative Perspective', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, forthcoming.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Brack, *The Evolution of the EBU through its Statutes from 1950 to 1976*, European Broadcasting Union, 1976, p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> In the following I use the term director for *Intendant*.

<sup>6</sup> Jean K. Chalaby, *Transnational Television in Europe: Reconfiguring Global Communications Networks*, I.B. Tauris, 2009; Jean K. Chalaby, 'From Internationalization to Transnationalization', *Global Media and Communication*, 1, 1, 2005, pp. 28-33.

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Fickers and Catherine Johnson, eds, *Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach*, Routledge, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Paddy Scannell, 'History, Media and Communication', in: Klaus Bruhn Jensen, ed., *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies*, Routledge, 2nd edition, 2012, pp. 219-234, here p. 229.

<sup>9</sup> see Birgit Bernard and Ulrike Nüchel, 'Das Historische Archiv des Westdeutschen Rundfunks Köln', *Rundfunk und Geschichte*, 24, 1, 1998, pp. 70-76; Jacqueline Kavanagh, 'The BBC Written Archives', *Records Management Journal*, 14, 2, 2004, pp. 78-84.

digitized format and accessible online.<sup>10</sup> This does not come as a surprise. In neither of the two archives consulted are files routinely digitized due to issues of cost, scale and copyright. Furthermore, with regard to the WDR HA, as one of its archivists mentioned, the overwhelming majority of academic requests target audiovisual material, relegating the processing of written files to the fringe.<sup>11</sup> A considerable percentage of Klaus von Bismarck's files – a key source for this research – has, accordingly, yet to be processed and catalogued and, without the help of one knowledgeable archivist, it would have been an extremely difficult and laborious venture to find relevant documents in the vast collection held in Cologne.

With regard to sources on the BBC, the research draws on a file from the BBC WAC (R78/3020/1) that includes correspondence between BBC and WDR personnel at management level between 1966 and 1977. There is also some material from the German Broadcasting Archive (hereafter DRA) included, relating to Greene's position as NWDR Chief Controller. Apart from that, the research is based on secondary sources dealing with transnational television history, the history of the BBC, the WDR and the EBU, as well as literature relating to the two central actors, including (auto)biographical material.

### 3 The Greene Mission in Germany

One of the most striking commonalities Britain and Germany share lies in the ideal of a public-service-driven broadcasting system independent of state interference.<sup>12</sup> In Britain, the origins of this distinctive feature date back to 1926, when the status of the BBC was changed from a company to a licence-fee-funded public corporation whose duties should correspond with those of a public service. On the other hand, in Germany the state monopoly relating to wireless telegraphy applied from 1892 onwards and until 1945 German broadcasting developed much more closely along governmental lines.

After World War II the German broadcasting system was remodelled by the four Allies within their respective occupation zones, according to their domestic role models. One of the most important roles in this regard fell to Hugh Greene. Between 1933 and 1939 Greene had worked as a foreign correspondent for the *Daily Herald*, *New Statesman* and *Daily Telegraph* in Munich and Berlin before becoming Head of the BBC Department for Germany, which brought him to study the National Socialist's propaganda.<sup>13</sup> During this time Greene kept close contacts with Hans Bredow, "the father – the Reith – of German broadcasting", who made him well familiar with German politics, the media system and the country's culture.<sup>14</sup> Greene was expelled during World War II and returned to Germany in 1946 when he was appointed as Chief Controller of the NWDR, the broadcasting organization operating in the British occupation zone.

In his role as Chief Controller, Greene tried to keep politics out of broadcasting and aspired to the broadcast media

<sup>10</sup> For the distinction between digitized material and digital content see Pelle Snickers, 'If Content is King, Context is its Crown', *Journal of European Television History and Culture*, 1, 1, 2010, pp. 34-39.

<sup>11</sup> This imbalance also seems to apply to the EUScreen database. At the time of writing (15 October 2012) there were 35.783 videos online on the project website, compared with merely 525 text files. Explore EUScreen, 15 October 2012, <http://www.euscreen.eu/search.html?q=&sort=newest>.

<sup>12</sup> For more detail with regard to similarities and differences between Britain and Germany see Christian Potschka, *Towards a Market in Broadcasting: Communications Policy in the UK and Germany*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 28-31; Frank Bösch and Dominik Geppert, 'Journalists as Political Actors: Introduction', in: Frank Bösch and Dominik Geppert, eds, *Journalists as Political Actor: Transfers and Interactions between Britain and Germany since the late 19th Century*, Wißner-Verlag, 2008, pp. 7-15, here p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremy Lewis, *Shades of Greene: One Generation of an English Family*, Jonathan Cape, 2010, pp. 298-316; Arnulf Kutsch, 'Unter britischer Kontrolle', in: Wolfram Köhler, ed., *Der NDR: Zwischen Programm und Politik*, Schlütersche Verlagsanstalt, 1991, pp. 83-148, here p. 119; DRA A06, 1-325, Hugh Greene, lecture of 16 April 1947, 'Antwort auf die kritischen Stellungnahmen der Parteien zum NWDR-Programm'.

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Greene, *The Third Floor Front: A View of Broadcasting in the Sixties*, Bodley Head, 1969, p. 51.

serving citizenship duties and fostering democratic processes.<sup>15</sup> Following these ideals, Greene gave the NWDR a legal status using the BBC as role model. This was evident when, on 1 January 1948, the NWDR became subject to public law and adapted the ‘public corporation’ (*Anstalt des öffentlichen Rechts*) as its form of organization. The NWDR, thus, exhibited a public service orientation with a broadcasting set-up independent of direct governmental control. However, as we will see in the next section, following on from regime legacies, the latter concern was thwarted by the inherent German tradition of ‘politics in broadcasting’.

## 4 Politicization

Greene famously described his role in Germany with the words: “I am here to make myself superfluous”.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, on 15 November 1948, he turned over the NWDR directorship to the Social Democrat politician Adolf Grimme. Subsequently, German broadcasting relieved itself of some of the concepts followed by the Allies. In 1955, when the Federal Republic of Germany became a fully sovereign state, WDR and North German Broadcasting Corporation (NDR) emerged from the NWDR.<sup>17</sup> One driver for these changes in the broadcasting structure, away from the centralized broadcasting organization in the British zone, was the federal German characteristic of state formation. Since 1946 North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous German *Land* which contributed more than half of the NWDR licence-fee revenues, had called for its own broadcasting station because it felt unfairly treated by the NWDR’s Hamburg-centric set-up. Apart from that, there were historical differences in culture, economic power, religion and mentality between the Rhine-Ruhr area, with its largest city Cologne, and the Hamburg region.<sup>18</sup>

The emergence of two independent, *Länder*-based broadcasting organizations in the British occupation zone marked the origins of proportional representation (*Proporz*). Proportional representation means that the members of the Broadcasting Councils of the WDR and the NDR were elected by the respective *Länder* Governments. The Councils, thus, continuously reflected the political constitution of the *Länder* parliaments concerned. Only six months after the Britons transferred full responsibility for the NWDR to the Germans, each and every consideration and appointment was determined by politics. With hindsight, Green critically reflects on this:

Perhaps I was too ambitious. Perhaps I underestimated the difference between German and British political traditions ... Certainly things have changed. The original statutes [inhibiting the radical politicization of the NWDR] have been replaced. NWDR as such no longer exists. But I ... think that in a wider sense my two years in Germany were not a complete failure, and that I did something to establish a tradition of independent broadcasting which still lives on.<sup>19</sup>

As we will see in the next section, the British tradition of broadcasting independence indeed continued to have an effect in Germany. One prominent representative in this regard was Klaus von Bismarck.

<sup>15</sup> Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume V: Competition*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 324; Kutsch, (op cit.), pp. 116-119; Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: A Biography of Sir Hugh Greene*, Bodley Head, 1983, pp. 95-116; Michael Tracey, *Das unerreichte Wunschbild: Ein Versuch über Hugh Greene und die Neugründung des Rundfunks in Westdeutschland nach 1945*, Kohlhammer-Grote, 1983, pp. 45-46.

<sup>16</sup> Greene, *The Third Floor Front*, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Lührs, ‘Aus eins mach’ zwei: Die Auflösung des NWDR’, in: Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner, eds, *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks*, Hoffmann und Campe, 2005, pp. 390-443; Eva-Maria Freiberg, ‘Köln und der NWDR: Rückblick und Chronik III (1945-55)’, in: Walter Först, ed., *Aus Köln in die Welt*, Grote, 1974, pp. 271-325.

<sup>18</sup> Janina Fuge and Hans-Ulrich Wagner, ‘Das Gute liegt so nah? Föderalismus, Dezentralisierung und Regionalisierung in der NWDR-Zeit’, in: Peter von Rüden and Hans-Ulrich Wagner, eds, *Die Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks*, Hoffmann und Campe, 2005, pp. 207-222, here pp. 215-216; Wolf Bierbach, ‘Besatzungszonen und Länder: Föderale Probleme zentralistischer Rundfunkanstalten’, in: Walter Först, ed., *Rundfunk in der Region*, Kohlhammer – Grote, 1984, pp. 87-122, here pp. 111-114, 116-117; Christian Potschka and Peter Golding ‘The Structural Developments of Regional Television in Britain and Germany’, *Media History*, 18, 3-4, 2012, pp. 443-458.

<sup>19</sup> Greene, *The Third Floor Front*, pp. 56-57.

## 5 Von Bismarck and Broadcasting Freedom

In 1953 von Bismarck became a member of the NWDR Administrative Council. Von Bismarck had never been a member of a political party and was highly critical of the increasing politicization of German broadcasting, which came to the fore after 1948, when Germany regained full responsibility for the broadcast media.<sup>20</sup> On 17 December 1960 the WDR Administrative Council unanimously elected von Bismarck as WDR director. Subsequently, in his inaugural speech, in 1961, von Bismarck declared in front of WDR staff that he understood his role as a public trustee for broadcasting, aiming to use the media to foster democratization.<sup>21</sup> This benign paternalistic understanding of broadcasting strikingly resembled the underlying concept of John Reith, the founding father of the BBC and, as such, the key reference point for all later Director-Generals of the Corporation, including Greene. Reith famously noted:

It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need – and not what they want, but few know what they want, and very few what they need. In any case it is better to overestimate the mentality of the public, than to underestimate it.<sup>22</sup>

Von Bismarck picked up this notion when stating: “As the broadcasting organization with the largest audience the WDR must give this audience what it must have, not necessarily what it allegedly wants to have” (author’s translation).<sup>23</sup> Based on these similarities during the 1970s, the WDR envisaged launching a series of ‘Von Bismarck Lectures’, using as a role model the famous ‘Reith Lectures’, started in 1948 and broadcast on BBC Radio 4.<sup>24</sup> Overall, however, it was not Reith but much more Greene, an “outstanding personality” in von Bismarck’s words, who served as a role model for the WDR director.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 1. Hugh Carleton Greene © NDR



Fig. 2. Klaus von Bismarck © WDR

<sup>20</sup> Josef Schmidt, ‘Intendant Klaus von Bismarck und die Kampagne gegen den “Rotfunk” WDR’, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 41, 2001, pp. 349-381, here pp. 358, 371.

<sup>21</sup> WDR HA – Manuskripte des Intendanten Klaus von Bismarck (Teil 1), Ansprache des Intendanten Klaus von Bismarck an die Mitarbeiter des Westdeutschen Rundfunks am 13. April 1961.

<sup>22</sup> John Reith, *Broadcast over Britain*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1924, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> WDR HA – Manuskripte des Intendanten Klaus von Bismarck (Teil 1), Klaus von Bismarck, Kleine Denkschrift: ‘Massen-Medien’ und Erhaltung der Individualität. Gedanken über Fragen der Gestaltung und Organisation, 1961, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> The Reith Lectures 1948–2011, BBC Radio 4, 15 October 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/features/the-reith-lectures/archive/>; see WDR HA, Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, BBC Bismarck, telex from Wilson to Drück, 29 December 1975.

<sup>25</sup> Klaus von Bismarck, *Aufbruch aus Pommern: Erinnerungen und Perspektiven*, Piper, 1992, pp. 251-255, 283.

## 6 The Relationship Between Greene and Von Bismarck and What it Meant for the BBC and the WDR

Von Bismarck's internalization of the British ideal of broadcasting freedom was manifest in the relationship with Greene. During the 1960s, both Greene and von Bismarck stood at the top of the two nationally-leading and, according to the number of their employees, largest broadcasting organizations in Britain and Germany. Under these circumstances, it can be seen as normal that the two maintained close business relations with each other. However, they also got along very well with each other personally. For instance, in March 1963 Greene, had a joint breakfast with Klaus von Bismarck and his wife Ruth-Alice in their residential house.<sup>26</sup> A few days after this private meeting, in a letter from Greene to von Bismarck, Greene first expressed his personal gratitude and greetings to von Bismarck's wife before turning to business matters.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, in November 1970, von Bismarck held a special reception in honour of Greene's sixtieth birthday in Cologne. In his tribute speech von Bismarck pointed out Greene's personal merits in the development of the German broadcasting system while expressing his hopes that Greene would, in the future, also serve as an important advisor, a loyal colleague and close friend. Greene valued this highly and his handwritten thank-you letter confirmed the friendship and solidarity between them.<sup>28</sup>

Greene and von Bismarck undertook many mutual visits and, overall, their communication and understanding was extremely trusting. In 1968, for instance, when the German journalist Peter von Zahn asked Greene for an interview Greene first consulted von Bismarck about the request before accepting it.<sup>29</sup> Apart from that, during the 1960s, both engaged in vivid exchanges of material (speeches, articles, newspaper cuttings, studies) and information (e.g. about organizational structures and domestic developments in broadcasting policy). During these exchanges, Greene and von Bismarck's letters often contained personal remarks besides business matters. For example, in April 1963 when Greene sent two reports to von Bismarck discussing music in sound broadcasting, he thanked von Bismarck at the end of the letter for his kind words in the obituary to Lindley Fraser, published in the *Englische Rundschau*.<sup>30</sup>

This close relationship triggered and fostered cooperation and exchanges between the BBC and the WDR. In this regard, during von Bismarck's directorship the WDR gathered information from the BBC about the Corporation's current-affairs television series *24 Hours*, aired on BBC1 between 1965 and 1972, and intended to launch a similar programme.<sup>31</sup> Both broadcasting organizations engaged in staff exchanges during election broadcasts<sup>32</sup> and, in May 1964, the WDR held a British week in which many jointly-produced programmes were broadcast.<sup>33</sup> Apart from that, there were regular exchanges of radio programmes with a scheme involving that the BBC programmes transferred to the WDR were charged up against the WDR programmes transferred to the BBC. In 1969 the BBC remodelled this scheme. From then onwards, the BBC made payment for programmes offered by the WDR on the same scale as BBC programmes were charged by the BBC Transcription Service, improving the WDR's financial situation in bilateral programme exchange.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from Greene to von Bismarck, 13 March 1963.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from Greene to von Bismarck, 23 November 1970.

<sup>29</sup> WDR HA, Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, telex from Greene to von Bismarck, 30 September 1968.

<sup>30</sup> Lindley Fraser was a broadcaster and director of the BBC's German Service. WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from Greene to von Bismarck, 9 April 1963.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Curran, Greene's successor as BBC Director-General, hereunto noted: "Emulation is the sincerest form of flattery". WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from Curran to von Bismarck, 21 October 1971.

<sup>32</sup> WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from von Bismarck to Curran, 12 October 1971.

<sup>33</sup> WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from O'Rourke to von Bismarck, 26 May 1964.

<sup>34</sup> WDR HA, Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, BBC Bismarck, letter from Stephenson to Brack, 26 August 1969'; letter from Komma to Drück, 'Hörfunkaustausch mit der BBC', 8 October 1969.

## 7 Pan-European Coordination in Television and the Importance of British/German Cordial Bilateral Relations

Programme exchange was also an issue dealt with on the pan-European level. The 1950s marked the beginning of, first, a cautious, and then increasingly closer pan-European coordinated proceeding in broadcasting. In Western Europe, first and foremost, these processes took place within the EBU, which was founded on 13 February 1950 in Torquay, on the south coast of England, and tackled issues of programme exchange across national borders while working on common technical and legal standards.<sup>35</sup> Pressures which led to the EBU's establishment came particularly from the BBC, which felt it was disadvantaged by means of its voting rights in the International Broadcasting Union (IBU) and the Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion (OIR). The IBU and the OIR were two equivalent and, to some extent, rival organizations of broadcasters. Whereas the IBU, established in 1929 and headquartered in Geneva, was dominated by Western European countries, the OIR, founded in 1946, was dominated by the Russians and partly also by the French.<sup>36</sup>

The ARD joined the EBU in 1952. However, in 1958, when the idea of a European news exchange came up, the ARD refrained from cooperating due to the high costs involved.<sup>37</sup> In 1959 the ARD joined a trial exchange of news material but regarded the venture as a failure.<sup>38</sup> Also, a series of television plays named *The Largest Theatre in the World* and launched in 1962 under the EBU umbrella was seen critically by the German broadcasters who decided against their participation.<sup>39</sup>

Overall, the German enthusiasm for cooperation within the EBU during the 1950s and 1960s can be regarded as rather moderate. This lack of involvement, partly, resulted from the EBU practice that bilateral cooperation and programme exchanges were often agreed upon privately and informally before these ventures were discussed in the official committees and working groups.<sup>40</sup> When, in 1963, representatives of the French broadcaster Radiodiffusion-télévision française (RTF) suggested to von Bismarck a common bilateral French/German proceeding within the EBU, von Bismarck discussed these matters before the meeting with Greene and strongly rejected such a proceeding vis-à-vis the French, which emphasized the importance of the interpersonal relationship between Greene and von Bismarck.<sup>41</sup>

One of von Bismarck's guiding themes in his directorship was the German reconciliation with the Eastern Bloc. Following this aim, in 1964 von Bismarck directed his staff to have more contacts between the BBC and the WDR in order to reach agreements about programme exchanges with East European broadcasting organizations.<sup>42</sup> The starting point for this initiative was that the BBC under Greene was already engaged in mutually-beneficial cooperation with television broadcasting organizations from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Concerning this matter, the BBC bought Polish and Czech film productions while assisting broadcasters from Poland with their film production ventures on

<sup>35</sup> Germany's most prominent and influential figure in the EBU was the multilingual WDR legal advisor Hans Brack. On 1 September 1948 Greene hired Brack as a NWDR member of staff. BBC WAC, R78/3020/1, letter from Brack to Greene, 13 September 1948.

<sup>36</sup> In 1960 the OIR was renamed Organisation Internationale des Radiodiffusion et de Télévision (OIRT). See Keith Edgerly, ed., *The Pioneering years: The EBU from 1950 to 1970*, Special issue of *Diffusion*, European Broadcasting Union, 1997, pp. 5-6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45; see Jérôme Bourdon, 'Unhappy Engineers of the European Soul: The EBU and the Woes of Pan-European Television', *International Communication Gazette*, 69, 3, 2007, pp. 263-280; see also Wolfgang Degenhardt and Elisabeth Strautz, *Auf der Suche nach dem europäischen Programm: Die Eurovision 1954-1970*, Nomos, 1999, pp. 119-131.

<sup>40</sup> Wolfgang Degenhardt, *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der europäischen Partnerschaft im Fernsehbereich 1950-1970*, Universität Siegen, 2002, p. 132.

<sup>41</sup> WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from von Bismarck to Greene, 6 May 1963.

<sup>42</sup> WDR HA – Unverzeichneter Bestand Klaus von Bismarck, Korrespondenz mit ausländischen Rundfunkanstalten in Europa, letter from von Bismarck to Brühl and Lange (with seven more people in cc), 2 March 1964.



English soil.<sup>43</sup> Given that the EBU found it rather difficult to cooperate closely with the East European broadcasting network OIRT – the Cold War, dividing West and East was, of course, a reason – bilateral proceedings in this direction proved particularly important.<sup>44</sup>

## 8 Conclusion

As has been argued in this article, the relationship between Greene and von Bismarck in the period from 1960 to 1969 was a special one. It was manifested in multiple interdependencies, exchanges, visits and correspondences and reflected mutual trust, closeness and high respect for one another. At the same time, it exemplifies how the British tradition of broadcasting independence lived on in Germany, with von Bismarck being one of its most prominent representatives.

Apart from this more emblematic effect, the interpersonal relations between the two central actors triggered bilateral cooperation between the BBC and the WDR. In this respect, the relationship between Greene and von Bismarck served, on the one hand, as basis for a coordinated British/German proceeding within the EBU, outflanking the French in 1963. On the other hand, this helped the WDR to overcome the East/West divide during the Cold War and develop strategies to initiate programme exchanges with East European broadcasters, even though it remained unclear how successful these envisaged ventures in fact were.

What becomes obvious from the investigation of the relations between Greene and von Bismarck is the difficulty to differentiate between the business and the personal layer. When investigating business relationships, possible indicators such as the frequency of correspondences, mutual visits and consultations need to be taken into account. Depending on cultural idiosyncrasies, personal elements in business relationships can, for example, be manifest in the content and form of correspondence (e.g. the extremely warm and hearty treatment of the other; the mention of personal issues before business matters; handwritten letters) or trust (e.g. during negotiations). In any case, in order to be considered relevant for transnational television historiography, interpersonal relationships need to be embedded into broader contexts (e.g. the media system level) and – as in the case of Greene and von Bismarck – they need to have an effect on broadcasting organizations. Interpersonal relations matter for transnational television history. They can be an extremely fruitful entry point into transnational interdependencies and have great potential for contributing to European perspectives on television history.

## Biography

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Edgerly, (op cit.), p. 39.