

In this issue

Due to the recent upsurge of interest, media is no longer a neglected subject within contemporary history. In fact, “for some years now it has become a booming field of research”¹ with various journals having already published thematic issues.² Nevertheless, the basic importance of the media for the understanding of contemporary history has not yet been generally accepted.³ After Thomas Lindenberger’s programmatic article in issue 1 of this journal,⁴ the media aspects of contemporary history will be taken up in more detail in the present edition – this time in form of actual case studies.

The title of this issue “media history(ies)” is – so to speak – an abbreviated reference to different topics, which will also appear in future issues. The title refers foremost to the *history of media*, i.e. single media and their relations to each other. Up to now this has been the subject of technological and institutional historical research, whereas a history of communication, which will broaden the perspective for media use and media reception, is just barely in emerging stages. This is on the one hand a result of the problematic nature of sources, but on the other hand a product of difficulties of combining an analysis of the perspectives of institutions and protagonists, of form and content, of economic conditions as well as the national and transnational context of “medialisation”, which would indeed be a most ambitious subject of research. Recently media studies, traditionally belonging to the field of German philology and communications studies (as part of empirical social research), have opened up to historical objects of research, but they ultimately pursue different cognitive interests than research in contemporary history.

Another dimension of “media history(ies)” refers to the *depiction of history in the media*, i.e. the presentation and interpretation of the past as media event.

¹ Karl Christian Führer/Knut Hickethier/Axel Schildt, Öffentlichkeit – Medien – Geschichte. Konzepte der modernen Öffentlichkeit und Zugänge zu ihrer Erforschung, in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 41 (2001), pp. 1-38, p. 1.

² Some recent German examples: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 41 (2001): Geschichte der Massenmedien und der Massenkommunikation in Deutschland; *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 50 (1999) Issue 4: Medien und Geschichte, 51 (2000) Issue 12: Umgang mit historischen Fotografien, 52 (2001) Issue 4: Geschichte im Film, 53 (2002) Issue 10: Fotografien: Bilder als historische Quellen; *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001) Issue 2: Kommunikationsgeschichte; 1999 17 (2002) Issue 2: Geschichte in den Medien: NS-Prozesse, Vietnamkrieg, Guido Knopp; *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 8 (1997) Issue 4: Film Geschichten; *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 31 (2003): Medien – Politik – Geschichte.

³ Cf. for example Horst Möller/Udo Wengst (eds.), *Einführung in die Zeitgeschichte*, München 2003.

⁴ Thomas Lindenberger, Vergangenes Hören und Sehen. Zeitgeschichte und ihre Herausforderung durch die audiovisuellen Medien, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 1 (2004), pp. 72-85.

The research landscape on this question is very heterogeneous: Some fields such as the presentation of National Socialism on television and in the daily press have been comparatively frequently brought up for discussion, whereas the concepts of history distributed by broadcasting have rarely been the subject of research. In general, a method which will go beyond the simple conclusion (or complaint) that the interpretation of history in popular media does not reflect the level of knowledge or the distinctions of historical scholarship has yet to be found. In order to overcome this often prevalent normative outlook, scholars will have to intensify their reflection and historicization of cultural contexts.

Furthermore the term “media history(ies)” can stand for the *history of stories told through media*. This meaning is connected to the already mentioned aspects, but it puts the emphasis more strongly on the acceptance and modification of popular genres. At first blush such stories may not appear attractive as an object of research because of their triviality and “serialisation”, but they can serve as meaningful sources for everyday life and the history of mentality, as for example studies about sentimental films with regional background (Heimatfilme) have shown.

In the present issue of “Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History” Daniela Münkkel investigates the triangular relationship between Willy Brandt, the United States and the media. She points out that even seemingly conventional topics of political history have a media aspect without which they cannot be understood. In the 20th/21st century media function not only as a “mirror” of events happening outside the media landscape, but in many cases also work as catalysts, which protagonists such as Brandt and Kennedy included in their scope of action. While Münkkel presents an analysis of Western German reception of America and of transnational media history, Henning Engelke and Simon Kopp analyze the appropriation of an American genre in the GDR. On the basis of the DEFA Indian film “Ulzana”, released in 1974, they illustrate how film makers in the GDR referred to American westerns. The authors decode how conventions of the genre were taken up and changed at the same time. The desired “new Indian film” was supposed to be more “authentic” than its American archetype, granting more room to the perspective of the native Americans as a suppressed people and making the American sense of mission appear as antiquated.

Lu Seegers points out success story of the programme guide “HÖR ZU”, outlines the development of this magazine and delves further into a thematic problem, which was virulent about 1970: the representation of gender relations in connection with the plurality of lifestyles in the Federal Republic. Media agency also plays an important role in Annette Vowinckel’s article. On the basis of the German reactions to the 1967 Six-Day War and the hijacking at Entebbe in 1976 she describes how the militant left’s attitudes, but also those of moderate

groups towards Israel were connected to rather twisted interpretations of National Socialism. These resulted from a peculiar kind of antifacism which often included elements of strong antisemitism. Although the articles of Seegers and Vowinckel differ, they also have something in common: they indicate that contemporary research should put more emphasis on the 1970s, which have so far been neglected to a considerable degree.

Vowinckel's explosive essay links up to the debate section, which this time is devoted to the controversy about the RAF (Red Army Fraction) exhibition planned by Kunst-Werke Berlin. After a short editorial appraisal of the quarrel which started during the summer of 2003, *Wolfgang Kraushaar*, who at times served as an academic adviser for the exhibition, comments on its problematic nature as media history as well as general history. He refers to numerous gaps in the research about the RAF and depicts a research agenda, which, because of its relevance to present times, should not only be of interest to historians.

The sources section in this issue includes three photo-historical articles: *Gabriele Conrath-Scholl* and *Susanne Lange* present August Sanders' pictorial cycle "Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts", an impressive work regarding its artistic as well as its sociographic value. *Agnes Matthias* commemorates the war photographer Robert Capa, who died 50 years ago and who did not restrict his attention to battle pictures, but managed to visualize the devastating impact of war as a social process. In contrast, the photographs chosen from a collection of the Leipziger Verbundnetz Gas AG and presented by *Thomas Wiegand* appear comparatively banal – at least at first glance. The collection documents the change that happened in the former East German states during the 1990s, revealing perspectives on the former GDR which are only possible by means of photo-artistry.

In the review section *Rainer Rother* presents and criticizes a web page on the reception of Leni Riefenstahl, undoubtedly one of the most enigmatic characters in German media history of the 20th century. As with many web pages the good intention is clear, but the contents leave much to be desired, especially because they have not been updated recently. *Dietmar Sedlacek* comments on an educational CD-ROM about people who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. The CD-ROM is especially interesting from a media point of view, because the interviews presented on it are taken from a research project during the 1960s that had vanished into oblivion for some time. *Roland Binz* reflects on the box-office hit "Das Wunder von Bern" (the miracle of Bern, referring to the German victory in the soccer world championship of 1954). In a generally positive tone, Binz refers to peculiarities of the political and journalistic response, which gave expression to a present need for "miracles". *Oliver von Wrochem* visited the exhibition "Stalingrad erinnern" at the Deutsch-Russisches Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, which shows for both German states and the Soviet Union (respectively Russia) how the "Kesselschlacht" myths were crea-

ted and through which media they were transported. *Clemens Albrecht* sheds light upon Horkheimer's and Adorno's dialectical failure, and *Jens Hacke* invites one to read, either for the first time or again, Dahrendorf's basic work on the obstacles to German democratization. This is also a small homage to Dahrendorf's 75th birthday, which the important political thinker celebrated on the 1th May.

The articles published in this issue demonstrate in different ways the interaction of several forms of media in historical processes such as visual and verbal media, images and sound, press and television etc. It is especially this interweaving of different media types, their contemporary historical context and consequences which will have to be examined further in the future to prevent media history from being pursued simply as "hyphenated subject or subdiscipline in the context of the already strongly fragmented discipline of historical scholarship".⁵ One of the intentions of "Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History" is to integrate important sources which are mentioned in the articles directly into the journal. Copyrights or financial obstacles sometimes prevent this aim from being completely realized. The editors therefore plead with archives, museums and other media collections to reconsider their sometimes very restrictive attitude towards contemporary historical research and to be more forthcoming with establishing cooperation agreements.

J.-H.K.

(translation: Maren Brodersen/Mark Stuntz)

⁵ Führer/Hickethier/Schildt, Öffentlichkeit – Medien – Geschichte (fn. 1), p. 1.