

"VWI goes to the University of Graz"

Wednesday, 20 April 2016, 5.00-7.00 pm
Zentrum für molekulare Biowissenschaften, SR 44.21
Humboldtstraße 48/II
8010 Graz

Judith KEILBACH

Televising the Eichmann Trial. Holocaust Memory and Foreign Affairs on West German Television



The trial against Adolf Eichmann was one of the first transnational television events. When the trial opened on 11 April 1961, journalists from all over the world were in Jerusalem to report on the proceedings. The trial was not only covered in the print media and on radio, but was also recorded for television. Videotapes were sent by plane to broadcasting stations in numerous countries, emphasising the global significance of the event. However, in different countries the trial coverage emphasised different aspects and fulfilled particular functions.

This presentation will first introduce the technical and institutional preconditions that enabled this transnational media event in the first place. It will then focus on West German television broadcasts about the trial. In analysing the special primetime television programme *Eine Epoche vor Gericht* which aired twice a week it will explore the recurring topics and changing narratives of the reports from Jerusalem. The programme included, for example, extensive coverage of the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, but also had to deal with

Eichmann's bureaucratic language. Taking into account other television programs of that time, this paper argues that the West German coverage of the Eichmann trial reflected the critical endeavours of young journalists to dissect the National Socialist past. At the same time *Eine Epoche vor Gericht* was in tune with television reports from abroad that brought German viewers, fifteen years after the war had ended, closer to the international community. Finally, the presentation will address how the increasing tension between East and West Germany affected the television coverage of the Eichmann trial.

Comments by Ursula K. MINDLER-STEINER

Chair: Gerald LAMPRECHT

Judith Keilbach is currently Senior Research Fellow at the VWI. She is Assistant Professor of Television Studies at Utrecht University. She has published articles about Holocaust testimonies and the photographic depiction of the Holocaust, and a book on television documentaries about National Socialism (*Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzeugen*, 2008). Her current research project deals with the television coverage of the Eichmann trial.

Ursula K. Mindler-Steiner is Assistant Professor of Austrian History and Jewish Studies at Graz University and Professor of History at Andrásy University, Budapest.

Gerald Lamprecht is Director of the Centre for Jewish Studies and Associate Professor of History at Graz University.