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Dear Program staff,

Ever since getting Cable, I have been a regular viewer of C-Span, and a strong supporter of your purpose. But in the last month or so, I have been deeply disappointed with your programing in response to events in Eastern Europe and the whole array of public policy questions that must be newly addressed by Americans in response to these events.

Because I want to make positive suggestions, I would like to offer the following possibilities.

Peter Schneider, author of The Wall Jumper; A Berlin Story currently teaches at, I believe, Dartmouth. Shortly after November 9, I heard a most interesting discussion on Deutchwelle concerning the psycho-social differences between East and West Berliners that involved a long distance phone call with Schneider. My German is not adequate to fully understand the whole discussion (It was in German) -- but the topic is fascinating -- as is his novel. (Which is in English with blurb by Salman Rushdie)

I note that Joel Agee was commissioned to do a New York Times piece, and similarly has a blurb on Schneider's book. Agee's own book about his childhood in East Berlin remains one of the best accounts of the sociology of the GDR. I've not seen any long interview with Agee, even though he is clearly one of the few young American writers with clear and direct access to the writers and artists of the east. I was somewhat disappointed in the NYT piece precisely because it was a rush job clearly pushed by deadline. Could an interview be more analytic?

From time to time you've had Christopher Hitchens of The Nation on as a guest. Are you aware that he was in Romania immediately after December 22. How about a roundtable discussion among reporters such as Hitchens about Romania. I am particularly interested in anyone who as a journalist could come on the program with some competence in recent American policy toward Romania. (I went Autocamping there in 1971 -- a small window of time when it was possible to rather freely travel about on an independent basis largely because Nixon exploited the divergence between the Soviets and Romania.) I learned a great deal about Romania during my trip -- but not much about Nixon's policy objectives or Ceausecu's political interests that intersected in 1971, and made independent Autocamping possible. So, I'd like to hear journalists who have now focused on Romania but at the same time have reviewed American policy over the past 45 years.

(One small set of facts might help you set this up with all the appropriate contradictions in place. In 1986 I led an Elderhostel trip to Hungary, and

visited the Baptist center constructed by Billy Graham's organization. I was most surprised to find that center busy translating and publishing in both Hungarian and Romanian the Works of Martin Luther King. I was astounded in fact, in that Graham certainly was not known as ever having supported King or his ideas in the US. In the 1960's I was Ex. Director of the Minnesota Council on Religion and Race, and the Billy Graham organization is headquartered here in Minneapolis, and I made numerous efforts to get them involved in supporting the Civil Rights movement -- to no avail. So imagine the shock of finding that the centerpiece of Graham's Hungarian Center is the teaching of the life and works of Martin Luther King! Of course the reason is evident, but why have no journalists described it?)

In my mind the best narrative/essay yet published is Timothy Garton Ash's "Magical Prague" in The New York Review of Books Jan. 18, 1990. Ash has a number of previous New York Review articles on E. Europe, dating back to the mid 1980's. I suspect these eventually will be collected in book form -- certainly should! Anyhow I know of few more capable of discussing the intersection of politics and culture in Eastern Europe.

Now another comment. I don't want to seem elitist, but I would hope you could do more "roundtable" discussions, and fewer "call-in's" on what is clearly a complete paradigm shift vis a vis Eastern Europe and the basis of American Policy as a result of this shift. I realize that call in's build audience and give a sense of participation -- but so many of your callers simply have not read much, and do a disservice to the competence of good guests. There is such a void in quality discussion programs. We get too much shouting and unsophisticated nonsense like "Capitol Gang" or forshortened interviews with some reasonably good people on CNN. There is a place for two hour roundtable conversations with civilized discussants who know their subject, and are drawn out by interviewers with probing skills.

I might add that the New York Review mentioned above has a marvelous review of recent books on Germany. Any possibility of bringing some of these together to discuss German developments? Is there any possibility of an interview with Gunter Grass? Perhaps the best known contemporary German novelist writing with political intent -- and with a huge American audience (All his works are translated and kept in print) -- Where is a good discussion about recent events with Grass? I just finished Show your Tongue, his poetry, prose and drawings from his 6 month residence in Calcutta. He got tired of being treated to Bengali arguments drawing parallels between German partition and Bengali partition. Fascinating book, equally fascinating question. Since the "trendy" answer to conflict in the late 40's seems to have been partition (Germany, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Palestine, India) and it all seems coming unglued -- perhaps Grass needs to be asked about this -- and perhaps others need to be asked about it too. I think it a sub-set of containment theory.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing questions today surrounds the kinds of reforms being considered in various Eastern European centers. In 1986 while visiting Hungary, I found our Hungarian host's special interests concerned Scandinavian systems and structures. Since I read and speak Danish (was an exchange student there in the late 1950's) I spent hours answering questions comparing how things are done in the US as compared to Scandinavia. (Example: How does the US Superfund work, and how does that compare to the Scandinavian system for cleaning up environmental problems? -- and behind that question, Can something like Superfund work in a mixed economy?) You know we do a real

disservice to Americans who can't travel and communicate by not letting them know that Eastern European countries do not see the US as the sole model for how to do things effectively, and by not being able to get beyond the cant about freedom and individualism. I'll admit, C-Span tries. Parliament, the broadcast of the European Parliament, some of your Wilson Center programs. But so much more could be done.

I really think you need to re-examine your seeming "equal time" practice -- that is so much time for liberals, equal for conservatives. Is this really a valid continuum given recent events? It seems to me that there are other measures of being comprehensive more relevant than the paradigm that the world is divided between conservatives and liberals. Is someone who has expertise in environmental matters, and has looked at the new Europe through that lens either a conservative or a liberal? How will the new Europe look at Educational Reform? Do the questions, perhaps the points of departure that they have found useful help us in asking better questions about our own immense problems?

Next question -- have you given any thought to how you are going to cover all the elections coming up in the next year in Eastern Europe? You are good at covering elections -- can you extend your reach and cover those in Eastern Europe with some of the same techniques? The Soviets will be having local elections in March, Hungarian elections are in March or early April, E. German on May 6th, in the fall Czechoslovakia has elections. Who knows what Romania will do. Yugoslavia is going multi-party and having new elections. Poland still has to have local elections which will be without reserved seats for the Communist party and party organizations. What a rare opportunity to use video technology and offer a supermarket of comparative materials. Please don't be timid. What better antidote to all the uninformed cliché than say a debate prior to the Hungarian elections where we can watch the candidates and hear a translation. I doubt seriously if they will sound at all like the sidewalk interviews we see on the networks where someone with some knowledge of English utters a few words about "freedom" or "independence" and we have no way of knowing what they mean by those terms, other than they sound warm and cuddly.

We all know that modern communications technology played a critical role in events in Eastern Europe. We need to make the same break-through in the US. The only way to grow beyond cliché and the paradigms these represent is to provide information that does not fit cliché. And we need more than a few sound-bytes.

To digress a moment -- I think the worst American invention of all time was the Readers Digest Condensed Book. It legitimized laziness. Sound-byte TV is the grandchild of this abomination. So one reason I like C-Span programing is precisely because it seeks to reverse laziness by respecting nuanced arguments and statements. I care much less about "objectivity" (logically impossible most of the time) and much more about the design of argument. I see C-Span as serving a revival of the art of rhetoric. Yes at times some stuff is sloppy, but simply because your format allows for nuance and elaboration it allows for a new appreciation of quality argument. I wish you would lighten up on empirical claims to equal time and objectivity, and stress instead qualitative values.

So if cross-cultural TV was good for Eastern Europe, why isn't it also potentially good for the US? Now I realize there are financial and business con-

cerns here -- but in all the broadcasting of Hearings, and Cable meetings about whether Cable should be re-regulated, I have yet to hear a good argument for opening up American TV (cable) to direct programing from non-US sources. Recently when going through some old political literature from the late 1970's I found a "white paper" on what to expect from Cable. I was to expect 120 channels, many being narrow-cast to specific audiences. If I wanted to improve my German, I could watch German TV. I would be able to watch French Fashion shows on French TV. I called my councilperson who was to vote on the Franchise, and reminded her that Minneapolis had lots of Scandinavians, and while I am not one, I know one language, and would there be the option of Danish TV -- Oh, yes, yes, I was promised. C-Span and ESPN -- which I don't watch, is about all the narrow-casting I see. I stress all this, because even with your covering Cable hearings and cable clubs -- a whole argument is missing, We have no international television in the US other than what is produced for us, or selected for us. In fact, in this sense, we are more impoverished that some parts of East Europe and West Europe, where three or four national systems are available over the air. In fact, we don't really pay much attention to Canada or Mexico. In my town a dish is not possible. But the market is clearly there -- while looking for a longer antenna for my short-wave a month or so ago at Radio Shack, I discovered that Radio Shack outlets in Minneapolis had totally sold out short wave receivers in December. I wonder why?

Hopefully this is positive critique of your programing. I had so hoped that over the holiday period the absence of congress would have occassioned long excursions into events in Eastern Europe -- direct broadcast of transmissions and commentary on them. Please try harder to do what you do best.

Sincerely,

