

SPEECH PRESENTED TO :

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF COMMUNICATIONS

September 12, 1988

Washington, D.C.

BY: LEONID PETROVICH KRAVCHENKO

First Deputy Chairman, Gosteleradio, USSR

6-  
P41  
R -

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Chairman,

Above all I would like to thank the directorate of the International Institute of Communications for the kind invitation to participate in this conference. As you may know I represent the USSR State Committee for Television and Radio, or GOSTELERADIO.

GOSTELERADIO today employs 83 thousand and broadcasts on 5 national television and radio channels. The electronic media in the Soviet Union rely on a ramified network of satellite broadcasting and radio-relay lines that cover the entire vast territory of the USSR. We have an annual budget of 2 billion rubles.

Some of you may perhaps wince at the qualifier "state" as applied to television and radio and doubt whether there can be a free expression of opinions or pluralism where television and radio are controlled by the state and wonder whether I am really no more than a courier for the Kremlin who comes to work with an attache case full of instructions for every editorial board as to what should be broadcast and when, and who should be rebuked and who, on the contrary, patted on the back. Let me assure you that this is not the case. The very structure of GOSTELERADIO, which incorporates 120 TV broadcasting centers in Soviet Republics and administrative territories as well, rules out dictating from Moscow, because all of them are fully independent. The chief editors of broadcasting editorial boards at the national

TV center also enjoy a large measure of freedom in selecting issues to be raised in their programs and areas for criticism.

The Russian words "perestroika" and "glasnost" or restructuring and openness, denote a package of profound reforms in the economic, political, and social life of the country. Having become part and parcel of international usage, they need no translation. It is only natural that television is at the very center of these processes and is itself one of the principal instruments of expanding openness and democracy in our society.

I must acknowledge candidly, though, that a mere several years ago Soviet television was rather conservative.

It is part of the very nature of the medium of television that it should possess a perfect ear for the truth, but it was very often the case in the recent past that the ears of our television were hard of hearing and the eyes of our television were hard of seeing. Our prime time current events shows were ostentatious and wordy in the reporting of industrial achievements.

According to a sarcastic joke of the day the best way to fulfill the national Food program was to hook your fridge to your TV set. Television shows raised no social problems and a whole range of issues were considered closed to coverage.

Three years ago the process of far-going restructuring got underway in our television as indeed it did in our society at large.

Over a very short time we renewed our programming by 60 percent and increased the amount of live shows twenty-fold as they arouse special confidence of the audience. Live shows today feature heated debates and profoundly critical analyses of the real processes underway in the country.

Especially popular now are live phone-in shows in which government ministers, statesmen and women, and communist party officials appear within a format of up to 120 minutes.

Honesty, candor, and openness have become an integral part of the TV and radio coverage of crucial political events. The recent 19th national conference of the Soviet Communist Party was a case in point.

We covered all the statements made at it without exception concentrating on the boldest and most daring judgments and clashing points of view to best convey the drama of the event. Just like an X-ray machine television reveals what people are really like, elevating some, and exposing others. It must be said that far from all are capable of passing through the test of the TV camera.

The most popular shows attract audiences of up to 200 million and the viewers can readily see the real worth of those who appear in them. They can see who has a clear-cut program of action and who has nothing, except for hollow rhetoric, to offer. There have been a number of occasions when following their poor showing and inarticulate replies to criticism from viewers high-ranking officials and even government ministers had to

New political thinking has permeated the extremely complicated area of foreign policy and the coverage of international affairs.

We have adopted a new concept here and it boils down to dramatically expanding the openness and candor of judgment on even the most sensitive issues of international relations where especially many areas used to be closed to honest analysis.

The policy of glasnost, or openness has added an especially pressing dimension to the need to break up our own stereotypes in covering the life of the Western nations. Soviet audiences are rightfully demanding a profound and allround analysis of all processes underway in the Western countries, positive and negative alike and they want to know how people live outside the USSR, what problems concern them and what they think about this or that issue. Responding to these sentiments we redefined our model of the TV coverage of international events and introduced on a broader scale the live reporting of important international events.

We require that our correspondents posted abroad provide more profound coverage of all aspects of life in the West, and not necessarily in a critical spirit. A recent report by our Washington correspondent Vladimir Dunayev about MACDONALD's fast-food concern broadcast on national channels aroused great interest, and such reporting is no longer causing sensations. Reports of that kind suggest to our foreign trade agencies where to go for the best

foreign expertise. Foreign advertizing has appeared on Soviet television as well.

Candor and openness are no longer characteristic of home consumption alone. We no longer develop hang-ups over direct debates on the air with our opponents subscribing to sets of political views entirely different from our own. Many prominent Western politicians and among them Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, George Shultz, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Frank Carlucci, Charles Wick, and Franz Joseph Strauss have appeared on Soviet television and nothing terrible happened, the roof of our television center did not cave in. International satellite TV link-ups carry especially candid judgments. It must be said that following the first Soviet-American satellite TV link-ups and shows hosted by Phil Donahue there appeared quite a few supporters of "double standards of glasnost" in our own audience. They maintained that one kind of glasnost is good for home consumption only and another for, export. We were accused to being far too self-critical in front of a foreign audience. Our stand here is quite definite: there can be only one glasnost for the Soviets and foreigners alike. Over the years of glasnost the contradiction between reporting to home audiences and reporting to foreign audiences has rapidly disappeared. Today many networks around the world take up our programs right from the air, quote Soviet television and some of them subscribe to the prime time current affairs show VREMYA and use the stories that appear in it in their own programming.

The work that we all do, except for its technical aspects, is the most heavily ideologized of all. The process of rapprochement takes a tortuous, and at times, painful course here. I don't want to go into the origins of the Cold War here or try and estimate who planted how many seeds of ideological weeds and when. These seeds have certainly proliferated and the signs are that for a long time to come we shall be adopting different attitudes to the same events. What I am trying to say is that being no friends yet, we must nevertheless cease to be enemies. There is enough room for cooperation between these two poles. It must be acknowledged that here we all are lagging behind our political leaders who are looking for points of contact to resolve the most complicated problems of politics and military affairs, all the differences notwithstanding. That areas of agreement can be found given shared will to find them, was shown by the signing in Washington last December of the INF treaty on the abolition of Soviet and American medium and shorter range nuclear missiles. We had better pool our efforts as well, guided by the better interests of our nations and the need to help each other in this nuclear day and age to build bridges of trust between nations, abandon outmoded stereotypes and take apart the logjams of old.

At the very least, we must abandon the one-sided, narrow and negativistic reporting of life in our respective countries. That is now the guiding principle of Radio

Moscow's external broadcasting in 74 languages, 260 hours a day. The life of any country is multidimensional and polychromatic and it does not do to use only the colors black and white in reporting it.

As you may agree there have been definite changes for the better. The bold foreign policy initiatives of the Soviet Union, democratic reforms inside the country, and the radical restructuring of the economic and political systems no longer fit into the customary Western stereotype of the USSR as a closed totalitarian society. In our own view the "face of the enemy", painted not least by the media on the images of our countries, is being washed off. Over the past two years the number of TV crews coming to the Soviet Union has grown dramatically. They come to make big serials, like the BBC's 12-part "COMRADES", "SEVEN DAYS IN MAY" by the CBS, and the 7-part "PORTRAIT OF THE SOVIET UNION" by the TBS, or cover various aspects of life in the USSR.

The next speaker, Mr. Ikeda, may recall that at the moment filming crews of his company are about the complete a big program about the Soviet Arctic and that they have been travelling over areas considered off limits for foreigners. In extending journalistic assistance to such filming crews GOSTELERADIO is making every effort to make sure that they take fascinating material back home. Two or three years ago any request concerning military matters, the operation of the militia, or such problems as drug addiction would have been turned down. At present these problems are looked into in a matter-of-fact way.

In advance of the Soviet-American summit in Moscow 15-hundred members of the electronic media and dozens of filming crews from various countries were stationed in the Soviet capital. Several major broadcasting organizations and among them the American Network Pool and the European Broadcasting Union installed their satellite communications equipment at a makeshift TV center at the Rossiya Hotel right next to the Kremlin and carried live reports. In other words the journalists had total freedom of action.

International satellite link-ups remain the most popular shows with our audiences. Twenty seven "TV Bridges" have gone on the air linking the USSR and the USA alone, over the last three years. There have also been link-ups with Britain, the FRG, Japan and other countries. Television is the only medium that can provide the unique opportunity of direct communication between people free of any editing or censorship. Over the next two months we shall be continuing the series of satellite TV link-ups between the USSR Supreme Soviet and the US Congress and an agreement has been reached with WORLDNET on starting a series of TV dialogues between Soviet and American citizens as of October 27. Radio broadcasters have done their bit too. This year and last phone-in satellite shows were organized between the Soviet and the United States in cooperating with STONER BROADCASTING. During these shows citizens of the two countries could communicate directly live.

Joint TV productions have been making good progress. At the moment in cooperation with the TBS we are working of the first-ever Soviet-American drama serial "Zeus' Weapon" looking into the crucial problems of the world today. An exchange of the best late night shows of our two organizations will be organized in November.

A promising experiment in Soviet-American information exchanges was begun recently. Jane Enersen of KING-5 Television in Seattle appeared for five days in a row on the national morning "120 MINUTES" show and toward the end of the year Soviet television journalists will be going to the United States. An agreement in principle has been reached between WXIA of Atlanta, Georgia and the television of the Soviet Republic of Georgia on exchanging TV personalities. We have just received a proposal for setting up a joint radiostation together with a British commercial broadcasting company.

We have been buying more feature, documentary and popular science programs abroad and we now visit international TV festivals and markets more often. The Soviet viewers were delighted to see the remarkable production of the BBC "LIFE ON EARTH" and another production "THE LIVING PLANET" is a major success now. Soviet television used a satellite link to relay to home audiences the Nelson Mandela rock concert from the London Wembley stadium and the opera ARIADNE AUF NAXOS from the Metropolitan opera in New York.

We are convinced that the people of our two nations want to know more about each other and it is therefore our duty, and the duty of the media at large, to respond

to that interest adequately and positively by carrying more impartial coverage of the life of people. If we fail to do that we shall not be able to keep pace with the requirements of the day and lose the trust of our audiences. In this connection such forums as this conference and the forthcoming Soviet-American conference on information issues to be held in Moscow on September 26 to 28 assume very special importance, because they provide the broadcasting organizations of various countries with an opportunity to compare notes on the current issues of cooperation.

Depending on what objectives it pursues television may be constructive or destructive as it strengthens trust among nations or undermines it and in this connection I would like to call you attention to the ever-growing burden of responsibility borne by us all. Concentrated in our hands is vast power over the minds of the people and it depends on us whether, as they meet, an American, or Briton named John and a Russian named Vladimir look upon each other as friends or enemies. I would very much like to hope that the power of television and the power of the media will be used for good ends alone. For our part we shall aspire to this by all means.

Thank you very much.