

INTERVIEW WITH
OLEG SEMJONOVITCH VLASOV
Head of The International Life Department

This is the department of foreign programs. It employs 90 people, half journalists, and half television assistants. It is a new department, in existence about eight months. Its aim was to unite most international programs into one department. Of the nine regular international programs, seven are under this department. The others belong to the information department and the film department.

The department has two subdivisions. One is the "rapid response" daily current information program. The other is the division of special programs on larger themes or topics.

We have twelve political observers (included in the 90 staff members) in the department. Political observers are assigned to a department for administrative purposes. But they can also be invited to work for other departments. But they also take part in the daily work of this department.

Our section of special programs has nine hours of program time a month. One of these, a live program is called "Resonance". It features experts and political observers answering questions from viewers called in on the telephone. It is aired once or twice a month.

Another is called "The Ninth Studio", one hour per month, also a discussion program, in existence for 20 years. The permanent host is Professor Zorin who invites two or three experts (academicians, political leaders like Arbatove) to discuss issues. Another is a

weekly program focusing on socialist countries for a half hour each week, from special correspondents from each of the countries. Another is also a magazine program dealing with the workers movement in different countries. A new program is a Saturday one-hour program aired sometime between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. called "Problems in Focus." This analyzes actual international problems, sometimes journalists or political observers, experts, administrators, political observers are usually the authors.

Another program is called "Political Portraits." This features important political figures from different countries. Political observers propose or are asked to host it.

The principal emphases of the special international programs are disarmament, regional conflicts (Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Lebanon, etc.), and discussion of human rights. One program is called, "Crossroads of Opinion" featuring invited foreign and domestic correspondents. This is in the series "Problems in Focus." For example, when recent discussion of US and Soviet journalists dealt with the issue "why image of enemy."

Do we express our own opinions? First of all, we deal with issues of State importance. We are expressing general opinions of the State. However, political observers do not speak for the whole country. They can discuss different points of view; we do not restrict them. Glasnost penetrates into our department. They can debate issues with each other, correspondence of Izvestia, and other journalists. However, this is a gradual process, and we face the problem of our audiences mistaking individual opinions for positions of the State. That is why we have to go slow until our audiences

learn to distinguish between individual opinions and authoritative views.

On space bridges. Interest has been declining, probably because of the many space bridges with various countries and the repetitive patterns. We are going to reduce the number of space bridges to one or two a month. We are also going to enlarge the range of topics and include special interests such as health, environment, etc. Also we are going to originate space bridges from cities other than Moscow. The virtue of space bridges is the live contact. But audiences also get too tight to their opinions and often become repetitive.

Each program is reviewed before airing by a committee of nine people. That committee includes administrative leaders, a representative of the group of political observers, and chief editors. The program being previewed is critiqued, changes are often suggested. If a producer objects or complains, the chief editor is responsible for making the final decision. He clears the permit to air the program by signing the airing permit. In fact, that document has to be signed by the chief of the department (that is me) and the chief editor or his deputy.

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