

V. Popov
Deputy Director
Gostelradio

We are under the Central Committee of Propaganda. However, we have no direct connection with the Central Committee of the party, no direct instructions or directives on such things as glasnost and perestroika.

We use briefing sessions and reading the papers and carefully studying press conferences as our directives on major political issues. For example, briefing meetings provide information on legislation, ideological issues. We pay close attention to that and implement it in our own way. That defines for us the major framework within which we operate.

Within that, we are relatively independent and self-regulating. We can air our reports, and often get into controversies. For example, recently a political play "Three on a Red Carpet" drew attention to a critical point (Ygorov). It was suggested that we should not run that play on the eve of the party conference. I read and previewed the play. In it a secretary of a rural party and manager of Kolkhoz are in conflict regarding damages to a collective farm. This was a serious plot and problem. Nevertheless, we aired it on the 27th, just before the party conference. That is why we have the editor-in-chief making final decisions; we have no prior censorship.

How often do I meet with party heads? It is a working process. We attend conferences, briefing meetings. Occasionally we attend or ask the Central Committee about problems of broadcast content or technical or monetary issues. We addressed our request to Ligachev and got permission

to improve our technical conditions. Such controls as used to be in Breznev's times -- they do not exist.

Do we get criticism? Yes, from the audience. We make factual mistakes, and apologize for them. The person making mistakes may be reprimanded or even fined.

Gostelradio as a state organ is practically on the level of a ministry, but different. Our chairman is a member of the Council of Ministers. There are no annual reports. Our schedule is not examined by outsiders. We plan scheduling about a year ahead. The draft comes to me, we discuss it in a meeting with chairmen, deputies, and a few leading chiefs of directorates -- all members of the Council appointed by government.

The total schedule includes 640 hours per year devoted to music (premieres and rebroadcasts; half should be new music, including light music).

If departments conflict, the Council of Gostel decides. Conflicts are usually about amount of time and technical resources. Recently we increased the percentage of live programs, involving direct contact with viewers. We believe that is more effective than fictional characters.

The duration of the broadcast day has also increased since January. We used to start at 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m., now we start at 6:30 a.m. We are looking for new formats and new programs combining information and entertainment. Our viewers are demanding deeper insight in art, philosophy, meetings with interesting people, famous writers, their points of view on life. We are also increasing imports, especially of feature films, but are limited by technical inadequacies and budgetary

considerations. This morning I received a proposal about a charity concert for children and disabled people.

We plan to air the New York Metropolitan production of "Ariadne Auf Naxos." We bought a Brazilian serial -- to be dubbed into Russian -- of 55 parts. We will show 26 of them on the air, two-three times a day, half hour each. The times will be fixed.

We do not yet produce continuing series. We have different customs. We will try a German serial about domestic life, but for us that is not so interesting. We are looking for playwrights to produce the kind of series that our audiences would enjoy.

We have as yet no data on audience flow from program to program or channel to channel.

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