

Interview with Lazutkin  
December 21, 1987

Head of International Relations for tv and radio  
In charge of all collaboration  
Has 240 personnel in Moscow

Budget:

operating funds for personnel has increased a little

Production funds have increased a great deal.

Doubled over course of last 5 years, with most increase in last 3 years. Reflects greater interest of foreign countries in working in the Soviet Union.

Salaries: 800,000 r.

bonuses: 53,000 r.

production budget: 6 1/2 million r.

Since this department functions as facilitator for foreign sources to work in Soviet Union, charges overhead and profit.

There is now much more to do, though profit remains the same.

Profit has not increased as %. They wish to increase the profit margin and expect to do so. They will create a juridically independent entity: Sovtelexport--to be entrepreneur, and this entity will create more profit for them.

Co-productions in the past were made only for foreign viewing. Now they will be shown more and more on domestic tv. There is no plan. What is done will be offered to program schedulers and they will decide. All foreign-made material comes through this dept. and can be shown in established rubrics, such as travel, news, etc. [for more on co-productions and how they work, see below]

In the past during the "braking period" [i.e. Brezhnev], this department refused multi-or 2-country projects. Now they are more open to international projects, since there is now the fact of growth: more countries want cooperation and more is available. Foreign-made productions account for 7-11% per year at present of tv programming. Increases will take place without reducing the time allotted to others, since there are now "too many repeats" on Soviet tv and more programming can be absorbed.

Genesis of Donahue collaboration

initiative came from US. Kim Spencer (internews) sought collaboration and looked for US partner. Donahue appeared. It was decided and done wholly within the department. When completed it was brought to Gostel council. Aksenov agreed to air it. Some were "concerned about elements of criticism." Some thought put it "not on First Program but on Second." Some said "later not now." No one was against it per se. Reactions of viewers mixed. Some complained about criticism.

Co-Productions with Foreign countries

They have not, in the past, been full co-productions. A real co-production should involve collaboration in picking themes, writing, and filming. That process does not obtain at present.

Rather, they consider requests from foreign countries and facilitate the production within the USSR. They do nothing with writing [and the rest of the creative side] but help with fixing transportation needs, hotel, etc. There are too many such

requests, and they do not have "the right to refuse." For example, CBS requested help for "7 Days in May." Then ABC and NBC request help, and if Gostel says it is too overcommitted to help, the companies will complain--will "write to Gorbachev." It will be seen by the Secretariat, and then Gostel will be told to accommodate. Gostel's response will be when [not if] to fit it in.

Gostel now wants collaboration to be on a higher level; want to show the USSR more broadly and deeply [i.e. want to influence more what is shown and done]

Summit: received hundreds of requests for help in USSR. "How can we refuse? Say, don't come?" There is a moral requirement to accept. Have to help the policy of the Party. I'm a member of the Communist Party and must do it.

Plan for co-productions depends of "life."

Next year: Reagan visit to USSR; Party conference; and the Millennium celebration of the conversion of Rus' to Christianity. All will happen between March and June. Will have to upgrade and expand facilities, and plans have decreed step-by-step expansion, but cannot be done sharply and discontinuously. Broadcasting cannot stop for a second. Introduction of a new system must be flexible, elastic; modernization takes place gradually.

In the past, themes [subjects] for co-productions came on their own. No initiative came from Gostel; it only reacted. Now there is more work with America, Third World, Mid-East, Africa. Now want to do our real co-production. One such example if the "Walk for Peace" [Poidem vmeste]. American and Soviet writers worked together, as did two cameramen.

Certain themes [subjects] are most important. Priority given to themes in accordance with policy [not stated as such]

Upcoming:

Big cycle with Donahue--Pozner doing the reverse. Soviet and US cameramen will work on this in US. There will also be a 6-part miniseries on global problems. There was a Soviet scenario. Found a company in US, which hired a US writer. HAd worked before with company. Thus, now Sov and US writers. Theme is Soviet-American Relations. First genuine co-production. Will be called "Arms of Zeus". Action will take place "everywhere" [i.e. both in US and in USSR, and perhaps other locales].

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