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AMERICAN DELEGATION LEAVES FOR MOSCOW TO EXPLORE JOINT COMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS

A delegation of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) left for Moscow today (Feb. 4) to explore the possibility of Soviet and American scholars designing joint communications projects, including computer and teleconferencing networks, a study of the use of communications technology in educational programs, and a project to enhance the effectiveness of translation of news and other items of interest from one language to another.

The ACLS delegation, headed by Dr. George Gerbner, dean of the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania, will meet with the Soviet Academy of Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences in Moscow for two days, Feb. 6-7, to discuss "Communications and Contemporary Society."

According to Gerbner, recent advances in communication technology have brought about profound changes that affect people in all realms of their experience: work, cultural life, education and the family. "Exchanging knowledge and experiences can help both countries make better use of their own resources," he said.

"Communications as an academic discipline has played a growing role in American academic life, but it has yet to become recognized as an important academic discipline in the Soviet Union," said Gerbner. "To establish communications as a recognized area of scholarly exchange is an important goal of this meeting."

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The Americans are considering a number of projects, some of which may be proposed to the Soviet delegation. They include:

- American and Soviet traditions regarding social goals and the media

- translation of news and other items of interest from one language to another. Experts from both countries will design studies to enhance our understanding of how translation has developed historically and how it operates currently in each country.

- new communications systems such as computer networking and interactive video and radio

- programming goals, priorities, and policy-making

- bi-cultural studies of television content and media effects. Gerbner calls this a "comparative cultural indicators project." The American version, which Gerbner has been involved in for the past 18 years, employs teams of trained analysts who have viewed more than 2,500 television programs as part of an ongoing study called the Cultural Indicators project.

The goal of a U.S./Soviet comparative cultural indicators project would be "a comparative analysis of viewer conceptions of reality and their relationship to behavior," said Gerbner.

Although the two groups have not yet met, preliminary Soviet correspondence indicates that the Soviet delegation is interested in discussing the following collaborative projects:

- communications and problems of strengthening trust between the two countries

- theoretical and experimental research on teleconferencing

The ACLS supports scholarship in the humanities through a variety of programs including research grants for foreign study and travel grants to enable American scholars to attend conferences abroad.

The delegation hopes to create a subcommission of the American Council of Learned Societies-Soviet Academy of Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences on "Communications and Contemporary Society." Funding for the projects will be provided for the first two years by the

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International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) in the U.S. and by the Soviet Academy of Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences in USSR.

This is not the first time that Gerbner has conducted research projects in the Soviet Union. In the mid-1960s, with a research grant from the U.S. Office of Education (now the Department of Education), he compared schools and teachers of the mass media in 10 countries, including the Soviet Union. In the late 1960s, with a grant from UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), he studied the film heroes of full-length feature films produced for entertainment in six countries, also including the Soviet Union.

The American delegation also includes Dr. Michael Cole, professor of communication and psychology and director of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition at the University of California at San Diego; John Paterson Boyer, editorial director, Inside Story; Dr. Murray Turoff, professor of computer science and director of the Computerized Conferencing and Communications Center, New Jersey Institute of Technology; Dr. James Michael Holquist, professor of comparative and Russian literature at Indiana University; Dr. Peter Blount Maggs, professor of law at the University of Illinois; and Dr. Ellen Mickiewicz, dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and professor of political science, Emory University.
