

Russian calls Soviet news 'responsible'

By DOUG GRAHAM
Battalion Staff

Russian and American newspapers are more similar than most Americans think, said Melor Sturua, the Washington bureau chief of Izvestia, a Russian newspaper.

The Soviet Georgian-born journalist told Texas A&M University students and faculty at a reception that Soviet newspapers compete in Russia much as American papers do.

"We are always on the lookout for scoops," he said. "There are many newspapers and we all compete to get the first news."

Sturua, winner of the Vorotsky Prize, a prestigious overseas journalism award given by the U.S.S.R., said it was important for their papers to get news first.

The reason is that their papers need to make a profit.

"In our system, everything must make money to survive," he said. "Otherwise it gets shut down."

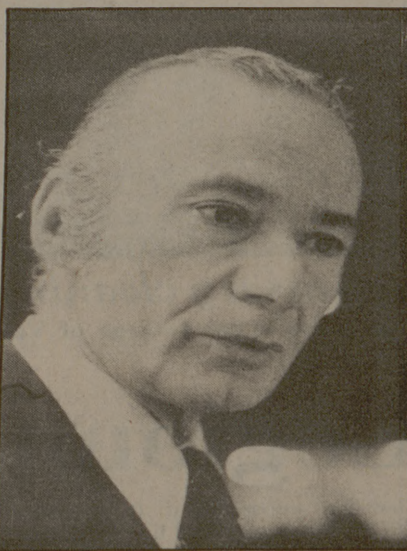
The "state supported" papers in Russia give their profits to the government, while in the United States, individual publishers profit, he said.

Sturua, whose first name Melor stands for Marx, Engels, Lenin, October Revolution, said Russian journalism serves society by promoting social harmony.

"You always have in mind the well-being of society," he said. "If you do anything for a scoop, to be sensational, to make money for yourself, then you must be ready to sacrifice social good."

Soviets practice self-restraint, he explained, adding, "We are against imposed censorship."

This self-restraint has led Soviet



Melor Sturua

journalists to support a resolution before a United Nations committee that states the media is supposed to support national and social interest.

Sturua said pornography in the United States is a failure of unbridled journalism.

"You must reflect and defend the mood of society," he said. "You must be very responsible."

This self-restraint does not hinder honest reporting, Sturua said. He said that if there is "a distortion of social life," in other words, a misdeed or crime, he must report it.

If his editor says no, he can take the story to a government commission that would investigate the case. If his facts were right, they could make the editor print his story, he said.

Though Sturua agreed that reports of police brutality would be a proper journalism, he said that he has never had to report a case of

Russian secret police (KGB) brutality.

"Police never beats anyone," Sturua said.

Sturua said dissident newspapers are "false evidence" and "not founded." "There are no truth," he said. "There is only truth, such as facts, which are verifiable."

"Then there is social truth," he said. He defined social truth as "inferences drawn from fact." "In this sense, what may be an inference to Russia may be an inference to Americans."

"We never said the individual is subordinate to society, but the times common interest and individual interest collide. Individualism, we help them coexist."

"If society flourishes, the individual flourishes."

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Rights movement alive Sakharov optimistic

MOSCOW — Soviet human rights activist and Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov says the small circle of those who speak out in defense of human liberty in the Soviet Union has taken heavy casualties in 1978 but the movement has inexhaustible reserves.

Sakharov says despite official repression there is a growing awareness of the human rights issue in the Soviet Union and "something is changing in this country."

An interview took place recently in Sakharov's Moscow apartment, spiced by Soviet standards, strewn with the physicist's papers and books.

The text of the interview:
Question: Has the Soviet dissident movement made any progress?
Answer: Many have paid a great price for this kind of activity — some have even lost their freedom. But it has brought about a vast change in peoples' conception of human rights — not just in the countries of Eastern Europe but in all countries of the world where human rights are seriously violated. The Helsinki accords are of

enormous significance with respect to human rights. And President Carter's policy, taking the defense of human rights as its basis, is another manifestation of this development, which amounts to a new international ideology.

This development cannot be snuffed out. Once spoken, words cannot be silenced. The circle of active dissidents is very small. But an estimation of their quantitative strength is not important. The element of quality is more important.

The circle of people who dare to speak out has suffered heavy casualties. But these casualties cannot exhaust the reserves of this movement because people do listen to foreign radio stations here and they do sometimes read Samizdat (privately published) literature, although unfortunately Samizdat has also been repressed and has an extremely small circulation.

All this represents fertile soil for serious changes in this country. People are now aware of the human rights issue in this country. Something is changing in this country.

Q: How do you see the future of human rights in this country?

A: I have never tried to be a prophet. I have a generally pessimistic feeling about concrete conditions in the near future. In the near future, I don't think many changes can be expected.

But philosophically, I still consider myself an optimist because I believe in the strength of the human spirit.

Q: What kind of society would you like to see?

A: I think that as far as his evaluation of the crimes and horrors committed in the past is concerned, my outlook is quite close to that of (exiled Russian writer Alexander) Solzhenitsyn. But as far as the future is concerned, if I may borrow a term from Russian history, I would say that I am an Occidentalist.

I am for a pluralistic society — a free, flexible arrangement of different economic systems.

I am for a democratic society, which guarantees freedom of conviction, freedom of the press, freedom of religion and also — a freedom which is important for large sections of the population — the freedom of nationality and the freedom of choice of where to live.

I agree with (U.S. Sen. Henry) Jackson that this last freedom is actually the first because the choice of where you live conditions and defines all the other freedoms — the freedom to choose your religion, convictions and so on.

Q: How do you view closer relations between the United States and the Soviet Union?

A: If I am asked about this give my opinion quite frankly. Otherwise, I will say nothing because I am not concerned with great future, but with the concrete concerns and problems of people.

In this country, international obligations are violated in the freedom of emigration. The Soviet citizens have to be invited to emigrate goes against the order to emigrate goes against the order to emigrate.

But I think there is a problem of greater significance. This is the problem of preventing a world war. This danger directly threatens the complete destruction of the kind. This question rises above other questions.

In the long term, the ensuring international security is important without removing confrontation. This in turn is impossible without respect for human rights. At the diplomatic level, the question of nuclear confrontation is of the highest priority.

I think the Carter administration is right to approach these problems separately. The situation is complicated because we don't see the essence of the Soviet system, sometimes looks like the moves of a vast chess game.

Q: How do you view the issues of human rights and other issues?

A: In principle, I'll say it's always in favor of detente, of the possibility of war more detente.

But concretely, the case is complex. There are actual violations of human rights in this country was in favor of the Jackson administration (the Jackson-Vanik agreement, which links U.S. trade with the emigration of Jews).

I consider that Jackson's agreement is very important. It is a very important factor in increasing the number of violations of human rights in the category of emigration.

I think it is very good that relations are developing, that increases the chances of there being a healthy influence on conditions in this country. This is a very important factor.

But I think economic should be just an element of a whole approach to the future of the world. It should not be treated in a narrow, pragmatic way. Dealings with the Soviet Union have long-range implications should be considered.

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