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# End of VOA-jamming seen as selective use of *glasnost*

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Dmitry Mikheyev recalls that along with the coffee and morning gossip at the factory where he worked in Kiev, Soviet workers used to swap stories about what they had heard overnight on the Voice of America (VOA).

They did not necessarily believe what they heard, he explains, but were nonetheless eager to hear it.

"The attitude of Soviet people was this: both sides are lying," says Mr. Mikheyev. "The VOA lied as well as the Soviet leadership lied. The people thought that between the two of them they could find grains of truth."

That was in 1979. The following year, the Soviets began jamming VOA as its coverage of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan intensified.

Nevertheless, recalls Mikheyev, "People tried to listen. They'd go outside of buildings. They'd use all kinds of filters."

For seven years, Soviet authorities employed a string of jamming transmitters throughout the USSR to drown out the VOA signal with a whining roar that sounded like a jet aircraft engine.

Unexpectedly, without explanation, the jamming stopped last Saturday. A

Soviet spokesman in Moscow said yesterday that the step was an "act of goodwill" in the absence of an accord that would allow more Soviet broadcasts to reach Americans, as Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has called for.

A State Department spokesman called the cessation of VOA jamming a "positive development."

United States officials speculate that the decision was timed to coincide with a visit later this week to Moscow by Charles Z. Wick, the director of the United States Information Agency, which operates VOA. Mr. Wick noted that jamming is "inconsis-

tent with the spirit of *glasnost*" - or openness.

However, *glasnost* has its limits; the transmitters used to jam VOA apparently have been redirected to intensify jamming of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), US-financed radio stations in Munich, West Germany, that broadcast to the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The Soviet spokesman conceded that Moscow would continue to jam RFE/RL, which he called "ideological instruments" that aim to undermine Soviet security and stability.

Mikheyev, who emigrated to the US and serves as a consultant to various think tanks, has worked as a VOA broadcaster. He says that the VOA, by striving to be unbiased in its report-

ing of Soviet affairs, may not be seen as a threat by the Soviets.

Not everyone agrees with that assessment. But there is widespread agreement that RFE/RL, with its pointed commentaries and sharp criticism of the Soviet system, is viewed with far more alarm by the Soviet authorities than VOA is.

The current attitude of Soviet authorities, Mikheyev says, is that it is now acceptable to criticize the performance of officials but not to question the underlying legitimacy of Communist Party rule.

Soviet officials, he says, believe that "any criticism, be it from inside or outside, that touches the foundations of the system, should be banned or prevented." But, he adds, RFE/RL

regularly raises "very fundamental questions of morality."

The stations were funded by the Central Intelligence Agency until 1973, when Congress began making direct appropriations to keep them operating. But the Soviets, according to informed sources, have never accepted that RFE/RL's link with the CIA has been fully severed.

The Soviets have stopped jamming before and then resumed the practice when relations deteriorated. Wick told a news conference that he hoped the end of jamming did not turn out to be a "selective ... and temporary tactic."

Reductions and cessations of jamming "have happened before," says George Jacobs, a Washington, D.C., broadcast

consultant and former US government official. He notes that the first Soviet jamming began in 1948, coincident with the Berlin blockade and the early stages of the cold war.

Jamming was reduced, he notes, when relations improved, such as after a speech by President Kennedy calling for improved superpower relations, and at the beginning of the détente era under President Nixon.

But jamming was quickly resumed when relations soured, notes Jacobs - as when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan.

"The level of jamming," concludes Jacobs, "has always, in my view, been tied in with the political relationships between the two countries."

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