
Washington, DC 20009


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July 26, 1993

Mr Brian Lamb
President
C-SPAN
400 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr Lamb

I write to tell you how much I admire your daily broadcast of *Ostankino* news from Moscow. This is such an indispensable compensation for the American media's miserable failure to provide a reliable coverage of all matters ex-Soviet.

As a writer on the Caucasus region I am greatly obliged, and as an avid consumer of international news I wish you could expand this service, and perhaps add a daily World News bulletin from the BBC (which CBC do every evening), and perhaps consider an occasional broadcast of English news programs from other nations: Japan, South Africa, Israel (introduced fairly recently, very high quality), Germany, etc.

Let me however suggest to you that the dubbed translation of the Russian news sometimes leaves room for improvement, particularly when it comes to the translation of Russian terminology to English.

I am referring to the news aired on Monday, July 26. The translator struck me as very fluent and precise, however when it came to identifying Russian officials by their title, chaos prevailed.

Such was the case in a report on a meeting of Russian top defense officials chaired by President Yeltsin. The body was identified as Russia's Defense Soviet, which may be a literal translation, however the title in English is the National Security Council.

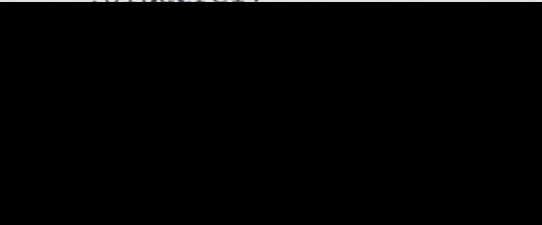
The translator went on to identify Russia's security minister, Victor Baranikov, as "defense minister," and then, within seconds, correctly identified Pavel Grachev as defense minister, and then, immediately, Baranikov was again described as "defense minister." At that point another report began, on the situation in the ex-Soviet Georgia, in which a Russia's deputy foreign minister, Boris Pastukhev, was identified as defense minister.

I noticed later on that the appliance of erroneous terminology was extended to non-Russian news. In a report on a massacre of white worshippers in Capetown, South Africa's minister of law and order was identified as "crime minister" (!), a title with almost biblical connotations. Then we were told us the gunmen opened "artillery fire" inside the church.

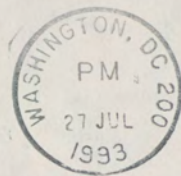
Throughout the program the translator kept referring to the Commonwealth of Independent States, known in English as CIS, by its Russian acronym CNG.

Again, this is not intended as a deprecation of the translator, who, on the whole, I believe, did a very good job. However, I suspect politics may not be her specialty, and perhaps she should be familiarized with the standard English terms for various Russian titles.

Sincerely



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