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Russian columnist: Keep files closed



MOSCOW (AP) — The U.S. director of Radio Liberty suggested Monday that the KGB's archives be opened to researchers, touching off howls of protests at a conference on the role of the free press in a democratic society.

"I think it would mean tragedy for millions," said Sergei Parkhomenko, a columnist for the newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta.

He and others defended the new KGB chief's decision to keep the files closed, saying millions of informers could be exposed to retribution if the documents were made available.

"Approximately a dozen of those present in this room would probably be interested in never seeing the archives opened," Parkhomenko said as a ripple of nervous laughter erupted among the 60 Soviets and foreigners attending the conference.

The lingering uneasiness about the KGB is just one of the difficulties facing Soviet media during the current transition from Communism to democracy.

The topic was raised during the opening session of a two-day conference sponsored by the World Press Freedom Committee.

"Current and future generations must learn the whole truth about the dark periods of 20th-century history," said Eugene Pell, director of Radio

Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which has broadcast uncensored news to the Soviet Union for decades.

Pell urged a 38-nation human rights conference meeting here to ask the Europe's former Communist nations to preserve the archives of their state, party, and secret police and open them to all researchers.

But Parkhomenko and other journalists defended the decision of KGB chief Vadim Bakatin to keep KGB files shut.

Swedish journalist Mika Larsen recalled that when the same question was raised in Poland, President Lech Walesa said the country had no time or energy to waste on revenge.

"We demand so much more of Eastern Europe and Communist countries than we would ever demand in our own countries," she said.

Her response received the only round of applause during the session.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin has offered to give Munich-based Radio Liberty a Moscow office because of its key role in keeping Soviet citizens informed during the coup. Founded and initially funded by the CIA, Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe are now financed by the U.S. Congress.

After several other protests, Pell returned to the microphone to explain that his proposal would not give journalists access to KGB files and his key proposal was to have the archives preserved.

But as the session broke up,

several Soviet journalists said the problem was opening the files at all, not who had access.

Anatoly Pankov, editor of the radical newspaper Kuranty published by the Moscow City Council, said there were problems for the media because the dictatorship of the Communist Party "has now been replaced by the dictatorship of certain democratic forces."

The printing presses that once belonged to the party now belong to the Ministry of Press of the Russian Federation, he said, referring to the Russian republic's increase in power since the central government lost power in the wake of the failed August coup.

Anatoly Krasikov, deputy director of the news agency Tass, noted that for 70 years, the Soviet government opposed a free press and the media was still coming to grips with freedom of information.

The two-day conference is being held in parallel with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which monitors the 1975 Helsinki Final Act on human rights.

Iraqis pondering startup of petrol production, export

GENEVA (AP) — Iraq could probably begin selling oil abroad "at any time," although it is still studying whether it will accept the strict U.N. rules by which it could export oil, the country's oil minister said Monday.

Osama Abdul Razzak Al-Hiti told reporters at a meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries that Iraq's present output was about 500,000 barrels a day. Of that, 45,000 barrels are earmarked for Jordan under a non-commercial arrangement.

If the U.N. trade embargo on Iraq were lifted, he said, Iraq could immediately begin exporting 1 million to 1.5 million barrels of oil a day, provided it bought some spare parts to replace equipment damaged in the Persian Gulf war.

"Technically, I think Iraq could start at any time," he said.

Before the invasion, Iraq was one of the world's biggest oil producers, pumping more than 3 million barrels of crude daily.

But it has been prevented from selling its oil under an international trade embargo that was imposed after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Under the U.N. rules, Iraq could sell \$1.6 billion for humanitarian supplies over six months, but would have no control over the sale or proceeds.

The United Nations would use up to 30 percent of the money to compensate victims of the Gulf war, and would tightly control the rest to keep it from being used by the Iraqi regime for military or political ends.

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