

Return to the world of sounds

From Moscow Pravda (Russia), June 20, 2001 Edition By Viola Yegikova

In a few days, in New York (State) there will be a signing ceremony of a document, which will initiate a very important international project on education. It will be established by institutions of higher education, which have considerable experience educating the deaf and hard of hearing. Among the participants is Bauman Moscow State Technical University (BMSTU), where there is a special center for the higher education of students with hearing problems.

Professor Igor Fedorov, rector of BMSTU, said that the problem was solved only in the early 90s with generous assistance of the Moscow government. (The Moscow mayor) Yuri Luzhkov personally participated in an inauguration of the renovated center. Current capabilities of this division of BMSTU have dramatically expanded: while 10 years ago there were only eight students, now 154 students study in the center using excellent equipment and modern computers; and, of course, unique methodologies developed here under leadership of the center's director, Alexander Stanevsky. Not surprisingly, the experience of BMSTU has drawn much attention from educators of the deaf around the world.

The most fruitful collaboration has been developed between BMSTU and the Rochester Institute of Technology in the USA, which is the home of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) having 1100 deaf students. Last year NTID received a special grant from The Nippon Foundation (Japan) to establish a multilateral international project. Its goal is to develop, based on leading institutions in various countries, centers of excellence for the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students and then to combine these benchmark centers via a unified telecommunication system aiming to expand advanced methodologies to other institutions of higher education

The project's director, Dr. James DeCaro of NTID, considers BMSTU to be one such center since its diverse experience can help successfully realize the project. BMSTU will join the project next year whereas the first center, within the international project, will open this year in China. In five years, Dr. DeCaro hopes to establish 7-10 base centers for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. He stresses that the project is not a charity. Investment in education pays off because educated people return to the state as taxes alone four times as

much as was spent for their education.

Professor Igor Fedorov concurs with his colleague but also stresses the humanistic mission of universities. It is very important that educated deaf and hard-of-hearing people become active members of society. In a sense, a university diploma returns them in the world of sounds opening broad possibilities for self-realization. The rector has no doubt that deaf BMSTU graduates will be able to find interesting jobs and will always be needed in society.