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Russian State TV Show Goes Off Message, Criticizes War on Ukraine

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Military hardware approaches the Dzhankoi crossing point on the Russian-Ukrainian border. **Alexei Konovalov / TASS**

A Russian state TV channel went off message Monday night as participants denounced the war in Ukraine.

A popular talk show broadcasted on the Russia-1 channel, “Evenings with Vladimir Solovyov,” hosted by Solovyov, one of the Kremlin’s most loyal propagandists, strayed from the Kremlin line when guests of the prime-time show began criticizing Russia’s war in Ukraine.

"Do we need to get into another Afghanistan, but even worse?” asked academic Semyon Bagdasarov.

Filmmaker Karen Shakhnazarov, also questioned the Kremlin’s decision to wage war on neighboring Ukraine, stating it risked isolating Russia and spooking its closest allies.

“I have a hard time imagining taking cities such as Kyiv. I can’t imagine how that would look,” Shakhnazarov said.

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Solovyov was forced to interrupt the guests, curbing the criticism aimed at the Kremlin.

Russian State TV is the only source of information for most Russian citizens on the war in Ukraine. After launching its offensive, the Kremlin also moved quickly to freeze out social media platforms and block several independent media outlets.

State TV seldom strays from the Kremlin’s official messaging, with Solovyev a prominent voice backing Russia’s campaign to “denazify” and “demilitarize” Ukraine.

Ukraine has been widely regarded as winning the “information war” since Russia invaded last month, including through regular updates about Russian losses, and videos of captured Russian soldiers stating they were lied to about their mission in Ukraine.

In response, the Kremlin introduced strict new laws against journalists and media platforms, attempting to suppress information about the conflict and threatening any outlets that refer to the “special military operation” as a “war” with jail time.

Western governments slapped Solovyov with sanctions following the invasion, freezing his European assets and banning him from traveling to the EU.

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