



O2TV Channel talks with Vladimir Putin about youth organizations

Moscow, December 21, 2012. O2TV Television Channel (O2TV or "the Company") participated in the news conference held by Russian President Vladimir Putin on December 20, 2012.

The conference was held in the Moscow International Trade Center. O2TV Television Channel was represented by head of O2TV Group and General Director of OAO O2TV Vladimir Pantserny.

This is not the first time the Company has been involved in such an event, including Vladimir Pantserny's Q&A session with then President of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev. In May 2011 Mr. Pantserny had the chance to address a number of questions to the Russian president.

Vladimir Putin's new conference was no exception for O2TV as the Russian president once again fielded a number of key questions from the television channel.

The following is a transcript from last week's news conference:

Q. [Vladimir Pantserny]: O2TV Youth TV channel

Mr. Putin, there is a wide variety of youth organizations in Russia. Some of them are associated with political parties, movements and what not, and a few of them are quite politicized. What do you think about forming a certain type of All-Russian youth organization under the aegis, say, of the People's Front or some other coalition of social forces? This would again be a political force uniting all the best elements that used to be part of the Komsomol or Pioneers but without any strong ideological underpinnings and it would seek to involve school children and teenagers. The point is that these people (teenagers) frequently find their own channels of expression. This organization would be engaged in patriotic education, physical education, special education, among other issues. That is my first question.

Also, further to the question posed by "Rossiya" channel about stability, it seems to me that Vladimir Putin, you are one of very few people in the world of politics and statesmen with such experience in managing such a big, vast country, and I would even venture to call you "the Russian Deng Xiaoping," given the scope of reforms you have undertaken. Have you perhaps thought about writing a book to share your experience with the public, including the younger generation? Thank you for your reply.

Vladimir Putin. *Thank you for the question and for such a flattering comparison. I don't think I deserve it, but it's nice to hear it spoken anyway.*

As for the idea of writing a book, right now I would not even have the time to dictate a book. At a certain point the idea arose among some of my friends to record at the end of the day or the end of the week at least a thumbnail sketch setting out the chronology of events but there is no time even for that. So I don't even have the luxury of recording my thoughts on a Dictaphone at the end of a day or sometime during the day. Of course it would be great if I did.



As for the idea of forming a public youth organization, I'm sure you must be aware that this thorny issue is one that is close to my heart, that is, the idea of patriotic education. Naysayers may scoff and scorn all they want when this topic is tabled for public debate, but it seems to me that the ones who scoff and scorn feel no connection between their own destiny, or that of their children, and Russia.

Your colleague to the left of you talked about my teachers and you spoke of our pensioners. How can we be disrespectful to our parents? Or how can we be disrespectful to our forerunners, the people who built our culture a thousand years ago? Unless we are mindful of this, that is, if we don't think about what our history teachers taught us in school, we will have no future. By the same token, unless we have patriotic education we will not be up for the challenge of solving the sweeping and systemic issues facing the country. A lot of us now have children or will at a later time, while those who are still too young to have kids will need to think about this if they plan to live in this country. Take a look at other countries and how they deal with the challenge of patriotic education. As you may know, in some countries there is a flag-raising ceremony that takes place in every school before classes start and nearly every house displays a state flag. This is no coincidence and it's not a minor issue, by the way.

There's no need to be doctrinaire about this issue, it should not be overly formal in nature and I'd say a creative approach it called for. That said, I would still like to get my message across, so please listen to what I have to say. A lot depends on you. You shoulder a tremendous responsibility when it comes to the destiny of your country. And this has nothing to do with politics since anyone of you or your colleagues may hold any political view, have any attitude towards the current state authorities or ongoing economic, social, domestic or international policy. But there are some overriding principles of state concern and one of them is respect for history and patriotic education.

Can such a universal organization be formed in present-day Russia? It's really quite hard to say. It seems to me that it would be quite difficult to achieve this goal. The main thing is that such an organization, and I agree with you completely on this issue, is for such an organization to be as non-political as possible. I talked in my Address about the need to support an association of student sport organizations. Maybe we will get a positive result if this is the path we decide to take.

Head of O2TV Group Vladimir Pantserny had the following to say about his question and the reply given by Vladimir Putin:

"I asked Mr. Putin a specific question about youth organizations because I believe the time has come to raise this topic at the state level. Recently, there has been a lot of wrangling about the Magnitsky Act and the issue of Russian orphans adopted by foreigners. People can argue all they want about this, but the problem is actually a lot more complicated than it seems. Why can't some parentless children find an adoptive family in Russia? This is a painful issue due to the indifference of Russian society towards these children. Indifference is the main problem facing society today and it's even more deleterious than the economic crisis. This indifferent attitude towards poor people regrettably took root in the 1990s and has since then been elevated to cult status. Back then the only thing that mattered was personal interests, turning a profit, and such qualities as kindness and mercy, or respect for those around us were relegated to the back burner.



People may have different attitudes about the Komsomol, Pioneer organization or other children's organizations dating back to the Soviet era that no longer exist. On the one hand, there was a lot of old-fashioned and worn-out ideology that made it virtually impossible for these organizations to continue to exist. But there were other facts of these organizations which were both positive and constructive. The main thing was that these organizations instilled in children and young people kindness, respect for personality and those around them and helped to educate people not to be indifferent. Back then, anyone, including young people who were having a hard time in life, could expect to receive help and not to be left destitute. But the way things are now some Russian people expect "some kind American guy" or anyone else except us to lend a helping hand.

That's why I'm in favor of creating a youth organization that would aim to teach young people to help each other, treat others with respect, to promote a sense of collectivism in the positive sense of the word, which means not to trample other people's personality. Young people need to learn how to work together for the common good and do things for the wellbeing of others and society. These organizations could take the lead in assisting people in need and also help young people – first and foremost students – by giving them the chance to unlock their potential. Perhaps young people's organizations could even be helpful in social climbing.

That being said, I feel they should be as non-political as possible and not become an appendage of any political parties. But I don't think these organizations should refrain from teaching values to young people. The President of Russia also underscored the need to respect the history of the country and the need for patriotism as the cornerstone principles of the state itself.

I read in some online publications a number of comments claiming that I and youth television channel O2TV in a news conference with the President had allegedly put forward the idea of resurrecting the Komsomol. Needless to say, I proposed nothing of the kind and the material in this press release is a reproduction of part of the transcript from the news conference so that everyone could see exactly what I said. I would like to add that I am against the idea of forming a single, 'captive', young people's organization such as the erstwhile Komsomol that would also be heavily politicized. I was pleased to note that the President concurs with me on this key issue that youth organizations should be non-political in nature.

It also seems to me that before long a large number of youth organizations will be set up in Russia. Moreover, quite a few new youth, including student, organizations are being formed in post-Soviet CIS countries. The European Youth Parliament (which has been in existence since the 1980s) has begun to operate in some of these countries even though a lot of these former Soviet republics are not members of the European Union. This should also be kept in mind. And O2TV, as a young people's television channel, has taken an interest in this issue because it broadcasts not only all across Russia, but also in a number of CIS countries and is going to expand its broadcasting footprint to post-Soviet space".

O2TV is Russia's first young people's television channel which targets an age group ranging from 16 to 35 years. The company commenced broadcasting in 2004. Nowadays, O2TV has the ability to reach 30 million viewers in 77 regions and 3,000 cities and towns across Russia. Total penetration in Moscow accounts for 11 million viewers. The channel broadcasts in NCN's Moscow cable TV network. The channel also broadcasts on free-to-air frequencies, on the networks of Rostelecom, AKADO, QWERTY, BeeLine-TV etc. Online broadcasts of the channel are also made on Russia's largest portals, video hostings and from the TV channel's official website. O2TV channel is owned by O2TV



open-joint stock company (OAO), which has had its shares listed on Russian stock exchange MICEX since 2008. For more details on the television channel and OAO O2TV, see the website www.o2tv.biz/en .

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