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City University

**The Relationship between the Mass Media and Organised
Crime in Post-Soviet Russia: A Sociological Perspective**

Submitted by

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To the City University as a thesis for the degree of Doctor Philosophy in
Sociology

Supervisor : Dr. Jean Chalaby

December 2005

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Acknowledgements

First, it should be noted that there would have been no thesis at all without the essential financial support of the Department of Sociology of City University.

Needless to say, I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Jean Chalaby of City University, my supervisor, for his assistance on all stages of my study. Wherever it has failed in accuracy of fact or logic of judgement must, however, be my responsibility.

I am grateful to Prof. Brian McNair and Prof. Frank Webster for their comments on the first draft of this thesis, but they are in no way responsible for my extrapolations of some of their ideas. This thesis would have been less than it is without the contribution of Olessia Koltsova, who gave me insight into the world of the Russian mass media and provided me with many important materials that are used in this study.

I am greatly indebted to Prof. Howard Tumber and Dr. Vadim Volkov for many stimulating ideas, which formed the theoretical framework of this research, and Dr. Richard Kania for his support during my stay in the United States and for his assistance with important books on criminology and the news media.

I am deeply grateful to Candy, Michael, Mireille, Nickolas and Stacy, all of whom read large parts of the manuscript and made corrections and thoughtful suggestions.

Finally, I would like to thank Vladimir Gusinsky, Boris Berezovsky, and the Russian political leadership, who provides us with intense political confrontation that resulted in many events which illustrate some important points of my research and helped me to meet interesting people, whose comments are a vital part of this thesis.

Declaration

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Abstract

The topic of organised crime in relation to mass media is rather marginal in academic studies and this research is one of the first attempts to fill the gap. This thesis is based on Russian media coverage and many interviews with leading Russian experts, entrepreneurs and journalists. It analyses the relationship between the mass media and organised crime in post-Communist Russia. It aims to identify the place of these social institutions in the complex reality of this transitional country, to grasp some important features of their relationship, and to provide a framework for a further analysis.

This thesis emphasises that the Russian news media have been increasingly involved in politics. It examines the media's role in relation to Russian power elites through the prism of the "symbolic method." The symbolic method is defined as a means of exercising *symbolic power* that aims to impact the *symbolic capital* of parties involved. This research shows that organised crime reporting comprises significant part of the symbolic method and, as such, is an effective instrument of political confrontation. This makes the media attractive to organised crime groups, which are deeply embedded in Russian power networks, and results in the establishment of numerous ties between the mass media and the Mafia.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the main features of the Russian media; Chapter 2 identifies the main types of Russian organised crime. Chapter 3 analyses weakness of the news media in the face of numerous methods of pressure from the power elites. This may explain the presence of ties between the Russian mass media and organised crime, which is illustrated in detail in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 outlines numerous difficulties of organised crime reporting, and Chapter 6 offers an explanation of why these problems do not prevent the media from publishing investigative stories. The final chapter reviews the history of Russian investigative journalism and assesses its role as a watchdog of the public sphere.

Symbols and Abbreviations used

BMP - Baltiysky Sea Terminal

CheKa - Emergency Committee (for the Fight against Counter-Revolutionary Activities and Sabotage)

CIS - Commonwealth of Independent States

CPRF - Communist Party of the Russian Federation

CPSU - Communist Party of the Soviet Union

FAPSI - the Federal Department of Governmental Telecommunication

FSB – the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

GAI - State Auto Inspectorate

GIBBD - State Inspection of Safety of the Highways

Gorkom - City Committee (of CPSU)

Gorispolkom - City Executive Committee

Goskomstat - State Statistics Committee

GRU - Main Intelligence Directorate (Military Intelligence)

GULAG - Chief Administration of Corrective Labour Camps

GUOP - Main Department for Combating Organised Crime

GUVD - Main Department of the Interior

KGB - the Committee of the State Security (or Committee for the State Security)*

Komsomol - Young Communist League

LDPR - Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

MK - Moskovsky Komsomolets (newspaper)

MVD - the Ministry of the Interior (Home Office)

NEP - New Economic Policy

NG - Novaia Gazeta [the New Newspaper]

NTV - Independent Television (First private TV channel in Russia)

OBEP - Department for Combating Economic Crime

OMON - Special-Purpose Militia Unit

ORT - Russian Public Television

RF - the Russian Federation

RL - Radio Liberty

RTR - Russian Television and the Radio

RUBOP - Regional Department for Combating Organised Crime

SOBR - Special Unit of Quick Reaction Forces

Sovbez - the Council of Security

TOO - Limited Liability Company

TsIK - Central Electoral Commission

UOP - Department for Combating Organised Crime

UVD - Department of the Interior

USSR- Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics

*The Committee for State Security (KGB) was dismantled in December 1991 into several units. Six units of the former KGB were reorganised into the Ministry of Security (MB) in 1992. In December 1993, MB was renamed as FSK. In April 1995, FSK changed its name to FSB.

Introduction

This thesis examines the relationship between the mass media and organised crime. Crime stories have always been popular with audiences, which has led media organizations to satisfy demand with crime reports. There are numerous studies on the relationship between the mass media and crime.¹ However, the relationship between the news media and organised crime in Russia has not been studied in detail yet. This topic is rather marginal in media research. This thesis is one of the first studies trying to fill the gap.

It focuses on Russia and examines the period of last twenty years, since 1985. This country and this period are chosen not only because organised crime in Russia is very powerful and embedded in many social institutions, and not only because of the presence of numerous reports on organised crime and corruption in the Russian mass media. The main reason for this is the fact that it has been the time when two independent processes started in Russia, following the beginning of socio-economic reforms in Russia, pursued by M. Gorbachev and modified by B. Yeltsin. The first of these processes was the increase of the independency and power of the Russian news media. The second was the rise of organised crime that soon became very powerful force, threatening the Russian state, business people and politicians alike.

It has been a period when the two growing powers tried to establish new relations between each other, relations that were based on their new roles and positions in transitional Russia. The role and status of the Russian mass media before this time were very different. The Soviet mass media was an ideological machine controlled by the Communist Party. Some sort of organised crime existed despite the ideological slogan that there was no organised crime in Soviet society. Nevertheless, organised crime had not been as multidimensional, widespread, visible and powerful as it became during Yeltsin's presidency.

¹ For example, Surette, R. (1997) *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice Images and Realities*. An International Thomson Publishing Company; Barak, G. (ed.) *Media, Progress, and the Social Construction of Crime, Studies in Newsmaking Criminology*. New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc; Hewitt K.D. and Osborn, R. (1995) *Crime and the Media: The Post-Modern Spectacle*. London.

This thesis examines various aspects of the newly established relationship between these two powers. First, it explains why the media has become attractive for criminal syndicates. Second, it assesses the arsenal of methods available to organised crime groups in order to put pressures on media organisations and compares it with the power of media's response. Third, it examines the connections of organised crime with the mass media.

It should be noted that a full knowledge about the relationship between the Russian mass media and organised crime is unlikely to be achieved without a clear understanding of the place occupied by these two institutions in the complex reality of post-Soviet Russia. Consequently, one of the important objectives of this research is to embed the mass media, organised crime, and their relationship into a larger picture of Russian society on the verge of the third millenium. As a matter of fact, I regard this to be the most important asset of this research, because it gives us an opportunity to compare the developments of these two powers and to establish a solid base that can be used for further detailed studies of the relationship between organised crime and the media in post-Communist Russia.

This thesis tests the following set of interconnected hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Russian organised crime is connected with economic and political elites in Russia;

Hypothesis 2. The increased status of the Russian mass media is explained by its monopoly on the use of the “symbolic method”, which is one of the major instruments in intense political competition between the power elites;

Hypothesis 3. Crime coverage (especially reports on organised crime and corruption), which is an important part of the symbolic method, plays a very important role in the political campaigns;

Hypothesis 4. Because of that, organised crime (which is a significant component of the power elites) is interested in the news media, and it has established ties with some media companies.

It is evident that quantitative methods are not especially useful for this research. Qualitative methods are more appropriate, but there is a problem of collecting information. At first glance, personal interviews are the most promising source, but they have several disadvantages, which are especially obvious in the study of the relationship between organised crime and the mass media. Drawbacks of personal interviews are not only problems of cost and time, which are frequently mentioned among major disadvantages of this method.² There are a number of other difficulties.

The access to journalists is one of them. As it will be shown in this thesis, the status of the Russian mass media has significantly increased. Many journalists are regarded at least as important as politicians in Russia. In fact, many of the journalists have a higher esteem for themselves than for high-ranking officials and well-known politicians (including the Prime Minister and President).³ Given that they are normally very busy, it is evident that to make an appointment for an interview with any of them is difficult.

The major obstacle, however, is the problem of respondent's bias, which is strongly strengthened by the features of the research object. The topic of organised crime and corruption is dangerous to cover. Many examples show that respondents may risk their life. Furthermore, it is the topic that is not convenient to talk. The reputation of a media outlet can be negatively affected if this sort of information is disclosed. It means that we are unlikely to receive reliable answers from the respondents.

In addition, the research should be based on clear and comprehensive information, for example, regarding the pressure on the mass media. Most people, including journalists, cannot remember everything, and, during interviews, are unable to give much needed details such as names and the time of some important events. Finally, if an

² Wimmer, R. and Dominick, J. (1994) *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, p. 129.

³ For example, Tregubova, E. (2004) *Bayki Kremlevskogo Diggera* [A Kremlin Digger's Tales]. Moskva: Ad Marginem.

interview took place, the researcher is under invisible obligation not to reveal information that can hurt his source. In these circumstances, it is evident that personal interviews cannot be used as the main method for this study.⁴

Fortunately, there is no particular need for interviews. Very valuable data can be obtained from hard selective work of numerous printed sources. First, Russian journalists have recently published several books, in which they reveal much verified data about the situation in the Russian mass media and their relationship with authorities.⁵

The second source is the media reports. From time to time journalists give interviews (to other prominent journalists) and reveal a lot of information that can be analysed and used for this research. In addition, there are reports in which the media disclose information about Russian media companies and journalists. This source is not particularly important in Western societies, where the media constitute an independent social institution. It is, however, an abundant source of data regarding the Russian news media.

Third, a textual analysis of the media reports can give an insight into organised crime coverage in Russia.⁶ It should be noted, though, that texts should be analysed in a broader framework. I adopt Fairclough's approach, which implies that text is the product of interaction between the processes of production and interpretation that are embedded into societal, institutional and situational context.⁷ The knowledge of these contextual factors is important to understand the hidden mechanism of news production and relations within the mass media.

These printed sources lack the drawbacks mentioned above. They are more easily verifiable. Furthermore, even if some media may sometimes twist their reports, this sort of data is generally more reliable than those obtained from personal interviews (the fact that it has been published shows that its authors are ready to be taken into court in order to defend their words). Finally, a researcher does not have direct or indirect obligations to the sources and is free to give his or her critical interpretation of the events.

⁴ Interviews are important, of course, but they should be used only as a supplementary method.

⁵ For example, books by Borovik, Tokareva, Tregubova, Konstantinov, Vachnadze, and Vitaliev.

⁶ Some details can be found in Deacon, D., Pickering, M., Golding, P. and Murdock, G. (1999) *Researching Communications*. London: Arnold, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 132-161.

⁷ Fairclough, N. (1989) *Language and Power*. London and New York: Longman, p. 34.

Thus, the findings of this research is drawn from many sources, including an analysis of nearly one thousand publications on organised crime and corruption reported by the Russian and Western press, aired by the Russian nationwide TV channels, and published by leading investigative Internet news agencies. Although interviews have several drawbacks, they are still important for obtaining first hand data so I used information collected from twenty-five interviews with media researchers, Russian and British reporters, investigative journalists, representatives of Russian law enforcement agencies, politicians, and media managers. The interviews were conducted in London, Moscow and St. Petersburg, mainly from 2000 to 2003. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about respondents' reflections on Russian powerful elites and their relations with media organisations. Although the interviews were open-ended and depended on professions and positions of the individuals, I always tried to refer to their own experience in order to verify what they were saying. When I was not able to arrange a meeting with someone, I analysed the interviews given by him or her to other people.

As I realised that any data associated with organised crime is based on many assumptions and indirect evidence, I used several sources so that I could triangulate. In addition to interviews, I have explored a great deal of survey material, Russian television programmes, the literature of political science, as well as media and organised crime studies. I also used my own observations on the work of journalists and their relations with power elites and the public. Most examples of this thesis are taken from the interviews that were confirmed by mass media publications. I used only the most reliable sources, such as the reports of the most respected Russian media companies and agencies.⁸ In some cases I have observed developments surrounding some personages of this thesis for several years.

I used interviews as an opportunity to find out general opinions and estimates about what is going on in the Russian media community and to identify problems of journalistic work. When appropriate I always tried to move to facts and details such as names of people involved and timing. From my experience, it was difficult part for respondents, so I asked to indicate possible additional printed sources on any particular case. Then I searched for the recommended sources and studied them in detail. Such a

⁸ For example, *Newsru.com*, *Strana.ru*, *Interfax.ru* - leading Russian news websites

procedure allowed me to collect primary data, which was accomplished, refined, and verified by secondary sources.

The data collected has not been used randomly or uncritically. Even the information taken from interviews has not been taken for granted. Neither did I use data obtained from a source independently from the other information collected on the subject. Moreover, I tried to embed all facts into an institutional and societal context and to identify possible interests and incentives of parties involved. My ultimate goal was to combine all evidence into an internally non-controversial scheme that can be analysed from an academic perspective.

This scheme is not a final academic verdict; it is rather a sort of report produced by a prosecutor, who has studied all evidence on a particular case and formed his vision of the event. It is known that prosecutor versions do not necessarily accurately reflect the reality and should be examined and verified by the court. Likewise, I propose my scheme, drawn from collected evidence, and expect its critical assessment and evaluation from Russian media experts and the world academic community.

My key argument is that post-1991, the Russian mass media became an important player in confrontation between powerful networks because of the increased role of the symbolic method due to a rise of democratic institutions and a decline of popularity of using coercive methods for economic and political benefits. This thesis defines the symbolic method as a means of confrontation aiming to downgrade the symbolic capital of the opponents. It should be noticed, though, that it would be a mistake to claim that the symbolic method completely overpowers the use of other available methods, which are also outlined in this study. It is more accurate to say that the symbolic method has occupied a very important place in the arsenals of confronting powerful networks, which made the mass media an attractive asset for organised crime and resulted in establishing ties between the media and the Mafia.

The composition of this thesis is rather complex as it reflects the complexity of interdependence and interaction between Russian powerful elites, including the relationship between media companies and organised crime. Structurally, this thesis can hardly be broken into parts because all of its seven chapters are closely connected with each other, and, consequently, any separation is likely to undermine a number of

important ties between some of them. To demonstrate this and alleviate the task of getting through the text, I provide a scheme of ties between the chapters, shown in Figure I.1.

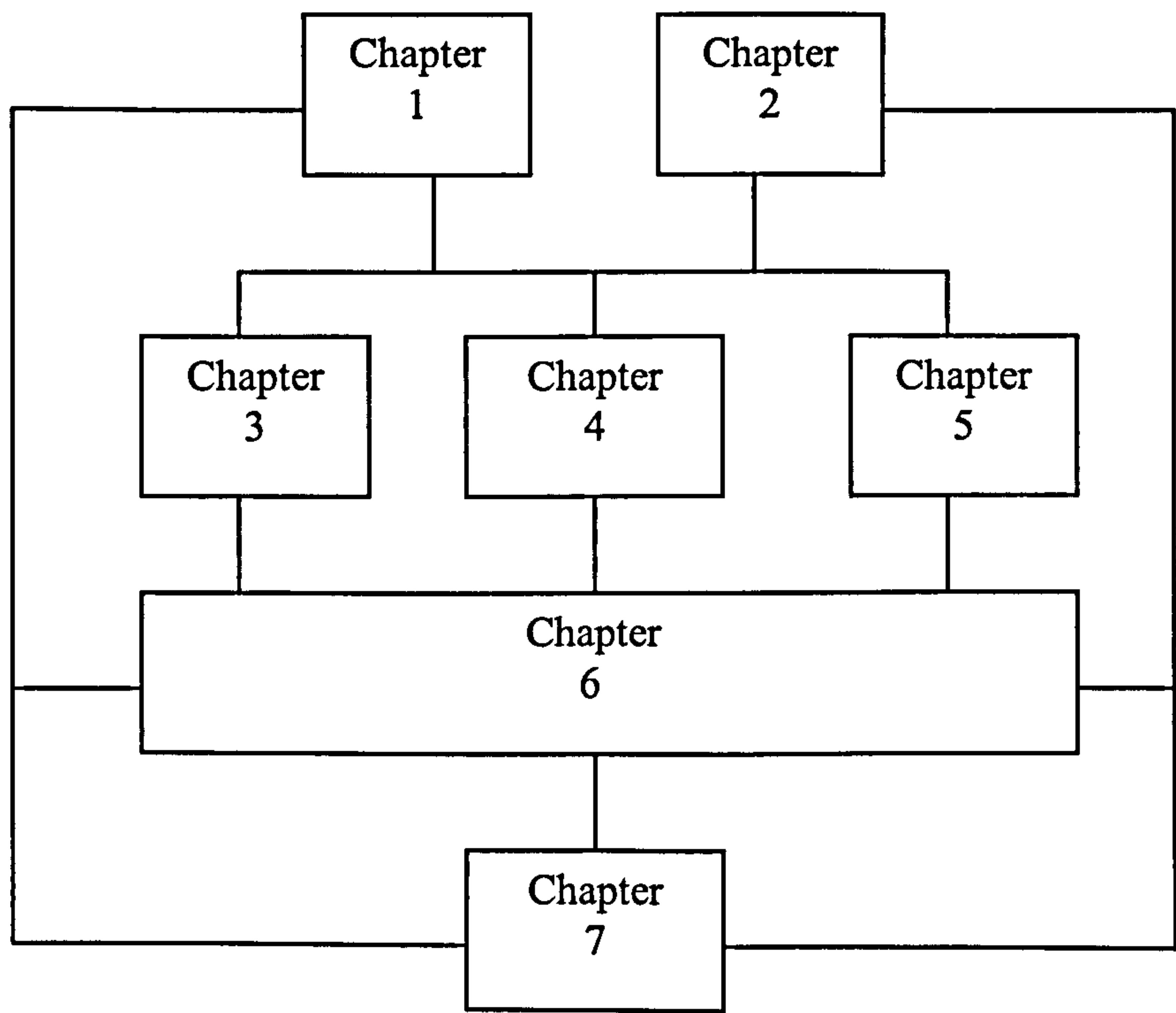


Figure I.1 Ties between Chapters in this Thesis.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 introduce and describe in some detail the Russian mass media and organised crime, two main subjects of this thesis, which is vital for understanding the content of the entire thesis. The subsequent chapters explore various aspects of the relationship between media companies and organised crime. Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, while focusing on different features of the relationship, generally provide evidence on the ties, established between some Russian media organisations and criminal syndicates, and suggest an explanation of why the news media can hardly avoid being dominated by organised crime and other powerful elites.

Chapter 6 explains why powerful actors are interested in ties with the media and provides a number of examples of how media organisations can be used for obtaining political benefits. The final chapter analyses the branch of journalism that should aim to represent the right way of relations between the media and organised crime: Russian

investigative journalism. However, it shows that Russian investigative journalism has not avoided deficiencies of other media networks and does not play an adequate role in the reinstatement of the public sphere.

The following sections of this introduction review the content of the chapters in more detail. Thus, Chapter 1 reviews the Russian mass media, its history, main developments, problems and actors. The first section of the chapter briefly reviews the period from 1917 to 1991 and shows that the development of the Russian news media at that period was greatly controlled by the political leadership of the Soviet Union. The relationship between the state and the media had been determined by Lenin's ideology of the dominance of the Communist Party over the political structure of the Soviet Republic. The media was seen as a tool that can be used by the leadership of Communist Party in order to explain its ideas and to dictate its will. Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev slightly modified this approach so that it could help them to reach their own targets.

The process of significant changes in the relationship between the mass media and the Russian government started during the Yeltsin era. Although Yeltsin tried to manipulate the media in first years of his presidency, progressively, the major Russian media organisations had been taken under control by the Russian oligarchs. The oligarchs is the group of richest men in Russia, who made their multi-billion pound fortunes during the privatisation of leading Russian state enterprises that was launched by Yeltsin. The oligarchs and their media companies helped Yeltsin to win the presidential election in 1996. After that, however, the communication between the Russian state and the news media became greatly mediated by the oligarchs.

After Yeltsin's resignation on 31 December 1999, Vladimir Putin, the new President of Russia, started reforms that have made a considerable impact on the Russian mass media. The last section of the chapter examines main trends of Putin's reforms and analyzes his policy towards the media. Although Putin always underlines his support for democracy and freedom of the press, some of his policies have been strongly criticised in the Western media. In particular, the Western media has condemned his position towards Gusinsky and Berezovsky, the two biggest former media moguls, who were forced to leave Russia after facing numerous charges ranging from fraud to tax evasion.

Chapter 2 explores Russian organised crime. It notes that the rise of organised crime was one of the most serious problems of the Russian Federation in the mid-1990s. The main purpose of the chapter is to review the structure and history of organised crime in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. The chapter suggests that it would be a mistake to view Russian organised crime as a lasting monolithic social phenomenon. On the contrary, it argues that Russian organised crime is a mix of different types of criminal networks, each of which has its own methods, structure, history, traditions and rituals.

The first type is *vori-v-zakone* [thieves in law]. *Thieves in law* emerged during Stalin's rule and continue to be very powerful in Russia. The second type of organised crime is *illegal entrepreneurs*. This type encompasses entrepreneurs whose economic activities were illegal from the viewpoint of the Soviet Law. The *administrative Mafia* is another significant part of Russian organised crime. Finally, *bandits*, is a relatively new criminal type that has become one of the most dominant in Russia.

The chapter describes each of these types and analyses their features, structure, significance and development. This structure is chosen because the history of organised crime in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia is an interaction of all above-mentioned types of the criminal underworld. The chapter shows that organised crime has embedded itself in almost all Russian institutions and is a considerable component of powerful elites.

Why media companies are biased in their reporting organised crime is explained in Chapter 3. It argues that although there is an opinion that the media represents reality with little or no distortion, the content of media reports is influenced by a number of factors related to both the internal features of media industries and a diversified set of external pressures. The chapter analyses the range and power of these factors.

The factors are broken into two big groups – internal and external factors. *Internal* factors are related to the media internal environment: the structure of mass media, the professionalism of media workers, missions of media organisations, their goals and ethical rules. Internal factors and their impact are described in the first section of the chapter. *External* factors are a set of coercive methods that can be used by external actors in order to force the news media to provide a required coverage of some events. I propose to include in the classification of external factors *regulatory, administrative, economic* (advertisement and other contracts), *judicial, informative, symbolic, violent* and *law*

enforcement methods. Their impact on media content is examined in the second section of the chapter.

Although Russian media organisations are not as strong and independent as the mass media in some of the developed Western democracies, they have some resources that may allow them to resist external coercion. They are reviewed in the last section, in which I argue that the methods and resources of the media companies are not sufficient to resist effectively to the coercion of external powerful networks.

Chapter 4 examines ties between the Russian mass media and organised crime. As it has been shown in the previous chapters, the Russian news media are very vulnerable to the pressures from powerful elites. No wonder that there are many examples of connections between the Russian media companies and criminal syndicates.

The chapter argues that the owners of media companies is the social group that is most linked to the criminal underworld. It happens because criminal authorities are involved in legal business transactions and often try to hide their criminal background. The control of media organisations could allow them to diminish transaction costs for their commercial projects, improve their political status, and increase their chances of gaining political and economic advantages over the competitors.

To a lesser extent, some executives of media companies are also involved in illegal transactions. The chapter shows that the complex reality of capitalist reforms encouraged some media executives to use their positions to seek opportunities for personal benefit. It is illustrated by several cases of corruption in St. Petersburg's Channel 5 and some dark transactions of Media-Most.

Numerous examples of the chapter attempt to prove the presence of various ties between organised crime and the mass media in Russia. Although any connections between organised crime and the media can hardly be appropriate for any normal society, the chapter points out that Russian media companies are involved in several forms of transactions with people or organisations that may be linked to organised crime.

Chapter 5 examines the main problems encountered by Russian journalists, who report on organised crime and corruption. It shows that reporting on organised crime is a dangerous activity. There is significant risk for journalists to be legally persecuted, to be injured or even killed during a journalistic investigation, after publishing the stories or

simply while convoying the people who might be linked with or tackle against organised crime.

The chapter summarises the cases of threats, violence, and other criminal offences against journalists, including such serious crime as murder. Also, it shows the availability of legal action as a means of making life difficult for those who write and publish reports on organised crime and corruption. The chapter argues that Russian news media organisations and journalists should take into account many possible obstacles, difficulties and dangers before making a decision to start journalistic investigations or to publish stories on corruption and organised crime. In other words, the media should have very significant reasons to do so.

Chapter 6 explains why the Russian mass media reports on organised crime and corruption in spite of encountering numerous problems. It argues that these reports reflect the changed role of the Russian media in the competition between powerful groups. The chapter refers to the extent of democratic values in Russia and points out that the negative media coverage of political opponents may give significant competitive advantage in a political campaign. The chapter shows that power elites use the negative media coverage frequently and organised crime reports have recurrently been a part of these political campaigns, influencing an erosion of the public sphere in Russia.

The final chapter of this thesis focuses on the investigative journalism in Russia, which is supposed to be a watchdog of the public sphere. The main task of investigative journalists is to alert the public when the boundaries between legal and illegal action were overstepped by some businessmen or politicians. Since many aspects of organised crime and corruption are on the boundary between legality and illegality, organised crime and corruption is the major concern of investigative journalism.

The chapter not only examines the main trends of investigative journalism in Russia but also presents its major actors. It describes leading Russian investigative media organisations and journalists and reviews their biographies, methods and achievements. The first section focuses in a greater extent on investigative journalism in the press, the second section refers to the developments on television, while the final section reviews major investigative websites.

The chapter points out that connections with law enforcement agencies and organised crime is one of the features of investigative journalism in Russia. The chapter also shows that Russian investigative journalists are involved in political communication. Although managers of investigative media companies insist that their organisations are not politically motivated or financed, the reality of Russia does not allow them to stay away from power elites.

In the conclusion, I summarise the main points of this thesis and make some recommendations to improve the situation. I suggest that the state media policy should be reconsidered so that news organisations become more independent and more protected from the pressures of power elites. I also suggest that the media system itself should be reformed and transferred to the larger control of the public. Otherwise, the media is at risk of continuing to be embroiled in the multifarious network of Russian organised crime.

Chapter 1

The Russian Mass Media: Main Trends and Problems

The role and the structure of Russian mass media have changed significantly over the last few decades. It has been quickly transformed from a vehicle of propaganda driven by the Communist Party into an independent force, which played a very important role in the fundamental restructuring of the political system of Russia. This chapter describes the main trends of this period of transition.

The second aim of this chapter is to briefly present the structure of the Russian news media. It is not very different from the media structure in most countries: the press, radio, television and the Internet. However, because the Russian media system is weakly integrated in the world media system, a Western reader may face some difficulties in understanding the role and significance of one or another Russian media companies which are mentioned in this thesis. For this purpose, the chapter very briefly outlines the main developments of the components of the Russian media system and introduces the major actors in the Russian media market.

First, this chapter briefly analyses the Soviet mass media. In the beginning it describes developments around the Soviet press under communist rule (before 1985). Then it shows the extent of Gorbachev's reforms and analyses their impact on the media. Main media developments during the Yeltsin era (1989-1999) are discussed in the second section. It was a very controversial and multidimensional period of Russian history, especially with regard to the news media.

The relationship between the state and the media has considerably changed during Putin's presidency. The character of these changes and public response to those are summarised in Section 2.2. Finally, I refer to some analytic studies that tried to assess the role of the Soviet and post-Soviet mass media in the context of modernity. I shall argue that these studies have not succeeded in their evaluation because they failed to understand fundamentals of Soviet society.

1.1. The Soviet Mass Media (1917-1991)

1.1.1. The Soviet Mass Media under the Communist Party – State Control (1917-1985)

The mass media in Russia was under communist rule for more than 70 years. The ideology of communism made a significant impact on its structure and coverage. The Soviet model of media policy was developed by Vladimir Lenin and was not transformed significantly during the communist period (1917- 1985). It is based on the principle that the state under the control of the Communist Party must use the media to clarify and disseminate communist ideas.

This section examines the main principles of the communist doctrine and their implementation in the practice of the Soviet mass media from Stalin to Gorbachev. First, it describes the model of relationship between the media and state and its transformation during this period. Then it shows developments of the main components of the Soviet media, which are the press, radio and television.

1.1.1.1. Approach of Soviet Leaders to the Mass Media

Lenin was the most prominent of the Soviet leaders, whose ideas and actions had the strongest impact on the Soviet mass media. The underlining philosophy of Lenin's approach to the media was as follows: a world where the owners of plants and enterprises have all the power and wealth is not a just world. A revolution is necessary in order to destroy this injustice. The proletariat, that is workers, is the most revolutionary force. However, because of a lack of education, it needs guidance from the Communist Party, whose members include the most prominent workers, thinkers and experts. The mission of the Communist Party is to help the proletariat to seize power and to become the dominant social force.

The state, although being an exploitative machine, can be employed by the Communist Party to ensure the victory of the proletariat. The media should be an important instrument to reinforce the state and the Communist Party to reach this

supreme goal. In other words, Lenin argued that the state under the control of the Communist Party should use the news media in order to clarify and disseminate communist ideas.⁹

Because the press was the main component of the mass media at that time, Lenin's theory focused on it. Lenin considered the newspaper as the centre of revolutionary action and thought. In his opinion, the newspaper was not only an institution but also a means of communication and persuasion. It was supposed to join people into a powerful social group. "The newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator - it is also a collective organiser," – was one of Lenin often quoted slogans.¹⁰ Lenin's experience with *Iskra* [The Spark] helped him to realise the propagandistic potential of printed media, and he came to view newspapers as a vehicle for conveying the party line to members of the Bolshevik Party and to the masses. Lenin also highlighted the importance of control over personnel and supported the idea of censorship of newspaper content.¹¹

Although each successive Soviet leader had somewhat different views on socialism and communism in general, and on the role of the media in particular, each of their media policies remained based on Lenin's principles. Stalin did not considerably expand Lenin's theory of the press. In fact, he narrowed it. It could be said that his attitude towards the press resembled that of a battlefield commander's toward his subordinates. In Stalin's view, the press was a weapon of political confrontation: "The press is the most powerful instrument with which the party daily, hourly speaks with the labouring class in its own vital language."¹² However, Stalin skilfully implemented some of Lenin's theories: it was he who built the Soviet mass media structure, incorporating purposefulness, dullness and conformity.¹³

Nikita Khrushchev, who was the Soviet leader from 1953 to 1964, did not contribute a lot to party's ideas on the Soviet media. However, in contrast to Stalin's

⁹ A good review of the Soviet model is presented by Brian McNair (McNair, B. (1991) *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, London: Routledge, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3).

¹⁰ Lenin, V. (1959) "S chego nachat" [How shall we start?]. *Polnoe Sobranie Sochineniy*, Vol. 5, Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatelstvo Politicheskoy Literatury, p. 11.

¹¹ Hollander, G. D. (1972) *Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda Since Stalin*. Praeger Publishers, p. 32.

¹² Hopkins, W. M. (1970) *Mass Media in the Soviet Union*. New York: Pegasus, p. 74.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

intention of having a completely loyal media, Khrushchev expanded the range of the media's liberties, leading it to resemble a marketplace of ideas. Believing that a freedom of discussion could contribute to social development, Khrushchev allowed the media to be a relatively independent social force. In this sense, he turned the clock back to the 1920's when the role and freedoms of the Soviet media were widely debated. However, this approach did not mean that the media became completely independent of the Communist Party.¹⁴

After Khrushchev had been ousted in 1964, the Party's grip on the media was restored. Brezhnev's team demolished even the very limited liberties which the Soviet news media had had during Khrushchev's time. It restored the party monopoly over the media and attempted to undermine dissemination of any views and ideas that were different from the official party doctrine. Gayle Hollander argues that the increased use of coercion, the cutback of foreign sources of information for the population, and the decreased access to information by foreign journalists concerning Soviet life indicated that the Soviet system continued the totalitarian model, which permitted some liberties in relatively unimportant matters but heavily relied on coercive means as far as its major values were concerned.¹⁵

1.1.1.2. The Soviet Media System

The Soviet media system was large and multidimensional. Its main components were the press, radio and television. This section analyses them in depth.

1.1.1.2.1. The Soviet Press from 1917 to 1985

The day after the Bolshevik Party came to power on 7 November 1917, several Petrograd opposition newspapers were closed. According to Hopkins, 884 newspapers were published in Russia in 1918 (about 18 newspapers per 1,000 people). The average individual circulation was 3,100 copies with total output 2.7 million copies. There were

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁵ Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda Since Stalin*, p. 195.

743 journals and magazines. By contrast, in 1913, there were 1,055 newspapers with a total circulation of 3.3 million issues (21 per 1,000) and 1,472 periodicals.¹⁶ However, the party control over the press was relatively weak, especially outside main cities.

In the 1920-30's the Communist Party tackled the disorganisation within the press and created a large network of journals and newspapers, which were available to almost all social groups in Russia. Stalin's main goal was to increase circulation and the number of newspapers and to extend the party dominance across the country, which he succeeded doing. The party made considerable investments into the Soviet mass media and stiffened its censorship and supervision. The number of newspapers increased from about 1,200 in 1928 to 10,668 in 1934. Total circulation grew from 9.4 million to 34.7 million. These figures remained relatively stable until World War II.¹⁷ Table 1.1 represents the dynamics of the Soviet press during this period.

Table 1.1 Soviet Newspaper Press: 1913 - 1953

Year	Number of newspapers	Circulation (Millions)	Average Circulation (Thousands)
1913	1,005	3.3	3.3
1918	889	1.7	3.1
1922	803	20.5	3.2
1923	528	2.2	2.6
1928	1,197	9.4	7.9
1932	7,536	35.5	4.7
1933	8,319	35.7	4.3
1934	10,668	34.7	3.3
1935	9,990	35.7	3.6
1937	8,521	36.2	4.2
1939	8,780	38.0	4.3
1940	8,806	38.4	4.4
1945	6,455	23.2	3.6
1947	7,163	31.1	4.3
1950	7,831	36.0	4.6
1952	8,299	41.7	5.0
1953	7,754	44.2	5.7

Source: *Pechat SSSR za Sorok Let: 1917-1957* [The Russian press during 40 years: 1917-1957], Moskva: Finansi i Statistika, p. 123; *Pechat Rossii za 50 Let: Statisticheskie Oчерki* [The Russian press during 50 years: statistical reports] (1967) Moskva: Finansi i Statistika, p. 132.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

During World War II the numbers and circulation of newspapers and magazines dropped dramatically. For example, the circulation of *Pravda* decreased from 2 million in 1940 to 1 million in 1944. By 1945 the total newspaper circulation decreased to 23 million. After the war the Communist Party of the Soviet Union made an effort to revive the media and its structure was gradually restored. There were almost 8,000 different newspapers publishing a total of almost 170 million copies in the Soviet Union in 1970.

Soviet newspapers were organised in strata. Nationwide newspapers, called the central press or All-Union newspapers, were at the top of the hierarchy. The second level included republic newspapers. Then there were the newspapers of provinces, cities and districts. The lowest level of the hierarchy was composed of the newspapers of individual factories and state agricultural firms.¹⁸

The main Soviet newspapers were: *Pravda* - a mouthpiece of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union; *Izvestia* - the organ of the government; *Komsomolskaya Pravda* - a mouthpiece of the youth organisation; and *Trud* - the organ of the trade unions. They had impressively large circulation figures: *Pravda* – circulation of over 10.5 million copies annually; *Izvestia* - circulation of 8 million copies; *Komsomolskaya Pravda* – circulation of almost 10 million copies; *Trud* had a circulation of almost 8.5 million copies.¹⁹

In a nationwide newspaper (such as *Pravda*) the first page normally contained an editorial, official news, as well as short domestic and foreign news stories. The second page was devoted to stories on the Communist Party. The next page published selected letters to the editor and domestic news. Page four presented foreign news, which normally focused on the situation in Communist countries. Reports from foreign capitalist countries were located on page five. All other stories such as humour, health advice and sports were placed on the back page.²⁰

Most of the stories published were relatively outdated: only 15 per cent of newspapers reported events that occurred recently.²¹ It was a direct outcome of the role of the media as an ideological instrument of the Communist Party which was supposed to

¹⁸ Hollander, Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda Since Stalin; Mickiewicz, E. P. (1981) *Media and the Russian Public*. New York: Praeger, p. 51.

¹⁹ Data for 1976.

²⁰ Mickiewicz, *Media and the Russian Public*, p. 54.

²¹ Kaiser, R.G (1976) *Russia: The People and the Power*. Brattleboro, Vt.: Book Press, p. 236.

explain the party policy rather than entertain an audience. As the Soviet press was subsidised by the CPSU and the state, there was no advertising. The party believed that the mass media had enough finance and should not seek for additional financial support.

The control of the CPSU forced the Soviet mass media to portray Marxism – Leninism as the only one truly “scientific” theory and to dismiss oppositional views. Only a limited range of opinions was permitted. And the reports that expressed them were regarding relatively non-significant matters. Despite strong ideological control, some human interest stories were published in the Soviet press. However, even these stories highlighted communist values.

Many usual topics for the Western media were not reported by the Soviet press. There was no information regarding celebrities and fashion in Soviet newspapers. Also, it was unlikely to find any advice on holiday travel. Astrology was seen as non-science and, consequently, no horoscope was published there. News of disasters and accidents were only slightly reported, crime and sensational stories went often unreported at all because they were on the list of the subjects prohibited from presentation in the Soviet newspapers.

As Kaiser has correctly observed, the list of forbidden topics included “information about crime, drugs, accidents, natural disasters, occupational injuries, official organs of censorship, security intelligence, schedules of travelled for the political leadership, income and purchasing power structure at home and abroad, arms sales abroad, crime or morale problems in the armed forces, hostile actions against Soviet citizens abroad, and special payment and education of athletes.”²²

1.1.1.2.2. Soviet Radio from 1917 to 1985

Radio played a very important role in the early years of the Soviet era. Radio broadcast Lenin’s first address to the citizen of Russia in October 1917. Regular radio broadcasting began in the 1920’s. The first radio concert took place in 1922 and music became a considerable part of the content of radio programmes. Radio audiences constantly

²² Ibid., pp. 243-44.

increased, especially after 1924, when several Soviet republics started regular radio transmissions.

Although it remained relatively unexploited until after World War II, radio broadcasting made significant progress during this period. There were 60 operating radio stations with 1.3 million registered receivers in the Soviet Union at the end of 1933. By 1940 these figures increased to 90 radio stations with about 7 million receivers.²³

During World War II radio broadcast was widely used in order to mobilise the Soviet population to fight against the German army. Radio was the main media channel to deliver the latest news of the war. Special radio programs were broadcast for people of occupied territories.

After the war, radio continued to be an important propaganda tool and gained essential support from the Communist Party and the state. In October 1960, radio provided a 24-hours service with total coverage amounting to 78 hours.²⁴ However, at that time the importance of radio started to decline because of the progress made in the development of television. The main developments and the structure of Soviet television are reviewed in the next section.

1.1.1.2.3. Soviet Television

Soviet television had its origin at the beginning of the 1930s. Regular broadcasting was provided in 1939. At that time only one hundred television receivers were able to accept television programs, and those were located only in the Moscow oblast.²⁵ Further development of Soviet television was slowed by World War II. Television gained a mass audience only in the 1960s.

However, it expanded quickly after 1960. If there were only 4.8 million television sets in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, this number had climbed to over 55 million in 1975.²⁶ Colour transmissions started in 1967. In 1974, about 67 per cent of the families in the Soviet Union owned a television and 6 per cent of television sets were colour sets.

²³ Hopkins, *Mass Media in the Soviet Union*, p. 94.

²⁴ Mehta, D.S. (1987) *Mass Media in the USSR*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 59.

²⁵ McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, p. 48.

²⁶ Mickiewicz, *Media and the Russian Public*, p. 18.

Broadcasts were transmitted through the network of television stations. There was the major television station in Moscow, and each of the 14 Soviet republics also had its television station. In addition, there were 109 television stations in large Russian cities and provincial capitals.²⁷ However, television programmes were not evenly accessible: while the European part was densely covered with central television networks, Siberia and the East had only local lines.²⁸

The amount of broadcasting time grew steadily. For example, in the early days of Soviet television programmes were broadcast less than four hours a day. By 1975 the total air time of colour programmes on Channel 1 reached 60 hours a week.²⁹ However, while the number of hours of programming increased, the Soviet government faced an unsuspected problem. Because communication lines could not provide equally wide dispersion of signals for several TV channels, some local television stations substituted central TV programmes (which they were unable to receive or amplify) by their own local programming. As a result, many Russian-language transmissions were replaced by programmes in local languages. In order to avoid the possibility of national tensions, the Union–Republic State Committee for radio and television under the Council of Ministers of the USSR was established in 1970.³⁰

In the 1980's there were four national TV channels in the Soviet Union. Channel 1 was the most important. It aired significant political and official programmes. Channel 2 was devoted to local programmes. Channel 3 was educational. It carried lessons for schoolchildren and adult-education courses. Channel 4 broadcast shows, feature films, plays, and other entertainment programmes.³¹

The ideological potential of television was quickly recognized by leaders of the CPSU. Television broadcasting was supposed to support the Soviet ideological doctrine. Consequently, the content of television programmes was controlled and administered centrally. The chief executives of Soviet television were normally appointed by the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁸ Gordon, L.A. and Gruzdeva, E. (1975) "Rasprostranenie i intensivnost chtenia v gorodskoy rabochei srede" [Extent and intensity of reading by workers in cities], *Problemy Sotsiologii i Psihologii Chtenia*. Moscow, p. 60.

²⁹ Mickiewicz, *Media and the Russian Public*, p. 18.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

³¹ Ibid., p. 20.

Central Committee of the CPSU, and this fact alone shows how highly regarded was television in the Soviet Union.

1.1.1.3. Summary of the State – Mass Media Relationship in 1917-1985

The main element of relationship between the state and mass media was the dominance of the state. The media was regarded as an important instrument to help the Communist Party to reach its main goal – to help the proletariat to seize power and to become the dominant social force. This approach justified any use of coercive means against the media in the case if it disputed the truth of communist ideas or disagreed with the party policy towards the news media.

The task of providing requested media coverage was sorted in several ways. Brian McNair has noted several methods that could be used for this purpose. The CPSU was empowered to grant licenses. It provided financial support and controlled the process of media policy-making. Furthermore, the Communist Party appointed chief editors of the Soviet mass media and supervised the training of journalists. Finally, if all these methods of influence were not sufficient, the party could use censorship, i.e., demanded to change or remove articles that did not satisfy the leadership of the CPSU.³²

It should be noted that censorship did not play a very important role in the relationship between the media and the state.³³ For example, Antony Buzek correctly observed that although censorship was one of the major methods of control over the Soviet mass media, it was rather on the bottom of the hierarchy.³⁴ Lilita Dzirkals expressed a similar viewpoint by arguing that the Soviet news media was structured in such a way as to “necessitate limited direct intervention” of authorities. She pointed out that the censorship department played a relatively minor role in the process of regulating the content of media coverage in Russia. It was chief editors who worked out most of this job.³⁵

³² McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, p. 49.

³³ These comments are important to keep in mind while analysing the interrelation between the state and the mass media in Russia during all stages of its history.

³⁴ Buzek, A. (1964) *How the Communist Press Works*. London: Pall Mall Press.

³⁵ Dzirkals, L. (1982) “Media Direction and Control in the USSR”, in J. Carry and J. Dasssin (1982) *Press Control around the World*. New York: Praeger, pp. 85-103; McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, p. 50.

1.1.2. Mikhail Gorbachev and the Soviet Mass Media

This section analyses how the Soviet mass media and its relationship with public authorities were transformed during the Gorbachev era. Although the Communist Party continued to control the media during Gorbachev's leadership, there were very significant changes in the mass media coverage and policies. This section presents a brief outline of these changes.

In April 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev claimed that many aspects of Soviet life should be modified. He wanted to change many social, political and economic realities of the Soviet Union and create a new, more democratic regime in the country. One of the major policies used by Gorbachev in order to revitalise Russia came to be known as *Glasnost*. The purpose of *Glasnost* was to make many previously hidden facts and data more transparent for the Soviet people.

The news media was seen as the most important instrument for the implementation of this policy. The policy of *Glasnost* is thought to have been launched by an article published in *Pravda*, the major newspaper of the time, on 13 February 1986. The article included a letter from a reader, who expressed his view that "in discussing social justices, one cannot close one's eyes to the fact that the Communist Party, Trade Unions, [...] and even Young Communist League officials intentionally deepen social inequality by taking advantage of all sorts of special refreshment bars and special stores."³⁶ In other words, the article disputed party privileges. It is worth mentioning, that it was published on the eve of the 27th Party Congress. According to Victor Afanasev, the chief editor of *Pravda*, it was this article that opened the era of *Glasnost*.

As a result of the new policy, many topics became open for media coverage, including problems within the Soviet economy, dissidents, some historical events which previously had not been considered "desirable for discussion", crime news, and disaster messages among others. It should be noticed that at the very beginning of the process a number of areas continued to be in the "forbidden zone", which included the direct criticism of communist ideology, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, and

³⁶ McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*, p. 54.

Lenin. However, little by little, the boundaries of permitted criticism expanded and even these major political figures became the legitimate target for a critical assessment.

The changes in media policies demanded corrections of regulative norms. The new law regarding the mass media, the Law on Mass Information Media, was discussed during the 19th Party Conference and came into force on 12 July 1990. There were some changes in advertising policy. It should be noted that being financially supported by the Party-State, the Soviet media had not used advertisements to cover its expenditures. This changed during Gorbachev's leadership. Unfortunately, advertising in the Soviet mass media was less effective for covering expenditure than in the West because the Soviet media did not have adequate expertise.

During Gorbachev's leadership, the popularity and power of the news media was speedily increasing. Many politicians, including Yeltsin, used the advantages of media coverage in order to accelerate their political careers. On the contrary, the failure of gaining positive media support is thought to have caused the collapse of Yanaev's putsch in 1991.³⁷ The amplified power of mass media increased the popularity of the concept of the "fourth estate" among the Soviet journalists. This concept views the media as a strong and independent estate, along with the executive, judicial, and legislative.³⁸ Although Gorbachev had intended to use the news media in order to strengthen his own policies, in the end he was not able to control its independence and enormous power.³⁹

To sum up the main principles of the transformation of the Russian mass media during this time, it should be noted that it obtained very significant rights. Although the media continued to be under significant guidance and financial support of the Communist Party, it continuously increased criticism of communist ideology and the policies of the Communist Party. This process was encouraged by the economic decline in Russia, the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the growing split within the Communist Party, and the rise of legal private economic enterprises (cooperatives). This

³⁷ Zassoursky, I. (2004) *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia*. Armonk, New York, London: M.E.Sharpe, p. 5.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 4 and p. 16.

triggered the growth of the independence of the mass media from the Central Committee of the CPSU and the state.⁴⁰

1.2. Post-Soviet Mass Media (after 1991)

1.2.1. Russian Mass Media during Yeltsin's Presidency

1.2.1.1. Main Political and Economic Developments

After being elected President of Russia in 1991, Boris Yeltsin encouraged further transformation of the mass media. Yeltsin, because of his dislike of communism,⁴¹ initiated considerable socio-economic reforms that made an impact on the Russian media. The Russian government adopted a strategy of economic reforms that was recommended by the World Bank. One of the main principles of the programme was privatisation.

Let us outline one of the cases of privatisation in Russia. Until 1993, the Russian telecommunications network had been entirely owned and controlled by the Russian Ministry of Communications. Local network operators were privatised in 1993. As a result of this privatisation, Rostelecom (the only nationwide network operator) and 85 regional telecommunications companies were established. In 1995, Svyazinvest was created as a company that consolidated governmental stakes in all of the 85 regional telecommunication companies. The Russian government held 51 per cent of Svyazinvest. The other shares were sold out to private investors. In July 1997, the Russian Government sold a part of its shares (25 per cent plus one share) of Svyazinvest for US\$ 1.875 billion.⁴²

As a result of privatisation, newspapers and broadcasting corporations changed their owners too. It is difficult to outline the common scenario of the privatisation of the mass media. In some cases, newspapers were privatised by their editors, managers and

⁴⁰ McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*; Mickiewicz, E. (1997) *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia*, New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press; Gerol, I. and Molyneux, G. (1988) *The Manipulators*, Stoddart: Gemol.

⁴¹ It should be noted that Yeltsin was the former first secretary of the Moscow Unit of the CPSU for several years.

⁴² Koshkareva, T. and Narsikoulov, R. (2000) "Gazprom's Kokh on Gusinsky's Side", *Gazeta.ru*, 12.01.2000, (URL <http://www.gazeta.ru/2000/12/01/GazpromsKokh.shtml>, consulted in September 2003).

journalists. Nevertheless, the main trend did not differ significantly from the privatisation of the media in the majority of Eastern European countries.

Colin Sparks has described this process and pointed out that there were several dissimilarities in the privatisation of television and the press. In particular, Sparks has noticed that newspapers were quickly and entirely privatised (maybe as a result of their relative insignificance) without any visible effect on readers. He has given an example of the privatisation of the press in Hungary:

In early 1990, a unique method of depriving a publishing house of its newspapers and periodicals was invented in Hungary. All the journalists and editors of the single national sports daily, the single women's weekly, and all the satirical weeklies of the country abrogated their contracts of employment with the respected publishing houses on the same day and sign new ones with limited companies they had established collectively. They changed the names of the papers slightly and appeared on the market very soon. The papers of the new limited companies were delivered to subscribers without warning.⁴³

The privatisation of the news media increased its independency to some extent. At least the media has become more independent from the Communist Party and the State. However, a question arises whether this allowed the Russian mass media to become completely independent. It could be argued that this did not happen because the mass media became dependent on finance. The reason for this is that the media was previously financed by the State. They had neither additional income from advertisements nor advertising expertise. When the Party-State suspended its subsidies to the news media, advertising revenue did not cover all media expenditure.

Consequently, media organisations needed sponsors. Even though philanthropy was always popular in Russia, the financial support was normally given to media companies in the hope of making money from advertising. The second reason for an investment in the mass media was the intention to control media coverage of certain events. In other words, the political subordination of the media was replaced by a

⁴³ Sparks, C. (1998) *Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media*. London: Sage, p. 119, Galik and Denes (1992) *From Command Media to Media Market: The Role of Foreign Capital in the Transition of the Hungarian Media*, Budapest University of Economics, p. 11.

politico-economic one.⁴⁴ This can be illustrated by Figure 1.1, which shows the difference between the Soviet and post-Soviet models of the relationship between the state and the media.



Figure 1.1 Comparative Structure of State – Media Relations in the Soviet Union during Yeltsin’s Presidency.

It should be noted that together with the privatisation of existing newspapers a number of new private newspapers appeared, such as the dailies *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* and *Segodnia*. This does not mean that these newspapers were created from nothing. They employed correspondents from many respected dailies and used their publishing facilities. Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky became the owners of these newspapers.

An important development during Yeltsin’s presidency was the Law on the Mass Media. Adopted in 1991, it established many of the norms that appeared in the Constitution of the Russian Federation two years later. The Law on Mass Media was very similar to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In particular, it legislatively established the right for media companies to be privately owned.

However, the law did not provide some essential definitions, including that of the ownership of a media organization, and this caused many commercial and political

⁴⁴ Nivat, A. (2000) “Russian presidential campaign coverage”, *The Harvard Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 92-97.

disputes. Also, the absence of a law on broadcasting resulted in regulation of radio and television by governmental decrees and instructions, which impeded the free market development of the media and contradicted public interest. In addition, the Russian libel law was at odds with the practice of the majority of other countries. That is to say, it placed the burden of proof on the media - not on the plaintiff. Other laws guaranteeing the right to information were not enforced.

1.2.1.2 Media Structure in Yeltsin’s Russia

The media structure also changed significantly since the communist period. Russia was transformed from the “nation of readers” to the “nation of TV viewers.” This section briefly describes the main components and actors of the Russian mass media during Yeltsin’s presidency.

1.2.1.2.1. The Press in Yeltsin’s Russia

At the end of the Gorbachev era in 1990, the figures of the circulation of the major periodicals were as summarised in Table 1.2 and Table 1.3.

Table 1.2 Circulation of Major Russian Newspapers in 1990

Newspapers	
Argumenty i Fakti	31.5 million
Komsomolskaya Pravda	20.3 million
Trud	20.0 million
Izvestia	9.4 million
Pravda	6.4 million
Selskaya Zhizn [Village Life]	5.7 million
Semia [Family]	4.6 million
Literaturnaya Gazeta	4.2 million
Sovetskaya Rossia	3.0 million
Ychitelskaya Gazeta [Teacher’s Newspaper]	1.2 million
Krasnaya Zvezda [Red Star]	1.0 million
Rabochaya Tribuna [Worker’s Tribune]	800, 000
Ekonomika i Zhizn [Economics and Life]	600, 000
Sovetskaya Kultura [Soviet Culture]	500, 000

Source: Vachnadze, G.N. (1992) *Secrets of Journalism in Russia: Mass Media under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*, Commack, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers, p. 4.

Table 1.3 Circulation of Major Russian Magazines in 1990

Magazines	
Ogonyok [Spark]	4.0 million
Novy Mir [New World]	2.7 million
Znamy [Banner]	900,000
Molodaya Gvardia [Young Guard]	600,000
Izvestia TsK KPSS [CPSU Central Committee News]	600,000
Communist	500,000
Zvezda [Star]	300,000

Source: Vachnadze, G.N. (1992) *Secrets of Journalism in Russia: Mass Media under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*, Commack, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers, p. 4.

It should be noted that although the number of nationwide newspapers increased significantly during Yeltsin’s presidency, their circulation dropped remarkably, as shown in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Russian Press in 1950-1998

Year	Number of periodicals	Total Circulation
1950	23	9,423
1970	28	62,364
1990	43	110,810
1998	245	32,914

Source: Vartanova, E. (2001) “Media in the post-Soviet Russia”, *Pro et Contra*, Vol. 5, No. 4, p. 66.

Nonetheless, audience preferences did not change significantly. The data of VCIOM (All Russia Centre of Public Opinion Study), which is presented in Table 1.5, shows this. The respondents were asked to select the most interesting newspapers in their opinion. It is evident that there was little change in the popularity of the individual newspapers during Yeltsin’s presidency.

Table 1.5 Russian Favourite Newspapers

Year	Favourite Newspapers of Russia’s Readership
1991	AiF, KP, Trud
1992	AiF, KP, MK
1997	AiF, KP, Speed-Info
1998	AiF, KP, MK
1999	AiF, KP, MK

Source: URL <http://www.polit.ru/documents/390969.html>, consulted in June, 2001.

In 1997 the main Russian newspapers were *Centre Plus*, *Speed Info*, *Argumenti i Fakti (AiF)*, *Extra M*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda (KP)*, *Trud*, *Ekonomika i Zhizn*, and *Moskovsky Komsomolets (MK)*. Their types and circulation are presented in Table 1.6.

Table 1.6 Russian Press in 1997

Publication	Type	Circulation
1. Centre Plus	Shopper	5,000,000
2. Speed Info	Racy tabloid	3,820,000
3. Argumenti i Fakti	Weekly	3,390,000
4. Extra M	Shopper	2,900,000
5. Komsomolskaya Pravda	Daily	1,547,000
6. Trud	Daily	1,400,000
7. Ekonomika i Zhizn	Business weekly	1,200,000
8. Moskovsky Komsomolets	Daily	1,000,000
9. Sport Express	Sports daily	850,000
10. Izvestia	Daily	630,000
11. 7 Days	TV, personalities	450,000
12. Segodnya	Daily	100,000
13. Nezavisimaia Gazeta	Daily	50,000

Source: Data of The Washington Post Company, 1997.

1.2.1.2.2. Russian Television during Yeltsin’s Presidency

Television played an increasingly important role during the Yeltsin era. There could be two reasons for this. First, access to television was enormously extended, which can be illustrated by the data that the population of the former Soviet Union had 93 million television sets. The second reason (which is largely dependent on the first) is that TV coverage became a very important political resource, helping to win elections. In 1992, television replaced the press as the main source of information (79 per cent of Russian population more relied on the press in 1979).⁴⁵

Information about the main Russian TV channels during Yeltsin’s presidency (and at present) is summarised in Table 1.7.

⁴⁵ Tolz, V. (1993) “The New Role of the Media and Public Opinion under Mikhail Gorbachev”, *The Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 192-209.

Table 1.7 Russian Nationwide TV Channels

Network/ National Channel	Number of Affiliates	Distribution Method	Audience receiving signal (%)	Share (%)	Hours /day	Owners
ORT	--	satellite, microwave, transmitter	94.7	49.5	20	51% state 49% private investors
RTR	--	satellite, microwave, transmitter	93.6	14.0	20	100% state
NTV	NA	satellite, microwave, transmitter	54.2	11.7	20	100% private investors
Petersburg 5	65 in 1996, though many affiliates did not renew in 1997	microwave	60.2	2.4		100% state
TV6	300 cities in CIS	satellite, transmitter	61.6	6.1	15 by satellite	100% private investors
REN- TV/NVS	62 in Russia, also other CIS states	satellite	29.0	1.3	8 hours/ workday 9 hours/wee kend	Private investors
2x2/AST/MT K	75 in CIS	microwave, satellite	23.0	0.4	16-18	Private investors, Bank Moskva
CTC/StoryFir st (their figures of 3/97)	8 stations owned 76 affiliate stations in Russia	satellite	27.4	2.8	7 hours/ workday 9 hours/ weekends	StoryFirst Corp. with capital from Western investors
TV3 Russia	St. Petersburg and 10 regional affiliates	satellite	NA	--	10	Allen & Co. Inc. (USA), Botts and Co. (50%), Russian government

Source: "A Survey of Russian Television", *Internews.ru*, 1998.

ORT – the first Russian TV channel. According to various estimates, ORT had a potential audience from 141 to 200 million viewers. This biggest Russian television channel has had several names. During the Soviet period it was called the Central Television. Then it was renamed Channel 1. In 1991, the government of Russia gave it another name – Ostankino. Ostankino was under the control of the state television company Ostankino TV.

In 1995, the privatisation of Russian television led to the establishment of the company ORT (Russian Public Television). The state continued to own 51 per cent of ORT. However, the other 49 per cent was distributed among Russia's

financial corporations and media companies. Ostankino TV, ITAR-TASS Information Agency, the National Sport Fund, Gazprom, Logovaz, Mikrodin, Obedinenny Bank, Stolichny Bank, Menatep Bank, National Credit Bank and Alfa-Bank became its shareholders. The name of the channel was changed in accordance with the name of this company.

Although the government was the largest shareholder of ORT, this channel had huge losses. It was interpreted as a result of the lack of financial support from the state. For example, in 1996, the State Duma refused to transfer any money from the state budget to ORT because the Duma believed that ORT was completely controlled by Yeltsin.

ORT is one of the largest Russian corporations. Its annual budget from 1995 to 1997 was nearly US\$ 250,000,000. A third of the budget was spent for signal delivery and a third was used for programme purchases. ORT was supposed to maintain its nationwide infrastructure that included eight satellites, almost 9,000 transmitters, 7,000 receiving stations, and 220,000 km of terrestrial communications.

As the government did not financially support ORT at that time, this TV channel began to rely on advertising revenue and investments from shareholders. The financial flow from its shareholders, who were Yeltsin's supporters, allowed ORT to exist without state subsidies and to be independent from the Russia's Duma. At the same time, some of the shareholders received huge political benefits from their investment. For example, Boris Berezovsky, who financially supported ORT and owned 16 per cent of the shares of this television company, helped Yeltsin to be re-elected in 1996. After the election, Berezovsky joined the Russian government.

At the end of Yeltsin's presidency, although the financial situation in ORT improved because of private investment, advertising revenue (US\$ 24,000-30,000 per minute), and governmental subsidies, ORT continued to need additional finance. It was claimed that this television company was in risk of losing some of its personnel due to financial difficulties. In this situation, some managers called

for the complete privatisation of ORT and for its entire independence from the state.

RTR – the second biggest nationwide channel in Russia. Soon before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yeltsin insisted that Russia had to have its own television station that would be independent from Soviet television, which covered the whole territory of the former Soviet Union. After the 1991 coup, Channel 2 was replaced by Russian TV. Officially this channel was named as The All-Russian State TV and Radio Company (VGTRK, the Russian acronym), but it is commonly known as RTR.

RTR was able to reach 98.7 per cent of the Russian population. It had five satellites and nearly 5,000 transmitters. Radio Rossii, one of the three major Russia's nationwide radio stations, also belonged to RTR.

Although RTR was completely state owned, it was not entirely subsidized by the government. For example, RTR received only 30 per cent of its budget from governmental subsidies in 1996. The rest of the essential funding was taken from commercial activities and advertising.

Even though RTR was entirely owned by the state, many experts believed that this channel was one of the most independent in Russia. For example, Yassen Zasoursky thinks that VGTRK and RTR were in effect more independent than the private commercial channel NTV.

St. Petersburg Channel 5 – the only nationwide channel that was located outside Moscow. It had a potential audience of 90 million. It was separated from Gosteleradio in 1991, after the coup. Although Yeltsin attempted to transform this channel into a “presidential channel” in 1993, this project was not supported by the State Duma.

NTV – the first Russian private TV company. It was established in October 1993 by Igor Malashenko, Oleg Dobrodeev and Evgeniy Kiselyov, and financially supported by Gusinsky. NTV started its broadcast with own news programmes (*Segodnia* and *Itogi*)

on St. Petersburg Channel 5 and on Channel 4 (formerly the Russian educational channel). In 1996, the presidential decree gave NTV the entire TV channel. It is believed that this was done because of NTV's support for the Yeltsin presidential campaign.

NTV had over 15 transmitters and reached the 100 million audience in European Russia, Kazakstan, the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine. Largely because of its independent and high quality news programmes, NTV was especially popular in Moscow and in European Russia. However, NTV's reputation decreased after its support of Yeltsin's re-election presidential campaign.

Many other small non-governmental television companies appeared during Yeltsin's presidency. According to various estimates, their number was between 500 and 750. For example, according to the Federal Service of Radio and Television Broadcasting (FSTR), the broadcast licensing body, nearly 640 stations had licenses to broadcast. Eighty stations had licenses to operate cable television.⁴⁶

1.2.2. The Russian Mass Media during Putin's Presidency

After Yeltsin's resignation, Vladimir Putin, the new President of Russia, started reforms that made a considerable impact on the Russian mass media. Although Putin highlights his support for democracy and freedom of the press, some of his policies towards the media have been strongly criticized in the Western media. In particular, he was suspected of launching prosecution campaigns against Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky, the two biggest media moguls, who left Russia after facing charges of tax evasion and fraud. This section examines the relationship between the Putin government and the media.

First, it briefly describes dimensions of Putin's reforms and assesses the impact of his policy on the Russian news media. Then, it addresses the issue whether the current Russian government aims to undermine the freedom of speech. In order to avoid personal

⁴⁶ "A Survey of Russian Television", *Internews.ru*, 1998

judgments in this controversial dispute, I shall present only facts, figures, and views of politicians and journalists. As the structure of the Russian media has not changed significantly during Putin's presidency, it is not examined in detail.

1.2.2.1. Putin's Career

Yeltsin resigned on 31 December 1999. Vladimir Putin, Yeltsin's chosen successor, was elected the Russian President three months later. This section briefly describes his career. Putin worked for the KGB, the Soviet security service, and served as a spy in Germany for several years. After the collapse of communism in 1991 he was invited by St. Petersburg Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, his university supervisor, to work in the Administration of St. Petersburg. Sobchak was not re-elected in 1996, and Putin decided to leave his post in the Administration of St. Petersburg. Being recommended by Anatoly Chubais, the former Vice-Premier of Russia, for a job in the presidential administration, Putin moved to Moscow and quickly became a member of the Yeltsin inner circle, known as the "family."

By March 1997 Putin was appointed the deputy head of the Presidential administration and in July 1998 the head of the FSB, the successor of the KGB. Even in this important post Putin was little known to the wide public. For the time being he preferred to stay a "grey cardinal", a man who wields power quietly, behind the scenes.

Nevertheless, in August 1999, he was appointed the Prime-Minister of Russia and quickly showed himself as a man of action. His popularity soared during the new Chechen war. In response to terrorist actions by Chechen militants in Moscow and in Dagestan, Putin ordered the Russian army to invade Chechnya and defeat the rebels.

After Putin was elected Russian president in 2000, the political stability in Russia was restored and the economy showed signs of revival. In addition, Putin was regarded by leading world leaders as a legitimate and competent ruler and Russia regained its status of a powerful state. Putin's achievements were so evident that he had no real challenger in presidential election in 2004 and was re-elected.

1.2.2.2. Putin's Views and Reforms

Putin's political credo was not clear for the majority of experts for a long time. Despite his image as a strong man, Putin is supported by many Russian liberals and reformers. He says that he is in favour of a market economy, but one that is adapted to Russian conditions. On the one hand, Putin criticises Soviet leaders because they failed to make the USSR a free or flourishing country. On the other hand, he does not approve many of the policies of post-Soviet reformers. He thinks that they made a number of avoidable mistakes.

Nevertheless, Putin argues that the mistakes and controversies of the previous Russia's rulers might be forgiven because they are less important than the political stability in Russia. He is in favour of the establishment of a political consensus. For this purpose, Putin maintains close relations with many of liberal reformers, the communist majority of the State Duma, the previous president Yeltsin, and his predecessor Gorbachev.

There are many contradictions in such a search for political compromises among so many different political groups. As a result of this, Putin's policy seems to stick together the incompatible. For example, although being devoted to democratic values, he insists that Russia should have a strong, paternalistic state.⁴⁷ To his mind, Russia is not yet ready for classical liberalism, and would not soon, if ever, come to resemble the USA or the UK. Putin believes that the strong state is a necessary basis for economic prosperity and democratic reforms. However, the state and officials should act on the basis of the law and there should be limits of the state intervention into socio-economic processes.⁴⁸

It is evident that this definition of the state's rights and responsibilities, given here in a brief outline, can hardly avoid encountering serious contradictions. Some critics emphasise the difference between the Russian approach and the western understanding of

⁴⁷ “‘Vместе мы сможем изменить нашу жизнь’: Речь Путина на церемонии вступления в должность” (2000) [Together we will manage to change our life: Putin's inauguration speech], *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 11.05.2000, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the rule-of-law state. For example, Michael Thumann, a journalist for Die Zeit, claims that in Russia, dictatorship of the law is subordinated to political objectives. He argues,

Putin has established in Russia an autocratic rule, skillfully camouflaging it by the idea of the rule-of-law. The Prosecutor's Office operates as if it was part of the Kremlin's legal department. It starts proceedings and it discontinues them subject to a political order. The Kremlin and its easily manageable the Council of Federation appoint the State Council, which, if necessary, can always be disbanded. As a result, the executive authorities, together with the law enforcement bodies, create the illusion of a rule-of-law state while browbeating that part of the Moscow elite, which is disloyal to the existing regime.⁴⁹

1.2.2.3. Putin's Policy towards the Mass Media

The contradictions in Putin's state doctrine are especially visible in his policy towards the mass media.⁵⁰ Putin always highlights the importance of freedom of the press. "Freedom of speech is a basic value of democracy in Russia," he said in his inauguration speech, and pointed out that the Russian news media should play a very important role in the development of a civic society in Russia. He repeatedly underlined his support for a law that would prohibit censorship and any intervention into media activities in Russia.

Despite this, some opponents blame him for the attempt to return to the communist dominance of the state over the mass media. An example of state pressure on the media could be seen in the establishment of a new "rapid response group", headed by Simon Kordonsky, formerly the chief of expertise in the Presidential Administration. According to the newspaper *Segodnia*, this group should control media coverage and discredit the oppositional media organisations.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Thumann, M. (2001) *Strana.ru*, 17.11.2001, (URL <http://eng.strana.ru/state/presidency/2000/11/17/974470547.html>, consulted in November 2001)

Note: a lot of references of this section is based on stories published by the news server *Strana.ru*. This is because I regard its reports on those particular events as presenting viewpoints of all sides involved. It was not done deliberately, because I analysed reports by many other news servers, such as *lenta.ru*, *deadline.ru*, *gazeta.ru*, *ntv.ru*, *polit.ru*, *grani.ru* and some others. However, it happened that the most relevant materials for this section were published by *Strana.ru*.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Lipman, M. and McFaul, M. (2001) "'Managed democracy' in Russia: Putin and the press", *The Harvard Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 3, p.121.

⁵¹ Warshavchik, S. (2000) *Deadline.ru*, 22.09.2000.

The state effort to get back the dominance over the media could be seen in launching the major news website *Rian.ru* on 1 January 2001. It was supposed to be jointly produced by RTR, Radio Rossii, Mayk and Golos Rossii, all of which were under the state control.⁵² There were frequent rumours regarding growing Kremlin's secret funding of selected news media organisations.

At the beginning of Putin's first presidency, many his critics expected that the Kremlin would try regain control over all three nationwide television channels – RTR, ORT and NTV. Whether this was Putin's wish or not, all these TV channels became strongly controlled by the government by 2004.

RTR has always been in the governmental property, and it took little effort to make RTR to be even more loyal to the new leadership of Russia. Two other channels were privately owned and it was more difficult to convert them to a state-run concern. Nevertheless, this has been done in a short period of time.

As far as ORT is concerned, the presidential team succeeded in wresting it from the hands of Berezovsky. Berezovsky, the major owner of ORT, was forced to leave Russia after being charged with tax evasion and money laundering, and sold his 49 per cent stake to an unknown investor, allowing the state to restore its full control over this major TV company.

Vladimir Gusinsky, the head of NTV and Media-Most, is believed to have encountered considerable pressure from the presidential administration. On 13 June 2000, the Russian Prosecutor's Office issued a sanction for his arrest. Gusinsky was accused of fraud, committed during his purchase of a state-owned TV channel, and of the withdrawal of the company's mortgaged assets. Having spent three days in custody, he was unexpectedly released after leaving a written undertaking not to leave the country.

Soon the criminal case against Gusinsky was suspended and he was allowed to go abroad. In September 2000, it became known that this was caused by his agreement to sell his Media-Most, along with NTV, to Gazprom, the richest Russian energy company.

⁵² *Smi.ru*, 05.12.2000, (URL <http://www.smi.ru/2000/12/05/976028386.html>, consulted in December 2000).

Thumann, *Die Zeit* analyst, claimed that Gusinsky was also required to “take care not to discredit Russia’s leadership through the dissemination of unpleasant information.”⁵³

Although Putin often underlines his respect for freedom of the press, many media companies found it suspicious that the Russian Prosecutor’s Office resumed the investigation into Media-Most after Gusinsky had breached the above-mentioned agreement with Gazprom, announced the deal void, and initiated new negotiations with the company. Even though Vyacheslav Soltaganov, the head of the Federal Tax Police Office, argued that the Prosecutor’s Office had enough evidence to prove Gusinsky’s crime,⁵⁴ it was not convincing for the Western audience.

Gusinsky was repeatedly summoned for interrogation and he decided to leave Russia. After Russia’s request Gusinsky was placed on the wanted list of Interpol and arrested by Spanish police on 12 December 2000. Russia asked to extradite Gusinsky, and the Russian Prosecutor’s Office claimed that it provided the Court in Spain with all required evidence to prove his guilt.

On the other hand, Gusinsky’s lawyers and supporters claimed that his case had been politically motivated, and that the government of Russia attempted to take Gusinsky’s media empire under control. Three month later, the Spanish Court decided that allegations against Gusinsky had political motives behind them, and he was finally freed on 17 March 2001.⁵⁵

Despite this verdict, the conflict between Gusinsky’s Media-Most and Gazprom, Russian gas monopoly, in which the Russian state is the biggest shareholder, resulted in Gazprom’s gain of the controlling stake in NTV. The former executives of NTV were replaced by the managers approved by Gazprom.

The process of regaining the governmental control over Russia’s major TV channels has been widely reported by the mass media both in Russia and abroad. Nikolay Ulyanov, an observer of *Strana.ru*, has described it in such a way:

⁵³ Thumann, M. (2000) *Strana.ru*, 17.11.2000.

⁵⁴ “Glava FCHP: ‘Spokoynie nochi dlia nashih kapitalistov konchilis’” [Head of FTPO: “The quiet nights for our capitalists are over”], (URL <http://lenta.ru/russia/2000/11/14/soltaganov/>, consulted in November 2000).

⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Gusinsky is likely to be arrested if he returns to Russia.

Today Russia is witnessing a large-scale re-division of property in media space, mostly in its television sector. This is explained, on the one hand, by the Kremlin's desire to regain control over the production complex, which was publicly owned in the former USSR, but ended up, in the Yeltsin period, in the hands of several oligarchic groups, whose property rights were rather dubious from the legal perspective.

The majority of the Russian population seems to look at media oligarchs with a bitter hostility. For example, it is hardly possible to expect from an average Russian to be well disposed to Gusinsky when his NTV run complementary interviews with Shamil Basayev, one of the Chechen terrorists, who had butchered thousands of Russian servicemen and civilians. Putin played on this sentiment during his presidential campaign, declaring that the oligarchs would be "equidistant" from the authorities.⁵⁶

The increasing interest of the Russian state in the media can be illustrated by the following. The Ministry of the Press and Information proposed to improve broadcasting in Russia. According to newspaper *Segodnia*, the Ministry planned to recreate the state broadcasting company Gosteleradio and then privatise a 49 per cent stake in this company. Gosteleradio was supposed to be managed by the Council, which would consist of the representatives of the president and municipal authorities. Another "public council", including members of the Duma, the Council of Federation, and prominent representatives of arts and sciences, would be the "watchdog" of this corporation.

This project also suggested the establishment of the state company RTRC (Russian TeleRadio Communication) which would unite all television stations in Russia on the basis of Telecom Ostankino). Eighty-eight new regional broadcasting companies would be established in Russia, each under an initial 100 per cent state ownership. Then these companies would be privatised and 49 per cent would be sold out. In order to contribute to the state policy, the broadcasting corporation was expected to coordinate its programmes with higher executive authorities – i.e., the Ministry of the Press. It is not clear, how much of this project came to be true. However, at the beginning of December 2000, Putin met Lesin, the Minister of the Press, and Leonid Reyman, the Minister of Informatics and Communications, discussed these proposals, and agreed with many of them.

⁵⁶ Ulyanov, N. (2001) "Media market shake-up to restore public control over television", *Strana.ru*, 11.01.2001, (URL <http://eng.strana.ru/stories/2001/01/11/979217054/979226530.html>, consulted in November 2001).

Apparently, Putin tries to diminish controversies of his policy by strengthening the state control over national television and promoting entire independence of the private printed media and radio stations. However, even such a restricted dominance (if the Russian state will impose state control only over TV channels) would mean a threat to the freedom of speech. Ulyanov argues that the Soviet history showed that a state supervisor of a television company would act as a censor seeking to present news in a way most desirable for the authorities.⁵⁷ The next section aims to examine whether Putin's policy resulted in undermining the freedom of speech in Russia.

1.2.2.4. Does Putin's Policy Abuse the Freedom of Speech?

Television propaganda is increasingly regarded as the most valuable resource for political campaigns since television audiences are larger and the format of TV reports leaves a smaller chance for the public to probe their accuracy. No wonder that some Western politicians admit that "where voters are concerned ... one TV picture is worth 10,000 words."⁵⁸ Television coverage is even more important in Russia because newspapers become less affordable for a considerable part of the Russian population, while watching TV broadcasts is free.⁵⁹ As the value of television's propaganda is more significant than that in the press, Putin's policy caused growing fears of undermining freedom of speech in Russia. This problem is widely debated in Russian society and is examined in depth in this section.

Let us start with the events relating to NTV. Kiselyov, Gusinsky, and some reporters of this TV company repeatedly emphasised that all action of Gazprom towards NTV is an attempt by the Russian state to gain control over the independent TV channel which had different views in its coverage of some current state policies, in particular the Chechen war. Mikhail Berger, the editor of the daily *Segodnia*, said the conflict around NTV is "another phase of the war waged by the state and Gazprom, which have their own

⁵⁷ Ulyanov, N. (2001) "Media market shake-up to restore public control over television", *Strana.ru*, 11.01.2001, (URL <http://eng.strana.ru/stories/2001/01/11/979217054/979226530.html>, consulted in November 2001).

⁵⁸ Tiffen, R. (1989) *News and Power*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, p. 90

⁵⁹ Russians do not need to buy TV licenses in order to watch main nationwide channels.

interests here, against the TV company, which is not liked by the authorities and gets on their nerves by being audacious and informative.” In his opinion, the conflict was “a serious threat to the freedom of speech.”⁶⁰

To some extent, such a viewpoint on the Gazprom-NTV conflict was supported by some Russian and Western media companies. For example, *The Los Angeles Times* wrote that the Russian State wanted to gain control of NTV in order to prevent the broadcast of its anti-Kremlin perspective on current events.⁶¹

Viktor Loshak, editor-in-chief of *Moskovskiye Novosti*, a popular Moscow newspaper, argues that the authorities do not want to hear different opinions. He has noted that there was no word regarding the media and the freedom of information in the message of president Putin to the Federal Assembly. “But the paradox is that NTV exactly repeated the statements made by the authorities - to listen and broadcast only what is necessary and pleasant for itself,” Loshak said.⁶²

Some Russian politicians agree with this. Grigory Yavlinsky is one of them. The Central Committee of his party Yabloko claimed that it would consider events around NTV and other structures of Media-Most as a political action. According to the resolution of this party, signed by Yavlinsky, Media-Most had become “a suitable target for the state authorities to show their power, which helps to draw attention from the problem of the inability of Russian law enforcement to combat real criminals and corruption.” Yabloko accepted that NTV had financial difficulties. Nevertheless, Yabloko thought that “if the only independent national TV channel is to be controlled by the Kremlin, Russia will be thrown back to the era of the state TV monopoly.”⁶³ In other words, the set of actions against NTV was regarded as a state attempt to undermine the freedom of the press in Russia.

⁶⁰ *Strana.ru*, 06.04.2001, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/04/06/986548288/986557590.html>, consulted in April 2001).

⁶¹ (2001) “Besieged tycoon a symbol of Russia’s suppressed media”, *Los Angeles Times - US Abstracts*; 10.02.2001.

⁶² *Strana.ru*, 6.04.2001, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/04/06/986548288/986557590.html>, consulted in June 2001).

⁶³ (2001) “Yabloko: ‘NTV presleduet po politicheskim motivam’” [Yabloko: “Prosecution of NTV is politically motivated”], *Lenta.ru*, 19.02.2001, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/most/2001/02/19/yabloko/>, consulted in February 2001).

Sergey Markov, the director of the Institute for Political Studies, is to some extent of a similar opinion. He feels that the NTV situation stems from the differences between the political positions of the Kremlin and Gusinsky. Markov said: "NTV's ideology contains two basic components: a radical orientation toward the West (something the Kremlin might accept) and hatred for their own state (something the Kremlin will not put up with, considering that it has adopted the ideology of liberal patriotism)." According to Markov, until 1999 "Gusinsky's political views coincided with the Kremlin's political contract, and during that time the head of Media-Most was able to accumulate vast resources and built a highly professional TV channel. However, when the lines of the Kremlin and Gusinsky diverged, resources for a political contract were withheld from him and, naturally, he ran up a fairly large amount of debt."

However, the viewpoint that the NTV events in April 2001 have resulted from an attempt by the Russian State to undermine freedom of the press has a great number of opponents among many Russian officials, politicians and journalists (including even some journalists of NTV). Some of them believe that this is only a personal conflict between Gusinsky and Putin. For example, Igor Bunin, the director of the Centre of Political Technologies, pointed out that both have "made a mistake: on the one hand, by putting personal (interests) before state (interests), and on the other hand, by putting personal interests before the interests of the company. And it was only at a later stage when the conflict had already emerged that people, pursuing not quite immaterial objectives, joined the conflict. As a result of this, a political conflict turned into a commercial conflict and a conflict of interests."⁶⁴

Many of the opponents have argued that the wide public talks around the decision of NTV shareholder's meeting should be explained by Gusinsky's intention to sell his stake in bankrupting NTV to ensure his personal welfare in the future. Still others have emphasised that NTV rebel leaders were not afraid of crackdown of free speech. What they really feared was an audit of their financial activity.

It is possible to note the comments of several chief editors of major Russian newspapers on the situation at NTV, published by the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* on 6

⁶⁴ *Strana.ru*, 5.04.2001, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/04/05/986464403/986470043.html>, consulted in May 2001).

April 2001. Vladimir Sungorkin, editor-in-chief of *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, regarded the protest actions and rallies as “a disgrace.” He said, “If the decision by the board of directors was legitimate, the NTV staff should act in the framework of that decision. Those who disagree have the right to get their discharge or appeal against that decision in court.”⁶⁵

Sungorkin did not assess the situation as an attempt to strangle the freedom of the press. “Our press is free. Many other media companies apart from NTV reported about the President’s mistakes and about the Kursk tragedy. [...] I think that behind the actions of the NTV staff is not a wish to ‘remain free’, but, on the contrary, a wish not to return the loans to the tune of many millions, which, as is known, had been granted to the journalists,” he said.⁶⁶

Anatoly Chubais, the CEO of UES Russia, claimed that Gazprom had legally restored its owner’s right on NTV. He pointed out that the decision of the Court was legal and final, and it should be accepted by the personnel of NTV. Chubais highlighted that after such a verdict Gazprom could have acted even more bravely. Instead, Alfred Kokh, the newly appointed head of Gazprom-Media, was rather accurate in assessment and subsequent actions.⁶⁷

Gleb Pavlovsky, the head of the Foundation for Effective Politics, has expressed his view that the journalists of NTV staged an act of protest either “to shore up the positions of Vladimir Gusinsky or knock down the channel’s price under an arrangement with its new owner.” He has not shared the view that the change of NTV’s leadership poses a threat to the freedom of speech in Russia. All the talk is “simply a propaganda thesis because we do not see where the threat actually is, and none of the channel’s new leaders is talking about it.” Pavlovsky regards the situation over NTV as “a mixture of business and politics since NTV is basically an institution for propaganda and agitation, and therein lays its value, including its commercial value.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *Strana.ru*, 6.04.2001, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/04/06/986548288/986557590.html>, consulted in June 2001)

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Chubais, A. (2001) “Gazprom vosstanavlivaet na NTV svoi prava” [Gazprom enforces its rights regarding NTV], *Strana.ru*, 07.04.01, (URL <http://www.strana.ru/society/media/2001/04/07/986657014.html>, consulted in July 2001).

⁶⁸ *Strana.ru*, 6.04.2001, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/04/06/986548288/986557590.html>, consulted in April 2001).

The State Duma also was not particularly worried about undermining the freedom of speech on NTV. Yavlinsky's suggestion to discuss the problem of freedom of speech was not approved. It was supported by 108 members of the Duma while 193 were against it. One of them, Zhirinovsky, the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Party, was even more critical of NTV. He wanted to discuss an issue of "responsibility of TV channels, in particular of NTV, for the lie which this company has told to citizens." Finally, Zhirinovsky demanded to "close and bury NTV as soon as possible." Valeriy Komissarov, a presenter of RTR, described the viewpoint of the faction Edinstvo. He said that NTV "has never been independent."⁶⁹

Putin's approach to the media seems to be supported by the majority of the Russian people. It can be illustrated by the findings of the public opinion poll carried out by the ROMIR independent research centre on 26 March 2001. According to this poll, there had been no change in the attitude of most Russians. 59.6 per cent agreed to Putin's activities as Russia's president since 2001. 9.9 per cent of respondents said that they had now taken a more negative view of the president. 56.5 per cent approved the president's action to promote law and order in Russia (individual security and the security of the state as a whole, the fight against corruption and crime, and the improvement of living standards) while 31.7 per cent said they held the opposite view.⁷⁰

Another survey assessed public opinion regarding events with NTV. This survey was conducted by ROMIR among 509 Muscovites over the age of 18 in April 2001. According to this survey, a third of Moscow's residents (31.1 per cent) viewed the NTV events as a routine change of the company's owners, 28.4 per cent of Muscovites regarded these events as an attempt to undermine the freedom of speech in Russia, and 12.7 per cent of respondents thought that at NTV the state authorities were waging a war against the journalist staff. In the opinion of 14.5 per cent, the events at NTV reflected a confrontation between the public authorities and oligarchs, 6.9 per cent of the respondents pointed out other reasons behind these events, and 6.4 per cent were undecided.

⁶⁹ *Strana.ru*, 4.04.2001, (URL <http://www.strana.ru/society/media/2001/04/04/986378663.html>, consulted in April 2001).

⁷⁰ "Most Russians positively assess President Putin's activities", *Strana.ru*, 20.03.01, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/politics/elections/2001/03/20/985103887.html>, consulted in March 2001).

The results of another poll conducted by the same agency indicated that 41.8 per cent of Muscovites believed that NTV journalists had launched their protest action because they wanted to uphold their own interests, 24.7 per cent of the respondents thought that the journalists had intended to defend the freedom of speech in Russia, and 16 per cent pointed out that the protest had aimed to protect the interests of TV audience. 6.4 per cent of the respondents argued that this action had been in favour of Gusinsky, the former owner of the TV channel, 4.6 per cent gave other answers, and 6.1 per cent were undecided. Every third Muscovite viewed the events at NTV as a routine change of the company's ownership.⁷¹

Does Putin's policy towards the media constitute state intervention or not? Despite evidence of the state pressure on the media, a point of view that the Russian mass media has become completely controlled by the state does not look accurate. The Russian media continues to be under control of various political and business groups. These political groups attempt to use the news media in order to form opposition to Putin's policy. It can be illustrated by many examples.

One of the most remarkable examples is the publication of several articles criticising the policy of the president in almost all leading Russian newspapers on 28 November 2000. *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, *Segodnia*, *Versia*, *Izvestia* and NTV made public a programme of Putin's opposition, which involved several governors and a few members of the State Duma. These articles criticised the Presidential Administration, the Russian government, and the leadership of the political party Edinstvo.⁷²

Also, it is evident that the Russian mass media is used as a means of political confrontation among politicians. In this confrontation the Russian news media reveals many unchecked and inaccurate information and rumours. The number of articles with rumours is so significant that special indices of rumours published in Moscow newspapers are being calculated. Index of Rumours estimates the rate of rumours published in Moscow newspapers, and Index of Corrections shows how many corrections to the rumours published before have been made.

⁷¹ *Strana.ru*, 5.04.2001, (URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/04/05/986464403/986478683.html>, consulted in April 2001).

⁷² Pavlovsky, G. (2000) "Ataka na Putina i putinskiy kurs" [An attack on Putin and Putin's policy], *Strana.ru*, 28.11.2000, (URL <http://www.strana.ru/stories/2000/11/28/975419774/975428951.html>, consulted in November 2000).

For example, rumours on 14 March 2001 implied that Berezovsky gained the full control over TV-6 and the newspaper *Kommersant*, and that he was intended to sell his *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [the Independent] for nearly US\$ 10 million. Also, it was claimed that Berezovsky decided to establish a few welfare funds to provide aid for Russian-speakers in some of the countries of the CIS. There was a note that the Berezovsky's partner Badri Patarkatsishvili, who used to be a manager of ORT, had been appointed as the state secretary of Georgia.⁷³

Does this mean that the Russian state does not intend to intervene into the mass media? Does this mean that the media in Russian are completely independent from the state? I shall argue that this is not true. Above-mentioned events relating to NTV, as well as many other strange events surrounding other subsidiaries of Media-Most, do not prove that there is a state intervention if they are considered separately. Nevertheless, if one takes a look at all the series of "strange" events surrounding Media-Most and some other media companies in Russia, he should conclude that there are too many of them to be incidental.

Isn't it strange that the Spain's Court did not find the evidence presented by the Russian Prosecutor's Office sufficient enough to consider Gusinsky as a criminal and to extradite him to Russia? Isn't it strange that the United States and Greece have the same opinion on this issue? Savik Shuster, the chief of radio Svoboda in Moscow, stated that Putin has absolutely no idea what is the real freedom of speech. He argued that the Russian state attempted to control television, NTV being the last island of freedom of the press. "What will happen with the others – it is a question," he said.⁷⁴ Shuster was soon fired from his post of the chief of the radio.

It is reported that Marina Lelevyvi, a Channel 2 reporter, was assigned to interview Ludmila Putina, Putin's wife. Before the meeting the journalist submitted

⁷³ Mochenov, A., Nikulin, S. and Vorontsov, D. (2001) "Slukhi i Oproverzhenia" [Rumours and corrections], 14.03.2001, (URL <http://www.smi.ru/2001/03/14/984580983.html>, consulted in March 2000).

⁷⁴ (2001) "Savik Shuster: Putin ne ponimaet, chto takoe svoboda slova" [Putin does not understand what the freedom of speech is about], Radio Ekho Moscow and *Lenta.ru*, 08.02.2001, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/most/2001/02/08/shuster/>, consulted in February 2001).

questions, but she asked a couple of her own during the interview. Such an initiative was punished: the videotape was destroyed and barred from broadcast.⁷⁵

The Press Club, a popular TV talk show on Channel 2, is another example. It was one of the first live shows in which members of the Duma, politicians and journalists could discuss important weekly events. After the tragedy with the submarine Kursk, this show started to be taped before broadcasting and censored. Yevgenia Albats, who participated in that show, said she was stunned to see the final version: it was severely edited with respect to any critique of President Putin. The following shows were even more radically scrutinised. Albats claimed,

Statements by participants were not just edited, but the whole course of the discussion - in pure Soviet style - was altered by changing the sequence. Viewers were unaware that they were seeing an edited version of a studio debate which had been taped a few days earlier: a running line of supposed pager and email messages from “viewers” aims to convince them that the show is going out live.⁷⁶

Izvestia, the privately owned national daily, published several articles criticising Putin’s move to reinstate the old Soviet anthem. The following week the Kremlin’s Management Department filed a lawsuit disputing the legality of the dubious privatisation deal over the editorial office of this newspaper back in the mid-90s.⁷⁷

During the conflict between NTV and Gazprom some programmes moved from NTV to TNT. The next day, TNT was accused of tax evasion. All of the events mentioned above were sufficient for Albats to draw a conclusion that freedom of the press in Russia is over and we are “watching its sunset with no hope of living long enough to see that freedom return.”⁷⁸ In any case, the current relationship between the state and the media is different from compared to the later stages of Yeltsin’s era. The mass media in Russia has become less independent from the state.

It does not necessarily mean that officials force the media to do what they want. In fact, the government does not need to intervene into policies of the media. The case of

⁷⁵ Albats, Y. (2001) “Cry for Russia’s lost press liberty: Now ‘managed democracy’ is replacing freedom of expression”, *The Guardian*, 11.05.2001

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Media-Most has been a good example for the other media organisations what could happen to them, if they “mistakenly” report some of the political events. The editors and staff of the Russian media companies are able to draw conclusions in order to avoid encountering similar problems. In other words, they are expected to understand what could fit the authorities’ view.

It should be noted that the Russian editors and other senior officials understand authorities’ preferences well. Georgiy Vachnadze noted this while analysing the development of the Russian mass media from Gorbachev to Yeltsin.⁷⁹ Another case in point is provided by the launch and closure of the website *Kogot*, which published several negative stories regarding Russian leading politicians. Even before the call from law enforcement officers, the Internet provider FreeNet, which embodied the server *People.weekend.ru*, the host of the website, decided to suspend access to the server.⁸⁰

This can also be illustrated by the above-mentioned example with the daily *Izvestia*. After the Kremlin’s Management Department disputed the legality of *Izvestia* building’s privatisation, the editors of this newspaper became very sensitive to political issues. An article which described teenagers’ bitter resistance to the new anthem was eliminated. The lawsuit by the Kremlin was suspended, but not withdrawn - just in case if this newspaper would make another wrong move in the coverage of Kremlin policies.

To sum up the discussion about the freedom of speech in Russia, let us refer to Putin’s words at the beginning of his presidency regarding his policy towards the media. He said:

Unfortunately, it has not been yet possible to develop the precise democratic rules that guarantee real independence of “the fourth estate”. I want to emphasise the word *real*. Journalistic freedom has turned in an instrument used by politicians and the largest financial groups in confrontation between them [...] Censorship and intervention in activity of the mass media are forbidden by law. We strictly adhere to this principle. However, censorship cannot be exclusively state censorship, and intervention - cannot be only administrative. The economic inefficiency of a considerable part of media companies makes them dependent on commercial and political interests of their owners and sponsors. This allows them to use the media for demolishing competitors, and even to

⁷⁹ Vachnadze, G.N. (1992) *Secrets of Journalism in Russia: Mass Media under Gorbachev and Yeltsin*. Commack, N.Y.: Nova Science Publishers.

⁸⁰ URL <http://inter.net.ru/13/37.html>, consulted in March 2003.

transform them into a means of mass disinformation, in a means of fight against the state.

Therefore, we are obliged to guarantee journalists real, instead of ostentatious, freedom. We have to create legal and economic conditions for civilised information business in our country.⁸¹

It should be concluded, though, that if that really was Putin's aim, it has been reached neither in the issue of freedom of speech nor in providing legal and economic conditions for the independence of news media yet.⁸²

1.3. Significance and the Role of the Russian Mass Media

The final section of this chapter aims to examine the role of the Russian mass media over the last two decades. For this purpose it is essential to assess the nature of the later Soviet and post-Soviet society. In order to do so, I analyse some notes which was made in this respect by some Russian and Western scholars and explain my viewpoint.

It was argued that the Soviet Union was a partly modernised country. Although it had some features of modern societies such as intense use of the media, they did not play a major role and were not able to promote further development. The pre-modern mode of economic relations continued to dominate all key processes. New modernization attempts failed because of the under-development of Russia. Instead, this failure strengthened the significance of the traditional mode of production. The mass media made a very significant impact on the collapse of the Soviet Union and its economic power.⁸³

This approach looks very promising and it has its supporters. However, from my point of view, it is a simplistic viewpoint, which causes many problems in understanding many Russian processes and distorts an accurate assessment of the role of the media. I agree that Russia maintained a lot of its pre-modern features, but at the same time it had a great deal of post-modern characteristics. I argue that Russia during the late Soviet and

⁸¹ Putin, V. (2000) *Gosudarstvo Rossia, Put k Effektivnomu Gosudarstvu* [Russia's state: Towards an effective state], Putin's address to the Federal Council, 8.07.2000, (URL <http://www.nns.ru/Elect-99/chron99/2000/07/08.html>, consulted on September 2005).

⁸² More information about Putin and his policy towards the media can be found in Lipman, M. And McFaul, M. (2003) "Putin and the media", in Herspring, D. (ed.) *Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc, pp. 63-84.

⁸³ Pietilainen, J. (2002) *The Regional Newspaper in Post-Soviet Russia: Society, Press and Journalism in the Republic of Karelia 1985-2001*. Tampere University Press, p. 17.

post-Soviet period should be regarded as a society with pre-modern, modern, and post-modern features. The relevance of post-modern theories for Russia has already been discussed by several researchers.⁸⁴ I intend to contribute to the discussion.

Let us outline fundamentals of modernity and post-modernity. The development of modern societies began in European urban centres in the late Middle Ages. Modern societies are associated with capitalism as well as with developed political institutions, in which nation-state played the most important role. The nation states centralised the system of taxation and concentrated military power. Knowledge and information became very important and it encouraged the development of mass communications. The news media was a very important element of modern societies because it connected their members and serves as the most reliable source of information.⁸⁵

Modernity encountered serious crisis at the end of 20th century. The role of nation-states was considerably undermined by the process of globalisation. Legitimacy and significance of political institutions and democratic values continue to decline.⁸⁶ The post-modern society regarded networks as a more efficient mode of socio-economic organisation. Mikko Lagerspets confirmed it by saying that in post-modern society loyalties are based on “particularism, fragmenting the society into potentially conflicting networks or post-modern tribes.”⁸⁷

It should be noted that the efficiency of networks was understood in Soviet Russia a long time ago. The late Soviet society was fragmented and resembled a system of networks. These networks consisted of representatives of different social, political and economic institutions and served as a very important medium, which to some extent diminished many deficiencies of the command economy and facilitated economic and

⁸⁴ Kirkow, P. (1998) *Russia's Provinces: Authoritarian Transformation versus Local Autonomy?* Houndmills & London: Macmillan, p. 9, Offe, K. (1996) *Varieties of Transition*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 137, 138, Pietilainen, *The Regional Newspaper in Post-Soviet Russia: Society, Press and Journalism in the Republic of Karelia 1985-2001*, pp. 46-49.

⁸⁵ Thompson, J. (1995) *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 44-52; Pietilainen, *The Regional Newspaper in Post-Soviet Russia: Society, Press and Journalism in the Republic of Karelia 1985-2001*, p. 23.

⁸⁶ Castells, M. (2004) *Politics and Power in the Network Society*. Presentation at the London School of Economics, 18.03.2004.

⁸⁷ Lagerspetz, M. (2001) “From ‘parallel polis’ to ‘the time of the tribes’: Post-socialism, social self-organization and post-modernity”, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, No. 17, p. 11; Pietilainen, J. (2002) *The Regional Newspaper in Post-Soviet Russia: Society, Press and Journalism in the Republic of Karelia 1985-2001*, Tampere University Press, p. 17.

information exchange.⁸⁸ The importance of the networks even increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is to say that Russia in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods had some features of post-modernity.

These post-modern features made an impact on the transformation of the Russian media system. Let us illustrate this by the history of Media-Most.⁸⁹ It is known that Gusinsky decided to be involved in the media business and established this largest private media syndicate.⁹⁰ The most important question arises as to how Gusinsky managed to find the money for this huge investment project. The Russian Prosecutor's Office argues that he used "dirty money." According to the prosecutors, Gusinsky's Media-Most and some of its subsidiaries had many billions of losses and debts that far exceeded their assets. In these circumstances, Gusinsky, according to Russia's laws, had to take a decision on liquidating his companies. Instead, he, along with his colleagues, took a loan of over US\$ 300 million on the security of non-existent assets, which is a criminal offence.

Gusinsky borrowed US\$ 300 million from Gazprom, the leading Russian gas company, to establish his media empire. The scheme *loan – trade – return of credit* is normal in market economies. However, it is unclear how Gusinsky managed to get a loan in Russia when there was a significant shortage of "hard" money in its economy. Second, it is unclear how he managed to take such a big loan? And only after this should it be asked: How did he manage to take the loan "on the security of non-existent assets"?

In order to answer these questions, we have to return to Communist Russia. Although the Communist leadership underlined its strategy towards a classless society, there was a ruling class in the Soviet Russia. This group was called the *nomenclature*, and it could be viewed as the network connecting power elites in the Soviet Union.

Researchers have not paid enough attention to the study of the force that kept members of the *nomenclature* together. However, it is important to outline the

⁸⁸ Ledeneva, A.V. (1998) *Russia's Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁹ Lipman, McFaul, "Managed democracy' in Russia: Putin and the press", p. 118.

⁹⁰ Although Gusinsky now presents himself as a defender of the freedom of speech in Russia, it seems that he invested in the mass media only as one of many possible ways of making money. In 1992, Gusinsky was the president of Most Bank and tried to create a rather multidimensional corporation. He was interested in the construction industry and tried to establish ties with Luzhkov's son. Gusinsky seemed to realise the importance of advertising and hoped for long-term advantages for his business projects.

mechanism, without which this multi-selective machine would have been dead. This mechanism can be called *benefit exchange* (or bargain network). It involved officials and senior managers those who controlled the production of some valuable goods or services and exchanged a part of them between each other. This exchange was informal and not entirely equal since it was very difficult to compare goods and services in the non-market environment.

This system penetrated all Soviet society – from the Ministers to the senior managers. The top of this network was often called the Soviet Mafia. On the level of senior managers and executives, this system was called *Blat*.⁹¹ The system compensated a shortage of necessary goods and resources in the “deficit” economy, the economy where there is a considerable misbalance of supply and demand.

As the Soviet economy was extremely centralised and inefficient, the task of getting essential goods or equipment demanded considerable effort and time. However, there was a way to avoid the difficulties. Some enterprises could exchange part of their output for other goods or resources that were necessary for them. Executives of the enterprises (*nomenclature*) later used this mechanism in order to increase their standard of living.

During Yeltsin’s presidency, this mechanism remained popular amongst politicians and businessmen. Yeltsin, when he felt that he was missing popular support due to difficulties of the policy of “shock therapy”, asked powerful moguls, or the oligarchs, for their financial support. In return, these people were regarded as Yeltsin’s friends and might have counted on state resources in case they need financing for their business projects. And this was regarded as a normal deal (at least in this network).

It was this organisation of the post-Soviet Russia that allowed Gusinsky to receive his loan from Gazprom and to establish the first private media syndicate in Russia. After that it took NTV only a couple of years to become one of the biggest Russian TV channels. This example illustrates that the current Russian media structure was recreated through the use of post-modern features and it itself has become an important element of the power network.

⁹¹ Ledeneva, *Russia’s Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange*.

1.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the history of the Soviet and Russian media since 1917. Transformation of relationships between the state and media organisations during different periods of Soviet and post-Soviet Russia has been examined, and the structure of the news media has been introduced.

I have shown that the Russian mass media was controlled by public authorities and by the Communist Party for the most part of the Soviet period. After considerable political changes in the Soviet Union, the role and the impact of the media increased enormously. During the Yeltsin era many media organisations were privatised. Without state subsidies, however, many of them encountered severe financial difficulties and became dependent on powerful corporations and oligarchs.

The trend of the growing independence of the media from the state was reversed when Putin came to power. Although events relating to major Russian TV channels NTV and TV-6 seem to have been caused by commercial conflicts, the whole series of the events shows that the time of the entire independence of the Russian mass media from the state is over.

In this chapter I have argued that the role of news media in post-Soviet Russia could not be assessed properly without an understanding of the nature of the relationship between the state, business and the public in the Soviet and post-Soviet society. Business and political transactions in Russia are greatly mediated by power networks, which continue to play a more significant role than social institutions. This is explained in more detail in the next chapter, which examines Russian organised crime.

Chapter 2

Russian Organised Crime: Towards a Definition

The spread of organised crime is one of the most serious problems of the Russian Federation. Handelman, the author of a noteworthy book on Russian organised crime, has given the following description of the situation: “there seemed to be more gangsters in the country than policemen. One out of four crimes in 1992 was committed by criminal gangs in 1993.”⁹²

The extent of Russian organised crime can be illustrated by the following statistics. In 1994 organised crime was reported to control about 40 per cent of the Russian gross domestic product. Overall it encompassed 41,000 economic entities, including 500 joint ventures, 550 banks, and 1,500 state enterprises. Criminal groups created nearly 700 legal financial and commercial firms for the purpose of money laundering.⁹³ The situation did not improve in 1997. It was estimated that 50 per cent of banks and 80 per cent of joint ventures had criminal connections.⁹⁴

The problem of organised crime was in spotlight during various phases of Russian history. Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Putin drew attention to the task of tackling organised crime. Many of the western experts, politicians and economists also point out that Russian organised crime does not allow Russia to implement economic reforms successfully.

What is Russian organised crime? This chapter attempts to answer this question. Its purpose is to describe the history of organised crime in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. First, it is important to explain what is considered as “organised crime”. It is essential because there are several definitions of organised crime. The first comprehensive definition of organised crime was given by the American Congress in 1968, which viewed organised crime as “the unlawful activities of the members of a highly organised, disciplined association engaged in supplying illegal goods and services, including, but not

⁹² Handelman, S. (1995) *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*. New Heaven: Yale University Press.

⁹³ Ryan, P. and Rush, G. (1997) *Understanding Organised Crime in Global Perspective*. London: Sage, p. 189.

⁹⁴ *Izvestia*, 18.02.1997.

limited to, gambling, prostitution, loan sharking, narcotics, racketeering and other unlawful activities.”⁹⁵

The definition of organised crime has been changed many times since then. Now the *Columbia Encyclopedia* defines organised crime as “criminal activities organised and co-ordinated on a national scale, often with international connections. [...] Firmly rooted in the social structure, it [organised crime] is protected by corrupt politicians and law enforcement officers, and legal advice; it profits from such activities as gambling, prostitution, and the illicit use of narcotics.”⁹⁶

It should be noticed that the definition of organised crime accepted by Russian Law differs from that in Western countries. The main point of contradiction is the concept “organised”. While American criminologists use this term to describe the whole system of illegal ties, which may spread to national and international levels, the Russian police regard organised crime as a criminal action of two and more individuals.

It could be argued that there is no significant difference between both approaches. Small crime groups are connected with larger and more powerful crime syndicates. Types and areas of criminal activities are controlled by higher criminal authorities. Consequently, it is possible to find a definition that to some extent combines both approaches. In my opinion, the best definition is given by Larry Siegel in his book *Criminology Theories, Patterns, and Typologies*. He has defined organised crime as “a conspiratorial actuate, involving the co-ordination of numerous persons in the planning and execution of illegal acts or in the pursuit of a legitimate objective by unlawful means.”⁹⁷ This definition is used in this thesis.

Second, it would be a mistake to view Russian organised crime as a lasting monolithic social phenomenon. I argue that it is rather a mixture of networks made of different types of criminal groups. Each of these types has its own methods, history and traditions. The first type is *vori v zakone* [thieves in law]. *Thieves in law* emerged during Stalin’s era. This powerful criminal type has its structure, behaviour code, and rituals. I name the second type *illegal entrepreneurs*. This type encompasses entrepreneurs whose

⁹⁵ Lyman, D. M. and Potter, W. G. (1997) *Organised Crime*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 15.

⁹⁶ *The Columbia Encyclopaedia*, Edition 5, (1993) p. 27654, (URL http://web1.infotrac-college.com/wadsworth/session/121/747/1043541/7!xrn_2&bkm_7, consulted in March 2000).

⁹⁷ Siegel, L. (1998) *Criminology Theories, Patterns, and Typologies*, Sixth edition. West/Wadsworth Publishing Company, p. 362.

economic activity is illegal. The most known representatives of this type were called *tshekhoviki*. The *administrative Mafia* is another significant part of Russian organised crime that has existed in the one or another form during the considered period. Finally, *bandits* - it is a relatively new criminal phenomenon in Russian history. Nevertheless, they have quickly become one of the dominant powers in Russia.

This chapter describes each of these four types of organised crime and analyses their features, structure, significance and development. The best alternative would be to represent the stages of the development of Russian organised crime in accordance with the changes of Soviet and Russian leadership. At first glance, this looks as a very reasonable choice because changes in Russian governmental policies significantly affected the features of Russian organised crime. However, the history of the organised crime in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia can be seen as an interaction of all mentioned above types of the criminal underworld: how these criminal cultures coexist, cooperate, and fight with each other. In other words, this case would include a similar description of relations among criminal groups, but such an explanation would have been less focused and more difficult for a reader without an essential knowledge of Russian professional crime. That is why this option has been rejected. The chosen structure lacks the above-mentioned problems and to some extent follows the main trend of major developments of Russian organised crime.

2.1. Vori–v–Zakone [Thieves in Law]

Russian scholars define a *vor-v-zakone* [thief in law] as “professional criminal, the recognized leader of the criminal world and an active ideologist of a criminal way of life and morals, who has experience of anti-state activities.”⁹⁸ *Thieves in law* formed a society that resembles more known secret criminal cultures as the Sicilian Mafia, the Neapolitan Camorra, and Japanese Yakuza.

⁹⁸ Glazov, Y. (1985) “Thieves in the USSR as a social phenomenon”, *The Russian Mind since Stalin's Death*. Dordrecht, Boston: D.Reidell Pub Co.

This thieves' organization was observed and described by some of the dissidents-convicts of the Soviet labour camps such as Dmitry Likhachev⁹⁹ and Alexander Solzhenitsin.¹⁰⁰ It seems to have been more durable than the Soviet system; the Soviet empire collapsed, but the society of *Vori -v-Zakone* continues to be one of the most powerful groups in contemporary Russia. This section examines the main features of this type of organised crime and briefly describes its history.

Thieves in Law originated in the labour camps at the beginning of the Stalin's era (the late 1920s). Like many other social groups that live in a closed space such as ordinary convicts or sailors, *vori* had their own signs that distinguished them from the others. They had their own dress code.¹⁰¹ They also had their own language (*fenia*), which is thought to emerge out of nineteenth century criminal slang.¹⁰² *Thieves in law* covered their bodies with various tattoos that allowed them to recognise one another. The most typical thief's tattoo was a heart pierced by a dagger.¹⁰³ *Vori* sought a monopoly of the usage of their tattoo design. If a non-*vor* wore a *vorovskaia* tattoo, he risked being punished by death.¹⁰⁴

The key features that distinguished the thieves from the other groups and allowed them to form a society that headed the criminal underworld of Russia were their own code of behaviour, a special ritual for initiation of new members, and the *vorovskie* "courts."¹⁰⁵ During initiation a group of hardened criminals decided whether a particular person might be granted membership of this society. This permission could be granted only if they considered that the behaviour of the candidate was directly associated with the principles of the society of *thieves in law*. If so, the candidate became a member of the society. He was formally given a nickname (*klichka*) that was different from the previous one signifying that the criminal was starting a different life.

⁹⁹ Likhachev, D.S. (1935) "Cherty pervobitnogo primitivizma vorovskoy rechi, iazyk i mishlenie" [Elements of primitivism in thieves' speech], *Proceedings of the USSR Academy of Science*, III-IV

¹⁰⁰ Solzhenitsin, A. (1978) *Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experience of Literary Investigation*, London: Collins & Harvill Press.

¹⁰¹ Glazov, "Thieves in the USSR as a social phenomenon".

¹⁰² Chalidze, V. (1977) *Criminal Russia: Essays on Crime in the Soviet Union*. N.Y., p. 57.

¹⁰³ Gamayunov (1995) "Thieves in Law: Devils dressed as Robin Hood", *The Moscow Times*, 11.01.1995.

¹⁰⁴ Bronnikov, A.G. (1996) *Tatuirovki u Prestupnikov v Rossii* [Tatto of Criminals in Russia]. Perm.

¹⁰⁵ Varese, F. (1998) "The Society of Vory v Zakone", *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, p. 516, 517.

There was a strict code of interaction of *vori-v-zakone* with each other. They were supposed to respect one another and avoid conflicts. It was prohibited for a thief to “raise his hand against another thief.”¹⁰⁶ Violence without the sanction of a *vorovskoy* “court” was forbidden.¹⁰⁷ Thieves were required to support each other and to be honest with other members of the community. In addition, the *thieves in law* would have had to share all that they had with the other representatives of this society.

The interaction of the *thieves in law* with the outside world was also regulated by this code of behaviour. In short, the thieves were supposed to restrict their external links, in particular their political activities. Consequently, any sort of activities that were recommended by the Soviet state, including serving in the army and being a member of Young Communist Unions (pioneer or comсомоlets), was prohibited.

Thieves’ main responsibilities were as follows. A *thief in law* was supposed to:

- acquire a leading role in the camps;
- rule over criminals according to the *vori* rules;
- search for recruits;¹⁰⁸
- actively participate in the life of thieves’ communities;
- live on money obtained only by criminal means (he should not work);
- promote “thieves” traditions and rituals;
- be responsible to the criminal community;
- collect money for the communal fund (*obshak*)¹⁰⁹ and supervise its spending;
- care for fellow thieves;
- follow instructions of thieves’ meetings (*shkodok*); and,
- avoid any cooperation with the state agencies.

There were a number of older rules. A *thief in law* could not have a family and come into any contact with law enforcement agencies. Also, he was supposed to live on only these monies which were obtained by him personally.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 520

¹⁰⁹ *Obshchak*, the communal fund to support the activity of the society of thieves in law, bribe state officials and to aid the families of the other members of the community while they are in prison. Money of this fund were collected both by extortion from inmates and contributions from outside.

There was no direct leader in the group of *thieves in law*. *Skhodka* (a *thieves'* meeting) was the main authority, resolving all conflicts and problems of the society. Any thief in law could call for a new meeting.¹¹¹

The society of “*thieves in law*” has a long history. It is reported that some organised groups of professional pickpockets emerged in the imperial (tsarist) Russia. They skilfully adapted to the Soviet reality. After developing a sophisticated and advanced scheme of criminal activities and rituals, they headed Russia’s criminal world in the 1920s-1930s. Since that time they were referred to as to the “*thieves in law*.”

The influence of *thieves in law* became so significant in the 1920s-1930s, that authorities of labour camps (Gulag) started to intensively involve *thieves in law* in suppressing the ideological opponents of the communists (Bolsheviks) in camps and prisons. This cooperation allowed the *thieves* to quickly leave the camps and to return to their criminal activities. In fact, the Gulag itself was considered as the crucial factor that determined the spread of the thieves’ rituals and the elevation of *thieves in law* in society.¹¹²

In the 1940s-50s *the thieves in law* became so influential that the Russian state began to fight against the former ally. This period of time is known as *suchya voina* [bitches’ war]. The intention of camp’s authorities to undermine the power of *thieves in law* was strengthened by the rise of the power of anti-thieves groups in labour camps in the end of the 1950s. These groups consisted of the inmates that had essential military training and were well prepared for violence. Camps’ authorities often cooperated with such criminal groups (which were called *suki*) and used them as an ally in the fight against *thieves*.

Valeriy Shalamov has described one of the episodes of this war. Korol, the leader of *suk*, was chosen by the prison supervisors to undermine the influence of *thieves*. For this purpose, in one of the transit prisons in *Vanino* all inmates were lined up and forced to strip. It was not a problem to recognize *thieves* because of their tattoos. The *thieves*

¹¹⁰ Razinkin, V.S. (1995) *Vori v Zakone i Prestupnie Klani* [Thieves in law and criminal syndicates]. Moskva, p. 26.

¹¹¹ Gurov, A.I. (1995) *Krasnaya Mafia* [The Red Mafia]. Kommrcheskiy Vestnik, p. 115.

¹¹² Varese, F. (1998) “The society of *Vory v Zakone*”, *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, p. 526.

were required to choose between a rejection of their rituals or death. Many of the *thieves* decided to follow their traditions and were killed.¹¹³

Santerre noted another similar case in a camp of the Inta region. There were 50 *suk* and 100 *thieves* in this camp. The camp's authorities did not directly intervene in the conflict between them. However they allowed only the *suki* to carry their weapons. It was the last day for the majority of the *thieves*.¹¹⁴

As a result of this anti-thieves strategy, the population of the *thieves in law* decreased dramatically at the beginning of the 1960s. If, according to Gurov, there were about 300 *thieves in law* in Soviet prisons by the mid-fifties, it is estimated that only 3 per cent of them remained by the end of the 1950s. The others either renounced the criminal profession or were isolated from the other prisoners.

When Khrushchev was elected the General Secretary of the CPSU, the Soviet government took the position that any organised crime was a product of a capitalist system and could not exist in the Soviet Union. The slogan of the total eradication of criminality in the USSR and a victory over organised crime were declared. As a result, when the KGB and military personnel tried to report about such activities they often were told that there was no organised crime in the Soviet Union.

Even the word *thief in law* almost disappeared from the departmental documentation. All types of organised crime were combined into a single article concerning banditism¹¹⁵ of the new Criminal Code in 1960. As a matter of practice, Local law enforcement agencies applied this article very rarely. If they intended to use it, they were supposed to inform the higher authorities by a special note. The central authorities investigated how the local law enforcement agencies allowed the organised crime groups to appear. As a result, the agencies themselves were frequently punished. To avoid such a situation they preferred to enforce laws against less serious crimes such as robbery. This encouraged a new rise of *thieves in law*.

Therefore, the viewpoint that *thieves in law* were almost extinguished in those years is not accurate. On the contrary, it is possible to find some evidence that during a long period of Brezhnev's rule, *thieves in law* co-operated (if this word can be used for

¹¹³ Shalamov, V. (1978) *Kolimskie Rasskazy* [Kolima Stories]. London: Overseas Publications Interchange.

¹¹⁴ Varese, F. (1998) "The Society of *Vory v Zakone*", *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, p. 529.

¹¹⁵ Article 77 of the *Criminal Code of the Russian Federation*.

describing such a relationship) with black market entrepreneurs.¹¹⁶ The entrepreneurs (*tsekhoviki*) were supposed to pay the *thieves in law* 10-15 per cent of their profit for protection in order to avoid further intrusion into their activities.¹¹⁷

This form of cooperation between *tsekhoviki* and *thieves in law* was enhanced after Gorbachev's election as General Secretary of the CPSU. He allowed the legalisation of the majority of previously illegal economic activities. As a result of this, the number of private enterprises in the Soviet Union increased significantly. For the most part, they were notably defenceless against extortion by criminal groups, some of which were headed by *thieves in law*. Most entrepreneurs were forced to pay a tribute in order to avoid penalties such as arson or killings. For example, Georgian *thieves in law* controlled Tokobank,¹¹⁸ and Shura Zakhar, a *thief in law*, owned shares of the commercial firm Interros.¹¹⁹ Some *thieves in law* themselves became successful entrepreneurs. According to Handelman, "by the late 1980 some of the most successful wheelers and dealers of the perestroika era were former *thieves*, who had repudiated their origin, and *the khoviki*, owners of underground factories."¹²⁰

When Yeltsin was elected President of Russia in 1991, he launched a large programme of privatisation. As a result of this programme, some Russia's powerful or rich individuals and social groups instantly become the owners of valuable property and enterprises. Given that the above-mentioned activities provided considerable income for *thieves in law*, it is not surprising that many of them acquired a significant part of Russia's firms and property. After that, the social status of *thieves in law* notably increased. They have divided the territory of Russia in terms of controlling legal and illegal enterprises and are now regarded as the most influential persons in several Russian regions and in Moscow.

¹¹⁶ This group is examined in depth in the second section and the ground of such a cooperation is analysed in the fourth section of this chapter.

¹¹⁷ Ulibin, K.A. (1991) "Domisli i fakti o kooperatsii i tenevoy ekonomike" [Rumors and facts regarding the black economy], *Tenevaia Ekonomika* [The black economy], Moskva.

¹¹⁸ "Zemliaki zemliaka" [Neighbours of a neighbour], *Rossiyskaia Gazeta*, 22.03.94.

¹¹⁹ *Izvestiya*, 08.04.1994.

¹²⁰ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 42.

2.2. Illegal Entrepreneurs

This section describes entrepreneurs who were involved in a set of economic activities that were considered by Soviet law as illegal. It is worth mentioning that most of such criminal activity was legitimate practice in the West. William Clark notes that: “the Soviet crime of speculation, a serious transgression punishable in extreme cases by death, involved in many cases little more than the everyday activity of retailers in the United States; the procurement and re-selling of goods and/or services with a view towards the acquisition of profit.”¹²¹ In fact, such activity represented a less formal and more traditional way of providing goods and services.

However, this behaviour was not appropriate according to the communist ideology. Consequently the problem of what to do about such illegal economic activities arose immediately after the October Revolution. On 22 July 1918, Lenin signed a decree on combating speculation. This decree prescribed severe punishment (up to ten years of the work in labour camps and the confiscation of personal property) for such activities.

Furthermore, such crimes were supposed to be persecuted by Chrezvychainaia Komissia, or CheKa (The All Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolution and Sabotage). This powerful organization, a predecessor of KGB, was created on 7 December 1917 in order to fight the political enemies of Bolsheviks. The CheKa was given permission to use various methods, some of which would not be accepted in a democratic society. It is known that a significant amount of Cheka work dealt with countering rampant speculation, i.e., private trading. This shows that such activities were a very serious infringement of Soviet law.

The CheKa failed to overcome this problem although it worked hard to do so. It used several methods and arrested many private traders. The CheKa is thought to have arrested 26,692 individuals in charges of speculation between December 1918 and November 1920.¹²² In addition to the legal penalties, the CheKa is believed to have ministered its own penalties for these economic activities. It is reported that during this period the commission executed over 900 individuals.

¹²¹ William, A. C. (1993) *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom, Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*. London: M.E.Sharpe, p. 9.

¹²² Leggett, G. (1981) *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 215.

However, private trading continued to flourish because the Soviet economy was unable to supply the population with the necessary economic goods. As Leggett, a leading expert on the CheKa, has noted: “The prevalence of profiteering was such as to defeat the combined efforts of the courts and the CheKa: it was not until the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921 removed its causes that the phenomenon of speculation virtually vanished, or rather was legalised.”¹²³

A permanent deficit of many goods was a consequence of central planning that was adopted as the basis of the Soviet economy. The State Plan was the main target, and the production of the amount of goods or services demanded by the State Plan was the most important goal of Russian enterprises. The salaries of the workers of the enterprises depended on whether this goal was reached.

The State Plan, at least in the form in which it was adopted in the Soviet Union, turned out to be an inflexible and controversial. Enterprises were supposed to submit notes (*zaiavki*), which indicated their demand in amount of natural resources and goods they would need. However, it proved difficult to estimate the real demand of an enterprise in advance. Another problem was that the required amount and quality of essential materials were frequently difficult to obtain.

Consequently, many enterprises faced a problem of getting essential materials in order to accomplish the targets of the Plan. This task was extremely difficult because of the above-mentioned unpredictability of supply and demand. Moreover, it was illegal to buy these materials from other firms without the official approval from the state authorities. As the process of getting this approval was very time-consuming and unpredictable, the executives of some enterprises sought alternatives.

One of these alternatives was the assistance of the special procurement officers called *tolkachi*, or pushers. The range of activities of the latter was very wide and included legally questionable action. In the search for needed materials, *tolkachi* suggested various schemes of barter and bribed officials and managers.¹²⁴ It is worth mentioning that to some extent Soviet law enforcement agencies were disinclined to persecute violations that were primarily perpetrated in order to fulfil the Soviet state

¹²³ Ibid., p. 214, 215.

¹²⁴ Berliner, J. (1957) *Factory and Manager in USSR*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

interests. However, sometimes even such dealings were scrutinised by Soviet law enforcement agencies since the salaries were dependent on fulfilling the Plan's targets and it was possible to argue that the executives had been motivated by personal enrichment rather than by state interests.¹²⁵

Stalin believed that the solution to the problem of illegal economic activities was a reinforcement of the coercive power of the Soviet State. In the 1930s the legal penalty for many crimes were raised to capital punishment. Stalin's theory of the intensification of the class struggle resulted in escalating the work of the Soviet coercive organs. *OGPU* (the Unified State Political Administration) received permission to execute those convicted of any anti-Soviet activities. Convictions in the Russian Republic are reported to have risen 44 per cent between 1928 and 1933.¹²⁶ It seems that this policy was successful in dissuading many people from carrying out these activities since there is little evidence of an expansion of illegal economic activities and the existence of a black economy during Stalin's era.

The black economy is thought to have emerged during Khrushchev's time. The black economy of that time consisted mostly of non-state firms. They produced ordinary goods and services. However, these firms were illegal because private business was prohibited in the Soviet Union. When Khrushchev was told about the existence of the black economy, he was very upset and ordered its eradication. Ironically, Khrushchev was soon dismissed from office, while the black economy continued to flourish for a long time afterwards.

It seems that Khrushchev's reforms initiated the emergence of the black economy in Russia. First, there were a lot of difficult targets to reach. Second, Soviet law enforcement agencies diminished control of activities of enterprises. As a result, a specific kind of fraud, which is known as *pripiski*, became popular. In short *pripiski* meant misleading the higher authorities and controlling organs about the real performance and expenditures of the enterprises.

¹²⁵ William, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom, Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, p. 53.

¹²⁶ Treadgold, D. W. (1964) *The Development of the USSR: An Exchange of Views*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, p. 175.

The executives and senior administrators formed a main group that was able to profit from such fraud.¹²⁷ They received considerable sums of money and this capital subsidised the black economy.¹²⁸ *Thieves in law* were another dominant group of the black economy. This group also accumulated huge sums of money (partly obtained by extortion from the *thekhovikov*) and tried to invest it in profitable business projects. Since such illegal activity in the long run was impossible without the complicit agreement of state and party officials, they formed the third group of the black economy.¹²⁹

The prolonged period of Brezhnev's rule allowed the black economy to strengthen and flourish.¹³⁰ Andropov's very short term of office from 1982 to 1984 was not sufficient to significantly undermine it. When he was elected General Secretary of the CPSU, Andropov, a former KGB chief, started a number of anti-corruption and anti-criminal initiatives. However, he was seriously ill and died before these campaigns could achieve any significant results.

The Gorbachev era was the golden age of the black economy since he legalised its considerable part. The Law on *Cooperative*, adopted during Gorbachev's time, permitted most of the kind of economic activity that is legal in capitalist economies. Surprisingly, the legalisation of the black economy did not make it disappear. This did not happen because of the simultaneous decline of the Soviet state. During *perestroika* many firms did not report real profit figures in order to reduce tax payments. A large number of companies did not pay taxes at all. As the black economy is often defined as the one consisted of tax avoiding enterprises, it is possible to conclude that the black economy continued to exist in Gorbachev's and post-Gorbachev's Russia. Beside tax evasion, many entrepreneurs of Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's Russia were involved in many illegal economic activities, including traditional organised crime business – drug trafficking, pornography, and immigrant smuggling.

¹²⁷ Similar frauds are examined in depth in the section on the administrative mafia.

¹²⁸ Ulibin, "Domisli i fakti o kooperatsii i tenevoy ekonomike".

¹²⁹ It should be noticed that they often were the same people who composed the first of the groups mentioned above.

¹³⁰ For example, see Vaksberg, A. (1991) *The Soviet Mafia: A Shocking Expose of Organised Crime in the USSR*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

2.3. The Administrative Mafia

The illegal economic activity described in the previous section was impossible without a hidden or open protection from state and party officials at various levels. This involvement, which can be viewed as corruption, was widespread, especially in late years of Brezhnev's rule. Let us call these corrupt state officials, managers and administrators the *administrative Mafia*. This section describes the causes and the extent of corruption in the former Soviet Union and reviews the structure and development of the *administrative Mafia*.

Let us start with the causes of corruption in Russia. Corruption was not a new social phenomenon produced by the Soviet way of life. It was deeply rooted in the Russian culture. Foreign visitors to Russia noted a significant involvement of Russian officials in corrupt practices.

Even though all Soviet leaders declared programmes against corruption, they were not able to overcome it. Some of the factors which led to corrupt practices include:

1. Informal principles of the Soviet management
2. Its organisational structure
3. Command economy and central planning
4. Institutional weaknesses
5. The features of Soviet law

Describing all of them in depth is not a task of this chapter. I shall draw attention only to the most relevant factors for this study.

Informal principles of the Soviet management have been well described by Charles A. Schwartz:

- Party interests had supremacy over legal interests;
- Nothing succeeded like the success of the Plans;
- The state preferred its money to be spent carefully;
- "White" forms of corruption were acceptable. White corruption meant taking occasional illegal action in favour of state interests (for example, the success of the Plans);

- “Grey” forms of corruption would be evaluated with respect to a set of economic performance criteria. Grey corruption meant an action in favour of state interests that might have had a significant benefit for those personally involved;
- “Black” forms of corruption were not tolerated. This was corruption for personal gains (e.g., wide variety of bribery).¹³¹

It is evident that these managerial principles encouraged corruption because they postulated that sometimes a violation of the rules was appropriate (provided this did not contravene the state interests).

Central planning, another important factor, made administrative corruption almost inevitable. To reach the Plan’s targets was the main goal of all Soviet enterprises. The salary and bonus of a Soviet firm’s personnel depended on how well the firm coped with the Plan’s targets. As a result, if managers were not able to reach the Plan’s targets by legal means, they tried to produce at least an appearance of plan fulfilment by the falsification of reports regarding the real volume of production.

Of course, such a practice, which was called *pripiski*, was a criminal offence. However, corrupt networks based on *pripiski* emerged because almost every level of the Soviet economy was interested in reaching the Plan’s targets. These networks included economic ministers, Communist Party and state officials, supervisors and workers.

As a consequence of central planning and the continuous deficit in the Soviet Union, executives tried to order more raw materials and spare parts than they actually needed. Such a safety net, which was called *strakhova*, sometimes resulted in a stock of materials and spare parts that managers preferred to hold for “a rainy day”, because even if these materials were never needed, they could be bartered for other valuable goods.

Another negative consequence of central planning (which has been noticed in the previous section) was an imbalance of supply and output. It was difficult to take into account everything beforehand, and it was almost impossible to receive ordered materials according to the specified terms and in the necessary volume.

In order to survive in these circumstances, the enterprises tried to overcome this problem. *Tolkachi* (pushers), described in the previous section, were one solution.

¹³¹ Schwartz, C. A. (1979) “Corruption and Political Development in the U.S.S.R.”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 4.

However, it was extremely difficult for “pushers” to succeed unless they established informal links (*znakomstva*) with the executives of enterprises and with ministries.¹³² Thus, informal networks connecting power elites in the Soviet Union were created.

As the number of people involved in these informal networks grew and the stock of additional products increased, the basis for the emergence of the Soviet *administrative Mafia* formed. Socialism in Russia did not provide many legal opportunities for citizens to improve their wealth. At the same time the Russians were aware of technological advances and the high standard of living in some Western countries. An aspiration to improve their wealth made many Russians search for illegal opportunities. The administrative corruption suited this purpose well.

Because of a permanent deficit of many essential goods, it was possible to benefit from the redistribution of the goods or services that were under the managers’ supervision. Although the control of law enforcement agencies was significant in Stalin’s period, it was gradually diminished after his death. After the 1960s, an informal alliance of the state officials, the officers of law enforcement agencies, and the managers of enterprises was formed and this significantly increased the opportunities for profiting from such illegal activities.

Thus, the Soviet *administrative Mafia* mostly consisted of upper classes of the Soviet society: executives, senior administrators, and the Communist Party and state officials. Joseph Serio notes that the Soviet *administrative Mafia* included the ministers in Moscow, controlling delivery of oil to other Soviet Republics, and their administrations, which controlled the trade with the assistance of criminals.¹³³ Some top-ranking leaders of the party, like the CPSU Secretaries in regions, used their posts for their personal enrichment. Although it would be wrong to say that every party official was corrupt in Russia, there were many examples of corruption during the Brezhnev era.

Let us look at some examples at the top of this pyramid of corruption, which were investigated by Andropov’s KGB.¹³⁴ Rytov, Deputy Fishing Industry Minister, was

¹³² William, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom, Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, p. 51.

¹³³ Serio, J. (1983) “Organised Crime in the Former Soviet Union: Only the Name is New”, *CJ International*, Vol. 9, No. 4, July-August, p. 12.

¹³⁴ It is believed that when Andropov was appointed the chief of KGB he focused his efforts on dismantling Brezhnev’s elite.

dismissed for his key role in the so-called “fish case” or “caviar case” in 1978. This case involved several hundred suspects. Shibaev, the chairman of the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU), was arrested in early 1982 on suspicion of being involved in a number of illegal activities, such as participation in sex orgies and the illegal construction of a private *dacha*.¹³⁵

Another Brezhnev’s protégé, Sergey Medunov, the chairman of the Krasnodar region, was expelled from the CPSU and some of his accomplices were arrested. In 1978, Dudnikov (director of the Polar Fisherman Resort Hotel), Magalentssev (an engineer at the Hotel), Cherkezia (the local construction administration’s chairman), and Batalov (allegedly a carpenter attached to the local administration) were jailed for 15, 12, 10 and 15 years respectively, and their property was confiscated. They were convicted in the “embezzlement of funds” in amount of 80,864 rubles (approximately US\$ 70,000).

Viacheslav Voronkov, the chairman of Gorispolkom (City Executive Committee) of Sochi, a large city in the Krasnodar region, was charged with corruption in 1980. He was accused of accepting bribes of 3,000 rubles on each apartment rented in this main resort of the former Soviet Union. Voronkov was sentenced for thirteen years. Another Medunov’s follower, Borodkina, the manager of the Gelenzhik Restaurant and Cafeteria Trust of the local municipal administration, was accused of receiving 561,834 rubles in bribes and executed.¹³⁶

A very significant figure of the Brezhnev’s political elite, Shchelokov, the Ministry of the Interior, was among the expelled together with Medunov. Shchelokov seemed to have used his post of the top police officer to enrich his family. His relatives are reported to have driven around Moscow in sixteen *Mercedes* and *Volvo* sedans, cars that were a rare and remarkable luxury of that time.

Shchelokov frequently sent his deputies to raid Moscow Custom Office’s storeroom of confiscated items for things he or his family wanted. After the death of Brezhnev, Shchelokov was ousted from this post and appointed the head of security at a Siberian gas pipeline construction site. Later he and his wife committed suicide.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ William, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom, Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, p. 53.

¹³⁶ Ibid., pp. 170, 171.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

Uzbekskoe Delo [Uzbek's Case] was the most scandalous corruption case of that time. Uzbekistan, a Soviet Republic of Central Asia, was a cotton-growing centre of the Soviet Union. For a number of years during Brezhnev's rule, the Uzbek executives and senior administrators systematically inflated reports on cotton production by incredible amounts of millions of tons.

Because the producers' salary and bonus depended on reaching and exceeding Plan's quotas, the system of *pripisok* significantly profited the so-called Uzbek Mafia. Its profit was enormous. When KGB officers searched the house of a low-rank criminal investigator who was caught in taking a bribe, they discovered a million rubles in cash, thousands of Swiss watches, and diamonds.

The money obtained by the Uzbek Mafia "was injected into shadow black market dealings, including the purchase and sale of official positions, which fostered universal corruption in the republic."¹³⁸ It is estimated that more than 30,000 people were involved in this corrupt network, including Brezhnev's son-in-law Yury Churbanov, who was a deputy head of the Ministry of the Interior. Churbanov was convicted and sent to prison, Brezhnev died, and Andropov replaced Brezhnev as General Secretary of the CPSU.

Andropov was very ill and did not succeed in the eradication of the Soviet *administrative Mafia*. The case of *Eliseyevsky* store was one of few cases finalised during this time. Yury Sokolov, the director of *Eliseyevsky*, the main store of the Soviet elite, and Nikolay Tregubov, his boss, were arrested. While searching Sokolov's premises, the police discovered the equivalent of US\$ 4 million in a box hidden under his apartment floor. Sokolov and Tregubov were charged with accepting bribes in exchange for supply of foodstuffs. Sokolov was executed by a firing squad.¹³⁹

When Gorbachev replaced Andropov as the General Secretary of the CPSU, the *administrative Mafia* gained even more opportunities to profit from corruption than before. Gurov, a leading expert on Russian organised crime, pointed out that "in 1985/86 when the co-operative movement was starting up, 60 per cent of those co-operatives were

¹³⁸ Finckenauer, J.O. and Waring, E.J. (1998) *Russian Mafia in America*. Northeastern University Press, p. 98.

¹³⁹ Serio, "Organised Crime in the Former Soviet Union: Only the Name is New", p. 12.

¹³⁹ It is believed that when Andropov was appointed the chief of KGB he focused his efforts on dismantling Brezhnev's elite.

¹³⁹ William, *Crime and Punishment in Soviet Officialdom, Combating Corruption in the Political Elite, 1965-1990*, p. 185.

run by former or active criminals [...] These so-called entrepreneurs were people who stole from the rest of us. They cheated in their factories and their production lines and reserved the best stuff for their own private trade. I have estimated that 80 per cent of the chiefs of small criminal groups today are former deputy directors, former administrators.”¹⁴⁰

During transition to the market this category is thought to have strengthened its power base. The *administrative Mafia* was able to trade the goods under their supervision for the private benefit and used this capital for profitable investments. The programme of privatisation adopted by the Russian government during the first years of Yeltsin’s rule allowed some individuals of the *administrative Mafia* to become owners of valuable Russian companies by paying significantly less than their real value. The devaluation of rouble, the Russian national currency, made Russian property and assets much cheaper in terms of hard currency (American dollar). In addition, the *administrative Mafia* bought huge packages of privatisation vouchers from ordinary Russians, the majority of whom sold their vouchers almost for free as they did not know what to do with them.¹⁴¹

Groups of owners that were called *oligarchs* emerged at this time. To demonstrate that the process of privatisation was not entirely transparent and that the finance oligarchy acquired its wealth in a questionable way, let us quote President Putin who said: “The (Russian) law enforcement was very bad. [...] Naturally, [...] many people used this weakness of the state [...]. Clans were created which became owners of multi billions of wealth. [...]. I am talking about the billions of *dollars*. [...] Some groups became owners [...] of billions within 2-3 years.”¹⁴²

Deficiencies of the Russian law, the economic instability, and the crisis in Russia have influenced the enormous number of frauds. There are many types of fraud, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss them. What is important is that the *administrative Mafia* has more opportunities to commit fraud and to avoid any punishment for it.

¹⁴⁰ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 56.

¹⁴¹ Castell, M. (2000) *End of Millennim*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, p. 188.

¹⁴² URL <http://www.strana.ru/state/kremlin/2001/06/19/992971981.html>, consulted in June 2001.

The majority of researchers have not paid attention to the fact that this Mafia continues to exist.¹⁴³ Of course, the methods of the *administrative Mafia* are much more “civilised”. To force businessmen to act in an expected way, the *administrative Mafia* does not normally use violence and weapons. A number of legal ways are available for this purpose, for example tax inspection.¹⁴⁴

There is much evidence to show that the administrations of many cities act like an *administrative Mafia*. For instance, the Moscow administrative elite around Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, seems to have become a society similar to the *administrative Mafia* of the Brezhnev era.¹⁴⁵ The number of officials of the Moscow Government charged with corruption has been rising from day to day. It is reported that thirty corruption cases have been filed against Moscow officials and reached a courtroom.¹⁴⁶

The most striking cases have been the alleged theft of nearly US\$ 8 billion during the construction of the Moscow circular highway¹⁴⁷ and the arrest of Dmitry Malishev, the deputy to the director of the former Moscow Property Department, because of the acceptance of a US\$ 70,000 bribery.¹⁴⁸ The first Mayor of St. Petersburg, Sobchak and some representatives of his administration have also been investigated in corruption cases.¹⁴⁹ For example, Valeriy Malishev, the vice-governor of the Leningrad oblast, was accused of accepting bribes in 2001.¹⁵⁰

These cases are only the tip of the iceberg of administrative corruption. According to the report *Economic Crime and the Security of Citizens, Society, and the State* (1995), “In 1993 and 1994 federal officials took bribes and other forms of illegal income from

¹⁴³ For example, see Kulludon, V. (1998) “Kriminalizatsiya rossiyskoy politicheskoy eliti” [Kriminalisation of the Russian political elite], in *Konstitutsionnoe Pravo: Vostochnoevropeyskoe Obozrenie*, No. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with V. Radaev, scholar and expert, Moscow, May, 1999.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Sergey, a researcher, St. Petersburg, 2001.

¹⁴⁶ URL <http://russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/03/01/983451575/983454295.html>, consulted in July 2002.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ The Interior Ministry’s Investigation Committee has started criminal proceedings on the basis of Article 290 of the Criminal Code (“Acceptance of a Major Bribe by a Group of Persons”), which carries a prison term of up to 12 years and forfeiture of estate, (URL <http://www.strana.ru/incidents/criminal/2001/02/28/983373480.html>, consulted in July 2002).

¹⁴⁹ Konstantinov, A. (2001) *Corrupt Peterburg* [Corrupt Peterburg]. St. Petersburg: Neva.

¹⁵⁰ *Lenta.ru*, 10.07.2001, (URL <http://lenta.ru/russia/2001/07/10/bribe/>, consulted in July 2001).

inappropriate licensing export quotas and registration of commercial enterprises, the value of such fraud is liberally estimated at US\$ 100 billion.”¹⁵¹

To sum up, corrupt practices became necessary and possible because the formal system of the Soviet economy was less efficient and fair than should have been the case. The Soviet *administrative Mafia* consisted of executives, administrators of firms, and party and state officials. Among the members of the *administrative Mafia*, money is not the main means of paying although transition to the market has increased the importance of this component. An exchange of goods or services that are often difficult or even impossible to compare in terms of money is the force that amalgamates the *administrative Mafia*.

The *administrative Mafia* is a serious competitor of *thieves in law* and *bandits*, a criminal type that is described in the next section. The *administrative Mafia* has very strong ties with the state and law enforcement agencies, and it is able to counteract any other Russian criminal group either by legal means (arrest of gangsters and lords of organised crime), or by encouraging conflicts between criminal groups in the saturated market of protection providers.

2.4. Bandits

Bandits is the last and most recent type of the representatives of organised crime in Russia. To some extent Russian *bandits* are similar to the Sicilian Mafia. This section analyses the origin of this type of organised crime, describes the main activities of *bandits*, examines their problems, and estimates their impact on the socio-economic situation in Russia.

The conditions of the emergence of this type of organised crime are based on some principles that are well known in economic theory. The first principle is that any commodity cannot be successfully traded on a market unless there is *demand* for it. The second condition is that there should be a *supply* of this article of trade. In other words, for the emergence of the Mafia there should be a demand for the services that are

¹⁵¹ Ryan, Rush, *Understanding Organised Crime in Global Perspective*, p. 189.

provided by the Mafia, and a sufficient number of people who wish to supply such services, i.e., to be mafioso.

A situation when there is *a demand* for services of a Mafia can be illustrated by a number of historical examples. As Robert Putnam has noted in his book *Making Democracy Work*, the Mafia had a significant impact on the life in the southern areas of Italy.¹⁵² Putnam has drawn attention to the fact that it was exactly in this area that public authorities were relatively powerless. In other words, following Putnam, it is possible to identify the weak state as a key factor that influences the genesis of the Mafia.¹⁵³

To understand how the supreme guarantor of the law and one of its most malicious enemies became somehow related to each other, one should take a look at the nature of the state. Although there are a great number of proponents of the theory that considers the state to be a public contract, it makes sense to address to Max Weber's definition of the state. According to Weber, the state is a social institution that owns the monopoly of violence within a given territory.¹⁵⁴

The state monopoly of violence was the key feature during the formation of states, and the state played a very important role in the development of the local economy. Let us note F. Lane's paper "Consequences of Organised Violence."¹⁵⁵ Lane has argued that the action of the state as an effective powerful guarantor has influenced the development of prosperous economies in some countries. On the contrary, if the state is weak, or starts to lose its monopoly of violence, and stops to be the guarantor of legal order, this causes social and economic crises. As impunity for crimes flourishes and crime increase in number, a need for an authority, which would be able to halt a spread of uncertainty and to enforce stability, emerges. In other words there is a call for the Mafia.

The second condition of demand for services provided by the Mafia is closely connected with the first one. It is an insufficiency of the definition and enforcement of property rights. For example, Varese notes this condition in his three basic principles of a

¹⁵² Putnam, R. (1993) *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press, pp. 146-148.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁵⁴ Gerth, H. and Wright, M. (eds) (1970) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. London: Routledge, p. 78.

¹⁵⁵ Lane, F. (1958) "Economic Consequences of Organised Violence", *The Journal of Economic History*, 1958, XVII, 4, pp. 401-417; North, D. and Thomas, R. (1973) *The Rise of the Western World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-18.

market economy, which comprise a clear definition of property rights, an opportunity for the extraction of income from available property, and the presence of the effective enforcement system of property rights that includes both an effective judicial system and a powerful police force.¹⁵⁶

In a transition period there is a huge uncertainty concerning property rights. Such a situation existed in Sicily during its transition to the market economy. Russia did not avoid this problem when the government started market reforms.¹⁵⁷ As Marshall Goldman notes: “On top of everything else, there was no accepted code of business behaviour. Suddenly Russia found itself with the makings of a market but with no commercial code, no civil code, no effective banking system, no effective accounting system, and no procedures for declaring bankruptcy.”¹⁵⁸

Alexander Gurov, another researcher of Russian organised crime, also noted the significance of this factor when he discussed features and causes of the development of Russian organised crime.¹⁵⁹ He pointed out that laws regulating property rights in Soviet Russia differed considerably from those during the post-Communist period. As it has already been noted, a significant part of economic transactions with private property (which includes financial capital) was illegal according to the Soviet Criminal Code.

The law enforcement system of Russia seemed to have been unsuitable for resolving many commercial conflicts. Arbitrary courts turned out to be very slow and relatively expensive (a court’s fee was from 1.5 to 5 per cent of the sum of appeals). Nonetheless, there were no guarantees that a case would be resolved effectively and properly because of the presence of a significant number of “holes” in the Russian legislation.

After describing the conditions of demand, let us examine another component of the emergence of the Mafia. Demand without supply is not sufficient for the success of a product or service. It has been argued that there are two main conditions for the emergence of the *supply* of mafioso services. First, there should be a significant number

¹⁵⁶ Varese, F. (1996) *The Emergence of the Russian Mafia: Dispute Settlement and Protection in a New Market Economy*. DPhil thesis. The Faculty of Social Studies, University of Oxford, Oxford, Chapter 1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Goldman, M. (1996) *Lost Opportunity, What has made Economic Reform in Russia so Difficult*, New York: Norton, p. 42.

¹⁵⁹ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 58.

of military trained individuals (who are able to use weapons). Second, these people should have sufficient reasons to prefer this dangerous occupation to other jobs.

The importance of these two conditions for the emergence of the Mafia has been pointed out by several researchers. For example, Diego Gambetta notices that at the end of the nineteenth century, many professional soldiers, *bravi*, *compagni*, *militi*, former soldiers of the Bourbon's army lost their jobs. This forced them "to offer their skills and services to different social groups, and not only to aristocracy."¹⁶⁰

The situation in many Communist countries during transition to the market economy was similar. Many of the former employees of the coercive organs are thought to have been unable to find a good job in the new conditions. They are believed to have composed the core of criminal groups. Katherina Verdery suggested such a scenario for the people of the former secret police (Securitate) of Romania.¹⁶¹ Russia is also in this list. It is known, that Alexander Solonik ("killer № 1"), a criminal of the *Kurganskaia* gang, was a policeman and a soldier of a special division of the Soviet Army in East Germany.¹⁶²

What are the conditions that force the military professionals to choose this dangerous occupation?¹⁶³ First, this happens during considerable social changes, when the power and wealth of the state decreases with a consequent shrink of the employment rate and salaries in law enforcement agencies. The second important factor is the economic recession, i.e., a situation when opportunities to change one's occupation are very limited. Third, the risk of being mafioso should not be too high. To put it in another way, the counteraction of law enforcement agencies and other criminals groups should not be very strong.

All the above-mentioned conditions for the emergence of the Mafia existed in post-Communist Russia. That made the emergence of *bandits* in Russia during its transition to the market economy inevitable. The *bandits* quickly became powerful

¹⁶⁰ Gambetta, D. (1993) *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, p. 80.

¹⁶¹ Verdery, K. (1996) "A Transition from socialism to feudalism? Thoughts on the postsocialist state", in K. Verdery (ed.) *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton University Press, p. 217.

¹⁶² Maksimov, A. (1998) *Rossiyskaia Prestupnost, Kto Est Kto* [Russian crime, who is who]. Moskva: EKSM Press, p. 124.

¹⁶³ It is very unsafe because criminal groups frequently fight against each other.

competitors of the *thieves in law*. Zhigalo noted: “In St. Petersburg, when *avtoriteti* (the leaders of *bandits*) sit down to talk with *thieves*, they are in equal terms. It is like two generals.”¹⁶⁴

Finckenauer has described some of the features of this new Russian Mafia as being involved in “some of the traditional staples of Western organised crime (mostly unknown in the old Soviet Union) such as drug trafficking and prostitution).”¹⁶⁵ However, the most distinguished feature is the “extortion of new companies, business, and restaurants in Moscow and other former Soviet cities.”¹⁶⁶ In brief, the criminal groups forced the majority of Russian entrepreneurs to pay them for “protection.” These payments were from 10 to 20 per cent of capital turnover for these firms (the equivalent to over half of their profits).¹⁶⁷

If the entrepreneurs did not pay, they were in serious risk of being beaten or killed. A senior investigator of the Ministry of the Interior confirmed this fact by saying: “Every big town in Russia has dozens of powerful groups run by *avtoriteti* [respected people], some are divided among ethnic lines, and other just by their crime specialisation.”¹⁶⁸

Whether or not the *bandits* helped Russian entrepreneurs to succeed is still a matter of question. On the one hand, Varese tries to defend the protection role of the Mafia and refers to a number of cases when the intervention of bandits was helpful for the entrepreneurs.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, there is much evidence that the protection impact of some bandits groups (called in Russia as *krisha* [roof]) was very limited if it existed at all.

Russian groups of *bandits* mostly consisted of robust youngsters who were trained and lead by mature criminals or professionals. Some former soldiers of special military

¹⁶⁴ Varese, F. (1996) *The Emergence of the Russian Mafia: Dispute Settlement and Protection in a New Market Economy*. D. Phil thesis, The Faculty of Social Studies, University of Oxford, Oxford, Ch. 1.

¹⁶⁴ Goldman, *Lost Opportunity, What has made Economic Reform in Russia so Difficult*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁴ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁵ “Russian organised crime in America”, in R. Kelly, R. Schatzberg and K. Chin (eds) (1994) *Handbook of Organised Crime in the United States*. Westport, p. 249.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ *Izvestiya*, 26.01.1994.

¹⁶⁸ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁹ Varese, F. *The Emergence of the Russian Mafia: Dispute Settlement and Protection in a New Market Economy*.

units of the Russian Army also joined the gangs. For example, Sergey Butorin's gang (*Orekhovskaia* crime group) was composed of some former soldiers of special military units of the Ministry of the Interior. One of them, Alexander Pustovalov, who is thought to have committed nearly twenty murders, was a naval officer of a special elite division of the Russian Navy.¹⁷⁰

The leaders of bandits, who are called *avtoriteti*, represent a new type of criminal lords. They have less respect for criminal traditions and are less susceptible to the morality of *thieves in law*. They are more involved into legal and illegal economic activities. Handelman notes that *avtoriteti* moved "into more risky spheres of criminal behaviour, such as bank fraud and drug trafficking," and they "commanded wealth beyond the dreams and ambitions of the old *vori*."¹⁷¹

In order to illustrate a multidimensional activity of *avtoriteti* let us take Kvantrishvili as an example. He was the coach of a popular wrestling team and a founder of a new political party Athletes of Russia. At the same time, Kvantrishvili was an "arbitrator" between criminal groups and the Russian officialdom. A few weeks before his murder, one of Kvantrishvili's enterprises, which exported aluminium, oil and titanium, was freed of taxes by a decree signed by Yeltsin.

This example shows that many *bandits* invested their money in a profitable business. This business could be either illegal, such as drug trafficking or prostitution, or legal. There is some evidence that bandits have invested money taken from the entrepreneurs in personal shops and trade firms. For instance, the *Tambovskaja* crime group, one of the most influential crime groups in St. Petersburg, more resembles a society of businessmen than a gang.¹⁷² Sergey Mikhailov (Mikhas), allegedly the leader of the *Solntsevskaja* criminal group, is a prosperous businessman. He supervises substantial investment projects in several countries, including Hungary and Austria.

Although criminal groups try to prevent serious conflicts between each other, they are not able to avoid them. Large areas of Moscow cemeteries are filled with the graves

¹⁷⁰ "Lider orekhovskoy prestupnoy gruppirovki zaderzhan v ispanskom publichnom dome" [The ganglord of the *Orekhovskaia* crime group is arrested in a Spanish brothel], *Lenta.ru*, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/world/2001/02/15/spain/>, consulted in February 2001).

¹⁷¹ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*.

¹⁷² Interview with Stanislav, a researcher on organised crime, St. Petersburg, December, 2001.

of youngsters killed in *banditskih razborkah* [gangster wars]. The pressure especially escalates during the periods of redistribution of property or areas of control.

This happened in Russia between 1992 and 1994. There was a gangster war in Moscow. Many *avtoriteti* and *bandits* were killed. As *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, one of the most popular Moscow newspapers, reported in 1992, “Almost everyday corpses are found in Moscow with bound hands and feet, sometimes even parts of bodies.”¹⁷³

One of the bloody fights was for control over a chain of car services. It was a conflict between *Podolskaia* and *Balashinskaia* organised crime groups. The fight was started by two ambitious leaders of the *Balashinskaia* crime group, nicknamed Gera and Sukhoy, who were upset by a lack of respect from the gangsters of the *Podolskaia* crime group. A series of skirmishes between the gangs ended with a pitched battle in a housing estate of a Moscow suburb.

Three gangsters of *Balashinskaia* and two representatives of *Podolskaia* were killed. Police found 250 spent cartridges in the battlefield. Gera and Sukhoy managed to escape. However, Gera was gunned down in the Hotel Druzhba known as a headquarters of *Georgian* mobsters on Vernadsky Prospect [Vernadsky Road] in Moscow a few days later. Sukhoy was also fatally stabbed with his bodyguard on a beach in Istrinski district.¹⁷⁴

One of the groups of *bandits* even specialised in killing members and leaders of other gangs. This group was called *Kurganskaia*. It was led by Audrey Koligov and is thought to have committed more than 40 contract killings during the criminal wars in the 1990s. This group emerged in 1994 when *Silvester*,¹⁷⁵ a prominent Moscow *avtoritet*, invited some former soldiers of the decant army from other towns to Moscow. *Silvester* hired them in order to undermine his competitors – the *Baumanskaia* crime group. *Kurganskies* managed to solve this task – they killed *Globus* and *Bobon*, two leaders of the *Baumanskaia* crime group.

Progressively, the *Kurganskaia* crime group demanded more independence. Its leaders wanted to have their own firms to extort money. Because the majority of Moscow enterprises had already been under a patronage of other crime groups, the *Kurganskaia*

¹⁷³ *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 18.07.1992.

¹⁷⁴ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 42.

¹⁷⁵ His real name was Sergey Timofeev.

group began killing the gangsters of those bandits groups. They focused on the north of Moscow, which was controlled by the *Koptevskaia* crime group. The gangsters of the *Kurganskaia* group killed 20 *Koptevskaia*'s gangsters and businessmen, including Alexander and Vasiliy Naumov (*Naum Starshiy*, and *Naum Mladshiy*), the leaders of this crime group.¹⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that Vasiliy Naumov was killed next to the headquarters of the Moscow Department of the Interior Ministry.

Almost all crime groups in Moscow suffered from the *Kurganskaia* group. Moscow law enforcement agencies were also annoyed by the activity of this group. Joint efforts against the *Kurganskaia* group led to the capturing of its leaders and gangsters. The trial over the *Kurganskaia* group started in February 2001. However, some of the most informed gangsters of this group, Andrey Zelenin (who killed Vasiliy Naumov) and Oleg Nelubin, had already been killed in custody. According to some data, the executors of these killings were paid US\$ 120,000.¹⁷⁷

Bandits continue to put pressure on business until the present, although the government pledged to liquidate them. Almost everyday Russians are told about new murders of businessmen in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities. Some of the killed businessmen were the *bandits* themselves.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has described different types of organised crime in Russia. Each type played a somewhat useful role in overcoming some deficiencies in the Soviet economy. It has been argued that the presence of these types of organised crime was significantly influenced by the structure of the Russian economy and the features of Russian history.

Although different types of organised crime use dissimilar methods and have different histories, it would be a mistake to consider them as completely independent of each other. It is important to note in this respect that these types of organised crime are often joined into networks that sometimes overlap. For example, it is very difficult to distinguish between the *administrative Mafia* and the illegal economic entrepreneurs

¹⁷⁶ Some experts believe that Kurgantkaia's gangsters also killed Silvester, their former "supervisor."

¹⁷⁷ URL <http://www.cry.ru/text.shtml?200002/20000215144831.inc>, consulted in January 2001.

because a significant part of the Soviet and post-Soviet *administrative Mafia* consisted of such illegal entrepreneurs.

Recent activities of the *thieves in law* are very similar to those of *bandits*. Both criminal networks have been heavily involved in business and economic activities. They extort tribute from legal and illegal entrepreneurs. Almost all small private firms and nearly eighty per cent of larger private firms and commercial banks paid protection money to criminal groups in 1994.¹⁷⁸

It has been noted that *bandits* and *thieves* operate their own illegal and legal businesses. For example, the association Twenty-First Century was created by an organised crime group. In addition to extortion, kidnapping, prostitution, and other illegal activities, the Twenty-First Century is thought to have controlled a hundred companies including restaurants, hotels and casinos. It also offered insurance, investments, banking and pension services.¹⁷⁹

Thieves in law and *bandits* have political links, i.e., they are connected with the *administrative Mafia*. As Handelman notes, “Mob money and Communist Party funds supported newspapers and certain right-wing political groups, and some provincial crime lords reputedly financed the political companies of anti-governmental candidates during the December 1993 elections.”¹⁸⁰ Gurov also places organised crime at the centre of Russian politics: “Not a single organised crime group would exist today without these links. After 1985 the criminal syndicates began to resemble formal business organisations. As they grew, they increased their corrupt ties with officials.”¹⁸¹

There is some evidence that some of the Russian public authorities cooperate with criminal groups. In order to describe the situation in Yekaterinburg, the third biggest city in Russia, let us quote Handelman:

Yekaterinburg political leaders periodically vowed to destroy the Mafia, “but that,” said Sergey Plotnikov, a reporter for newspaper *Na Smenu* whose critical articles had provoked that attack on

¹⁷⁸ *Izvestiya*, 26.01.1994.

¹⁷⁹ Finckenauer, Waring, *Russian Mafia in America*, p. 124.

¹⁸⁰ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia's New Mafia*, p. 55.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Tamara Lomakina, (the editor of this newspaper),¹⁸² “is like someone saying he will stick a knife in his own throat.”

The fusion of the gangs with the city’s political establishment made a crackdown on organised crime even more unlikely due to the economic crisis in Russia. “The white criminals are putting literally millions of rubles into circulation,” Plotnikov said, “Senior municipal authorities have told me that since all this former criminal money is now subject to taxes, it would be silly to do anything to stop it especially since there is no money coming from the government.” The participation of officials in the frontiers plunder explained the tight-lipped atmosphere surrounding Ternyak’s death. No one could avoid the conclusion that Yekaterinburg was run by, and operated for the benefit of, comrade criminals.¹⁸³

Representatives of criminal groups lobby for their interests in the Duma (the Russian Parliament).¹⁸⁴ For example, Kobzon, a Russian singer and a member of the Russian Duma, has been suspected of links to organised crime and because of that has been repeatedly denied entry into the United States. Biyneger Baychorov, a member of Zakonodatelnogo Sobrania (mini-Parliament) in district Karachaevo–Cherkesiya, is also connected with criminal groups. He has been accused of extortion and placed on the wanted list of the Interior Ministry.¹⁸⁵

To sum up, the ties of crime groups among one another and with the legal social institutions, business and politics in Russia are so tight that it is difficult to know where one begins and the others end. Many of the powerful actors in Russia are connected with all types of organised crime. This can be regarded as the key characteristic of Russian organised crime. Therefore, it is possible to agree with Solzhenitsyn’s words that “the criminal revolution” in Russia is “an amalgam of former party functionaries, quasi – democrats, KGB officers, and black market wheeler-dealers, who are staying in power now (and have) represented a dirty hybrid unseen in world history.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Another reference that the mass media are also in the sphere of interests of organised crime groups are given by Louise Shelley – “Russian criminal organisation intimidate journalists and scholars, acquire media outlets to circumscribe news coverage” (from Shelley, L. (1996) “Post–Soviet Organised Crime, A new form of Authoritarianism”, *Transnational Organised Crime*, 2 (2-3).

¹⁸³ Handelman, *Comrade Criminal: Russia’s New Mafia*, p. 89.

¹⁸⁴ According to Vladimir Miljutenko, a Russian journalist in Finckenauer, Waring, *Russian Mafia in America*, p. 121.

¹⁸⁵ “Razoblachena Deputatskaya mafia” [The MP Mafia is caught], *Utro.ru*, 28.06.2001, (URL <http://www.utro.ru/articles/2001062803084921903.shtml>, consulted in July 2001).

¹⁸⁶ Reported in Ryan, Rush, *Understanding Organised Crime in Global Perspective*, pp. 75, 76.

Chapter 3

Factors of Influence on Media Content in Russia

One aspect of the relationship between the mass media and organised crime is organised crime reporting. Consequently, this chapter aims to explore factors that may have an impact on the media coverage of organised crime. Although there is an opinion that the news media represents reality with little or no distortion, some studies demonstrate that the content of media reports is determined by a number of factors related to both the internal features of media industries and a diversified set of external pressures. This chapter analyses the range and power of these factors.

The factors are broken into two big groups – internal and external. *Internal* factors are related to the media environment, they include the structure of mass media, the professionalism of media workers, goals and ethical rules of media companies. Internal factors and their impact are described in the first section of this chapter. *External* factors are a set of coercive methods that can be used by non-media powerful actors in order to force the media to provide a required coverage of some events. The impact of external factors is examined in the second section of this chapter.

Although Russian mass media organisations are not as strong and independent as media companies in some of the developed Western democracies, they have some resources that may allow them to resist external coercion. They are reviewed in the last section of this chapter in which I argue that the methods and resources of the Russian news media are not sufficient to resist effectively the pressure of external powerful actors.

3.1. Internal Factors

On the one hand, journalists claim that their reports are based on facts, the words of witnesses, or evidence. On the other hand, they work with sources and construct media messages by using specific techniques. One Russian journalist described this process in

such a way that a journalist should understand the goal of a report plainly and search for the data which supports this goal. It is not to say that this approach is bad. Media personnel have created a great number of techniques to present news laconically and remarkably. The problem is that in such a way, journalists construct reality rather than represent it. This section describes the range of factors that originated from inside the media industry. These factors are broken into three big groups, including: (1) *influence from media workers*, (2) *influence of media routines*, and (3) *organizational influence*.

3.1.1. Influence from Media Workers

This group of factors includes beliefs and personal characteristics of media workers. It is not surprising that the beliefs of journalists can affect media reporting. Even if reporters honestly try to be unbiased, it is almost impossible to avoid the influence of those personal traits. As Herbert Gans points out, “journalists try hard to be objective, but neither they nor anyone else can in the end proceed without values. Furthermore, reality judgements are never altogether divorced from values. [...] The values in the news are rarely explicit and must be found between the lines - in what actors and activities are reported or ignored and in how they are described.”¹⁸⁷

The impact of personal characteristics of reporters is equally difficult to avoid. Shoemaker shows that gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, place in social hierarchy, careers targets, and reporters’ professional background might also influence the content of media messages.¹⁸⁸

Of course, professional roles and professional ethics should eliminate or alleviate the impact of beliefs and personal characteristics. These media workers’ orientations are shaped while learning the journalist profession in university or in job through the process of socialisation. Breed describes this process as follows: a new journalist “discovers and internalises the rights and obligations of his status and its norms and values.”¹⁸⁹ This

¹⁸⁷ Gans, H.J. (1979) *Deciding What’s News*. New York: Pantheon, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸⁸ Shoemaker, J. P. and Reese D. S. (1996) *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*. White Plains, N.Y.: Longman Publishers, pp. 66-81.

¹⁸⁹ Breed, W. (1960) “Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis”, in W. Shramm (ed.) *Mass Communications*. University of Illinois Press, p. 182.

socialization introduces “the context of shared values”¹⁹⁰ within media organisations. To some extent, professional ethics eliminate personal characteristics and values. However, this framework of journalistic norms is the new constraint that distorts the content of news reporting.

3.1.2. Influence of Media Routines

Media routines greatly affect the content of media reports. For the following analysis, it is useful to organise media routines into three subgroups, as shown in Figure 2. This Figure represents the main blocks of routines, which include routines related to the audience, routines related to media organisation, and routines related to sources.

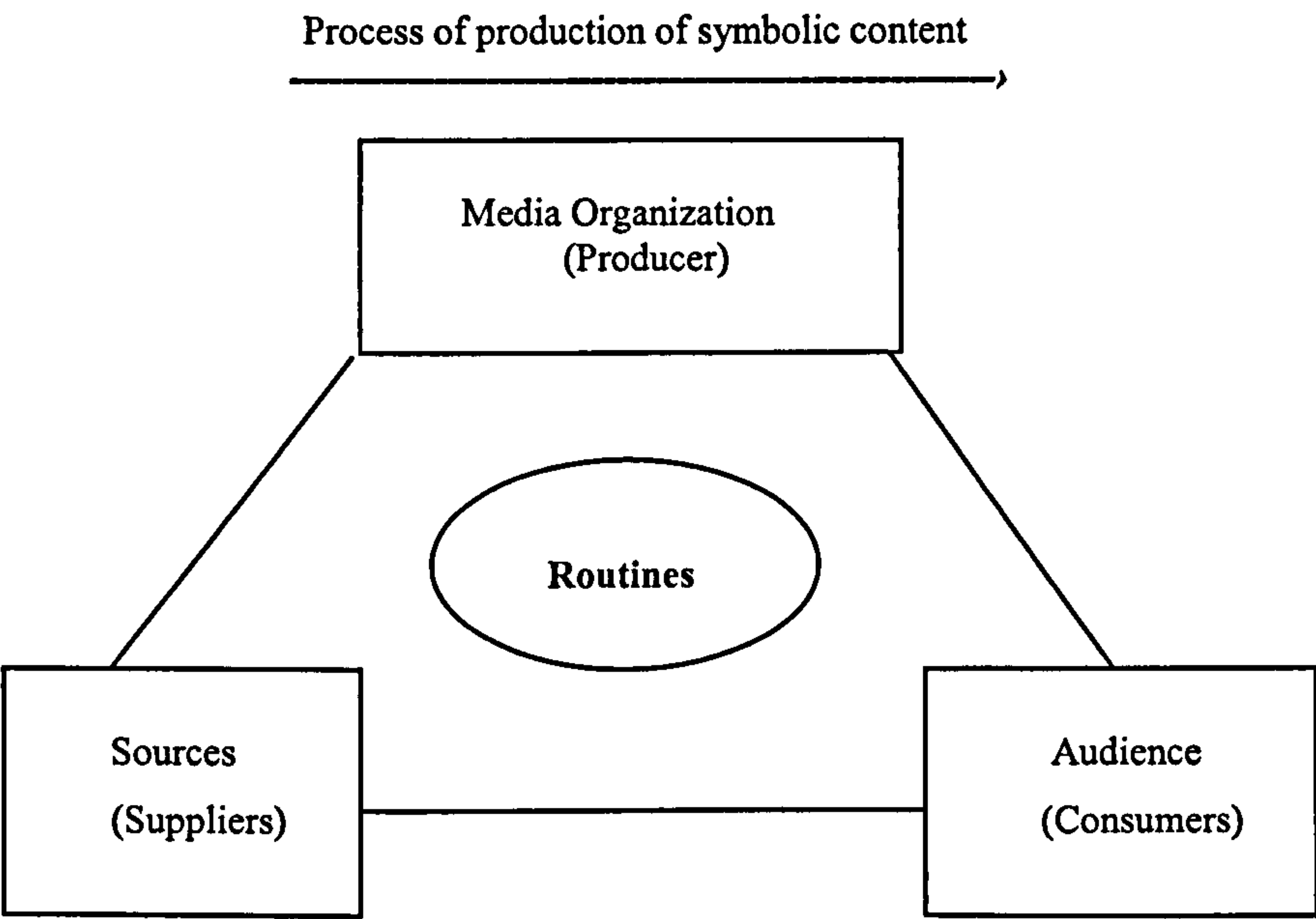


Figure 3.1 Media routines.¹⁹¹

3.1.2.1 Routines Related to the Audience

Even if the mass media was able to report all events in the world, it would not be especially useful. The reason for this is that *the media audience* has limited attention and

¹⁹⁰ Sigal, L.V. (1973) *Reporters and Officials, The Organisation and Politics of Newsmaking*. Lexington, p. 3.

¹⁹¹ Shoemaker, Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*, p. 109.

interest. Consequently, the audience would consume just the most valuable stories. Therefore, if media organisations find out the news preferences of the audience they are able to fulfil their mission more efficiently.

Although mass media organisations want to know the interests of their audience, this data is not easily available. Many media outlets have solved this problem by inventing the system of craft norms that presumably reflect the audience's interests. As Schlesinger argues, "Production routines embody assumptions about audiences [...]"¹⁹² When it comes to thinking about the kind of news most relevant to 'the audience' newsmen exercise their news judgement rather than going out and seeking specific information about the composition, wants or tastes of those who are being addressed."¹⁹²

The news media has created its perception of what the audience would find interesting and what encompasses the news values. Stephens points out the following set of news values: interest, importance, the unusual, controversy, proximity and timeliness.¹⁹³ The *importance* of a story is measured in how many lives it can impact. The range of *human interests* is far beyond what is directly affecting us and among others includes human dramas, scandals, and funny stories, etc. The unusual and controversial events are of a special interest for the public (audience) as well. Finally, the news should be reported at the right time and be primarily related to the events not far away from the offices of media organizations.

Many Russian journalists also believe that they choose newsworthy events on the basis of the preferences of the audience, despite the absence of a direct dialog with it. One Russian journalist explained the abundance of crime stories reported by the Russian mass media by referring to Maslow's theory based on the hierarchy of needs. This theory suggests that basic human needs have to first be met. According to this journalist, as the need of safety is a basic need, reports about dangerous events, such as crimes and

¹⁹² Schlesinger, P. (1978) *Putting "Reality" Together: BBC News*. London: Constable.

¹⁹³ Stephens, M. (1980) *Broadcast News*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston;
Baskette, F.K., Sissors, J.Z. and Brooks, B.S. (1982) *The Art of Editing*. New York: Macmillan;
Dennis, E.E. and Ismach A.H. (1981) *Reporting Processes and Practices*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

catastrophes, are of primary interest to the audience. Therefore, the media should report such stories.¹⁹⁴

Furthermore, in order to be competitive in the media market (at least in the free media market), media outlets should meet the audience's need for trustworthy information. A problem is that the verification of data is usually a difficult and time-consuming process. As the speed of reporting events is the most important media task, it was supposed to find practices that would allow it to report stories quickly and with sufficient credibility. Such practices of objectivity are *attributing statements to sources*, *omitting seemingly harmless information*, and *avoiding mobilizing information*.¹⁹⁵

Finally, to meet the audience's needs, the media is supposed to present stories in a form convenient to the audience. Television news has to be visually appealing and interesting. Newspapers have to publish stories that are readable and well illustrated. The development and exploitation of these presentation formats are also a part of media routines.¹⁹⁶

3.1.2.2. Routines Related to Media Organisation and Sources

Trustworthiness and the format of stories may be equally related to the routines determined by media organization. A media organization can be defined as “the social, formal, usually economic entity that employs the media worker in order to produce media content.”¹⁹⁷

As contemporary mass media companies have rather complex structures, they need to develop some routines that enable them to operate smoothly. A serious problem for the media is the fact that newsworthy events do not happen regularly, and they differ in importance and location. On the other hand, the space of media reports is fixed, media organizations should produce news reports on a regular basis regardless of the irregularity

¹⁹⁴ Koltsova, O. (2001) “Proizvodstvo novostey: tipy vliyaniy na raboty journalistov” [News Production: Types of Influence on the work of journalists], in V. Voronkov, O. Pachenkov, and E. Chicadze (eds) (2001) *Nevidimie Grani Sotcialnoy Realnosti*, Trudi TSNCI, Vip. 9, St. Petersburg, pp. 109-123.

¹⁹⁵ Lemert, J.B., Mitzman, B.N., Cook, R.H. and Hackett, R. (1978) “Journalists and mobilizing information”, *Journalism Quarterly*, 54, pp. 721-726.

¹⁹⁶ Shoemaker, Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*, p. 114.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

of real life, and the process of news production cannot avoid being regulated by certain deadlines. All this makes the mass media routinize the process of sorting available information and support the system of sources, so-called sources net.¹⁹⁸

These routines, however useful they are for the work of media organizations, affect the content of media reports. For example, it has been noted that the occurrences that happen outside of regular working hours are less likely to be reported. The same is true regarding the events that take place outside the zone of reachability of media workers. Thus it is possible to say that through their routines the mass media constructs reality rather than reflects it.

3.1.2.3 Organisational Influence

Routines related to media organisation are only a small part of organisational influence on content of media reports. Although some researchers argue that technical and format restrictions are the most significant factor in the distortion of reality by the mass media,¹⁹⁹ it is hardly the case in contemporary Russia where other organizational factors make a greater impact on media content.

The first of them is related to the *goals and mission* of media groups. According to many researchers, the main goal of most media organizations is to make a profit. Other targets, such as producing a quality product, achieving professional recognition, and serving to public are built into this major objective.

This is not always true in Russia. The Soviet mass media was subsidised by the state, and its main goal was to disseminate the ideological views of the Communist Party and to present events according to this ideological framework. In other words, the Soviet media was not supposed to make a profit.

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the economic profit of a media outlet (at least in terms of income-expenditures of the media outlet) was not a priority for many Russian media organizations. One of the causes of this situation was the fact that the

¹⁹⁸ Tuchman, G. (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.

¹⁹⁹ For example, Pironkova, O. (2000) "Zhivie novosti, ili o vremeni prostranstve v televizionom efire" [Live news, or about the time-space in broadcasting], *Sociologicheskie Issledovania*, No. 8, pp. 65-74.

Russian media did not have the experience of advertising and was unable to effectively use the advertising resource, the main source of income in the Western media. This fact, along with the Russian economic crisis, caused most Russian media companies to become unprofitable after the state stopped subsidising them in 1991. Several media organisations decided to close their businesses. The others were supposed to look for any possible sources of income to survive. Because the media business made no profit, it was a rather difficult task.

In order to reach a mutual compromise, some of the Russian media outlets started to consider as their main goal the following principle: the survival of the media outlet, the prosperity of its editorial personnel, along with economic or political advantages for the media owners or advertisers. In some cases, this formula worked perfectly. The success of Media-Most during 1996-1999 was a good example of this.

Finally, the *hierarchical structure* of the media organisations also makes a great impact on the content of media messages. To reach their goals, media organizations have to develop an appropriate structure and to assign roles. Like other bureaucracies, media companies are a combination of hierarchy and division of labour. Their distinctive configuration has been aptly described as “middle-heavy hierarchy.”²⁰⁰

The typical structure of a media organisation reflects its divergent demands. On the one hand, media outlets widely interact with a diverse and unpredictable environment. On the other hand, their normal work is impossible without centralised coordination.²⁰¹ That is why overall authority and decision-making in the mass media are concentrated in a relatively small group of editorial executives, below which is a large and diversified middle stratum of reporters and processors.

The typical structure of Western media companies includes three levels. The lowest level is composed of reporters and journalists. The middle level consists of managers, producers and editors who coordinate the process of news production and mediate communication between the lower level and the top one. The latter encompasses corporate and news executives who are responsible for protection of commercial and

²⁰⁰ Tunstall, J. (1971) *Journalists at Work*. London: Constable, p. 1, p. 280.

²⁰¹ Tiffen, *News and Power*, p. 16.

political interests of the media organization. They set budgets and make employment decisions.²⁰²

Although the structure of Russian media companies does not differ significantly from that of Western media corporations, a simpler model is to be used in the further analysis. The model views Russian mass media organisations as consisting of two layers - the management, including executives and top editorial staff, and the lower group, which consists of media workers, reporters and operators. Although the real structure is not as simple as that because of the considerable hierarchy of managerial posts within media organisations, this simplified yet reliable and convenient model can be used, as this thesis does not intend to explore all details of hierarchical relations within the Russian news media.

The decisions of senior managers are compulsory for the staff placed lower in the organisational hierarchy. The majority of these decisions are about media routines, such as what is to be chosen for broadcasting and who should write a story about any particular event. According to Koltsova's experience of working in St. Petersburg office of a nationwide TV channel, there were nearly twenty telephone calls per day from the Moscow based management of the channel.²⁰³

Nevertheless, even in these minor matters it is almost impossible for managers of media companies to avoid personal views and beliefs. Media managers may explain their preferences to the journalistic staff either by referring to the interests of the audience or by not explaining their reasons at all. It should be noted that the managers use this possibility frequently because the ways of possible resistance of the media personnel to their decisions are very limited.²⁰⁴

For example, managers are capable of sacking media workers as happened with Shulekina, the anchor of show *Mestnoe Vremia* [Local Time] in August 1998. She was sacked by B. Maksimenko, the Director General of broadcasting company *Vladivostok*, after her live critical report regarding a policy of political censorship that had been introduced by the management of the company before the election of the mayor of

²⁰² Shoemaker, Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*, p. 151.

²⁰³ Koltsova, O. (2001) *Institut SMK v Sovremennoy Rossii: Proizvodstvo Novostey kak Sistema Vlastnikh Bzaimootnosheniy* [Institution of mass media in contemporary Russia: News production in the system of power]. Ph. D. Thesis, European University at St. Petersburg, p. 143.

²⁰⁴ It is examined in detail in the last section of this chapter.

Vladivostok.²⁰⁵ This method is not used often because there is a wide range of other, less severe, ways of controlling the content of media reporting. The management is able to gradually push a reporter to resign by creating an unbearable working environment, or simply by closing the show.

Another method of control over news coverage is the transfer of “bad” reporters from news programmes to less prestigious posts. For instance, Anna Kulikova, a presenter of the news on the TV channel of Leningrad Oblast, was replaced in September 1998 as a result of her report regarding unpopularity of Valery Serdukov in the regional elite.²⁰⁶

Also, it is possible to eliminate some reports. Glasnost Defence Foundation reports several such cases. For example, it notes the decision of the state TV channel OKA to eliminate the report by journalists Maxim Andreev and Vladimir Tikhomirov about the restoration of a Lenin’s monument on the central square of Riazan. This decision was made by Valentin Karpuskin, the Chairman of this channel.²⁰⁷

Therefore, the management of media companies is not only the actor that greatly influences the content of media reports, it is also an ideal tool for conducting the will or preferences of external actors. For example, it is reported that managers of media companies personally controls the production of *zakaz* stories (pre-paid stories).²⁰⁸ Following the pressures of external actors, the management is able to change the programme of broadcasting, or dismiss “bad” reporters. In fact, many of the above-mentioned examples have been influenced by some of the external actors. However, the range of possible external pressures on the mass media is significantly wider and is to be examined in the next section of this chapter.

²⁰⁵ *Monitoring of GDF*, 28.08.1998, (URL <http://www.gdf.ru/monitor/1998/august/russia-0898.html>, consulted in July 2003).

²⁰⁶ *Monitoring of GDF*, 23.09.1998, (URL <http://www.gdf.ru/>, consulted in July 2003).

²⁰⁷ *Monitoring of GDF*, 10.04.1997.

²⁰⁸ Koltsova, “Proizvodstvo novostey: tipy vlianiy na raboty journalistov”, pp. 109-123.

3.2. External Factors

The internal factors that have been examined in the previous section do not encompass all possible methods of control over the mass media's coverage of events. This section analyses the impact of factors that originate from outside the media industry. Because of this they are referred to as *external* factors of media news production.

The impact of external factors has been noticed by several researchers.²⁰⁹ A few interesting systems of classifications have been suggested. For example, Michael Parenti notes *owners of media, advertisers, editors and self-regulatory practices of journalists* among the forces which might influence the bias of media coverage.²¹⁰ Sparks has pointed out the existence of four groups of actors who can control the media coverage in Central Europe. These are *entrepreneurs, politicians, the executives of the mass media and their staff*.²¹¹ Koltsova adds a few new actors, including: *state, criminals, sources, owners of media and advertisers (economic actors), audience and its representatives – media research groups*.²¹²

Although the classifications mentioned above have included many important external forces that might manipulate the media representation of reality, the choice of actors as the basis of an inclusive classification of external factors does not look appropriate. First, it is very difficult to distinguish between state and the owners of media, as well as between the latter and criminals. Secondly, sources can belong to each of the above-mentioned categories. Thirdly, different actors can employ the same way of media control. Finally, the same actor can use several ways to influence a desirable media response. Because of these contradictions Koltsova has noted that her classification is rather a set of analytic concepts.

²⁰⁹ For example, Silviu Waisbord has summarised causes and coercive means of antipress violence in Latin America (Waisbord, S. (2003) "Antipress violence and the crisis of the state", *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 90-109).

²¹⁰ Parenti, M. (1993) *Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media*. New York: St. Martin's Press, pp. 33-51.

²¹¹ Sparks, C. and Reading, A. (1998) *Communism, Capitalism and the Mass Media*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, p. 137.

²¹² Koltsova, O. (2001) "Kto i kak vliyet na proizvodstvo novostey v sovremennoy Rossii", in *Pro et Contra*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 80-109, p. 85.

Many of these deficiencies can be avoided by applying the approach used by Jean Chalaby in his analysis of the development of the media in the successor states of the Soviet Union. Chalaby notes four types of coercive means against the media – *legal, administrative, economic, and violent*.²¹³ I consider his approach, i.e., to classify the factors not by actors but by methods of media control, as the best basis of the classification of external factors.

However, I would like to expand Chalaby's approach by taking into account a larger number of types of coercive means. My proposed classification of external factors of media production is a set of methods of putting pressures on the news media which includes *regulatory, administrative, economic* (advertisement and other contracts), *judicial, informative, symbolic, violent, and law enforcement* methods. They are explained in detail in sections 3.2.1 - 3.2.9.

3.2.1. Regulation

I shall define the *regulatory* method as an ability to make an impact on the legal framework of media activities (the Law on Media, governmental and local acts) and regulate the order of licensing and registration of media companies. It is the most powerful means of control of the media because the very existence of media outlets depends on this. Not many actors can have enough resources to be able to use the regulative method. For the most part it is a privilege of the government and local authorities.

For example, the Yeltsin government seemed to be uninterested in the creation of a clear legal framework of media communications and slowed down the development and implementation of the Law on Broadcasting. The first draft of this law was developed as far back as 1993. However, the draft approved by the State Duma was rejected because of Yeltsin's veto. Even although the state Duma managed to overcome the veto, the Council of Federation did not approve this draft of the Law on Broadcasting in 1996.²¹⁴

²¹³ Chalaby, J. (1998) "The Media and the Formation of the Public Sphere in the New Independent States", *Innovation*, Vol. 11, No 1, pp. 73-85.

²¹⁴ Lange, Y. (1997) *Media in the CIS. A Study of the Political, Legislative and Socio-Economic Framework*. The European Institute of Media. Brussels: European Commission, pp. 157-158.

As a result of this, key aspects of the broadcasting industry – the issue of licences and distribution of broadcasting waves were regulated by the Presidential Decree № 2255 (December 1993) and the Governmental Act № 1359 (December 1994). These vague regulatory acts allowed Federalnoy Sluzhbe po Televideniu i Radioveshaniu (the Federal Broadcasting Committee) to issue licences according to its own preferences. For a decision on these vital questions it was not even obligatory to organise tenders (although it was recommended). For example, Yeltsin himself decided to give NTV the whole channel.²¹⁵ Needless to say, this channel did much for Yeltsin's presidential campaign.²¹⁶

Until the mid-90s there were no rules which regulated the accreditation of media representatives in Russia. However, even after these rules were formulated, the state and Russian local authorities decided themselves to whom and for how long to give accreditation regardless of the appropriateness of their decision to law. For example, in August 1998, Alexander Lebed, the Governor of Krasnoyarsky Kray [Krasnoyarsk Borough], signed a decree which regulated the rules of accreditation of journalists. Among compulsory conditions for journalists were mentioned: “the presence of the appropriate education and work experience, [...] an ability to analyse data properly [...], and so on.”²¹⁷ It is evident that such a decree allowed the Administration of the Krasnoyarsky Kray to accredit or discredit any journalist in accordance with its preferences.

3.2.2. *Administrative Control*

The *administrative* method in this classification means the range of managerial activities by the media owners, the most important of which is a possibility of the appointment of media executives who influence the policies of media companies. As it has been noticed earlier in this chapter, the executive of a media organisation is its chief editor. He is responsible for almost all issues relating to the performance of the media company –

²¹⁵ NTV had only limited broadcasting time before this Yeltsin's decision.

²¹⁶ The transfer of the frequency of St. Petersburg Channel 5 channel to the channel Culture was also decided by Yeltsin without any consultation even with with Federalnoy Sluzhbe po Televideniu i Radioveshaniu.

²¹⁷ *Monitoring of GDF*, 17.08.1998, (URL <http://www.gdf.ru>).

content of reports, relations with the media personnel and those with many of the external partners – supplying firms, advertisers, and so on. In other words, the chief editor is the CEO of the Russian media syndicate who makes decisions on everyday activities of this company.

However, the appointment of the chief editor is a privilege of the owners of the media organisation. Through the choice of the chief editor the owners are able to make a very significant impact on the policies and activities of the controlled media company. In other words, chief editors (or management) are a medium through which media owners control their media company.

For example, chief editors can suspend any show. A number of cases have already been noted in this chapter. Another example is the closure of the show *Sobitie* [Event] on Channel 11 of St. Petersburg in November 1998. According to Chernyadev, the anchorman of the show, his programme was closed because he rejected an offer made by a representative of Yabloko to agitate in favour of this political party. Chernyadev claimed that Yabloko's contacts with NTV, an owner of Channel 11, caused the decision of the management to terminate his show.

This is not to say that the owners directly order the managers of media corporations. According to some journalists and editors, the owners do not control every aspect of media work but just determine the main targets and policies of the media companies. One editor said that he had to make many personal decisions because it would be impossible to contact the owners on every single occasion and, for the most part, he was not told what to do. Nevertheless, he admitted that he was sure *what* was supposed to be reported and *who* ought to have been mentioned. He even knew who was not allowed to be presented by his media organisation at all.²¹⁸

An understanding of the preferences of the owners is often gained through informal contacts. The following words of a Russian editor illustrate how it may work.

Who is this Dorenko? Yaa, he is a Berezovsky's boy, everybody knows this, in other words, they have informal contacts. He can phone him at any time and indicate what should be reported. [...] The same is true regarding Svanidze. He is the best friend of Chubais. [...] When some people drink together, for example, Berezovsky with Dorenko, or Svanidze with Chubais - can there be an

²¹⁸ Interview with a researcher on the Russian mass media, St. Petersburg, September, 2001.

order to say something? No, it might be informal talks. And naturally, after those informal talks people gain some understanding and make decisions, even if those talks were about somebody or something abstract.²¹⁹

Nevertheless, it is not always easy to gain such an understanding of the owners' preferences, especially, when the preferences of several owners contradict one another. For instance, in 1997, two owners (Administration and a bank) of a St. Petersburg newspaper had a conflict between each other (because the Administration chose another bank as the main bank of its financial transactions). In this situation the chief editor of the newspaper was very uncertain how to report this conflict. Finally, the newspaper did not report this event at all.

When the chief editor does not understand or does not want to understand the owners, the latter can, if necessary, dismiss the chief editor. It can be illustrated by the dismissal of Vitaly Tretyakov from the post of the chief editor of the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [the Independent Newspaper] in June 2001. The controlling stake of this newspaper was held by Boris Berezovsky, who absconded from Russia because of a prosecution against him. One day, Berezovsky decided that this newspaper should take a more critical stance against President Putin. Because Tretyakov refused to change the editorial policy of this newspaper, he was forced to resign.²²⁰ The new chief editor of *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* made this newspaper cover events in the way that suited Berezovsky's preferences. For instance, on 4 December 2001, this newspaper published Berezovsky's open letter to leading Russian politicians and businessmen – Chubais (Chairman of RAO UES), Kasyanov (the Prime Minister of Russia) among others, in which Berezovsky encouraged them to create a strong liberal opposition to President Putin.²²¹

Sometimes the intrusion of the owners can go further than the appointment of the management of the media concerns. It is reported that from time to time media owners (especially state officials) demand their preliminary approval of news, or dismissal of

²¹⁹ Koltsova, *Institut SMK v Sovremennoy Rossii: Proizvodstvo Novostey kak Systema Vlastnikh Bzaimootnosheniy*, p. 110.

²²⁰ (2001) "Russian editor resigns", *Financial Times*; 7.06.2001.

²²¹ Berezovsky, B. (2001) "Pismo iz Londona" [A letter from London], *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 4.12.2001.

some journalists. For example, let us quote a piece of Koltsova's interview with a reporter from TRK Petersburg (the major television company of St. Petersburg):

In 1998 during the election for the St. Petersburg parliament [...] glasnost on St. Petersburg television was eradicated. We do not know for sure whether the wife of the Mayor phoned the headquarters of the TV channel or not, but some people say that she did. Moreover, she also came there and took command. [...] Before the election, some people from Smolny (the headquarters of St. Petersburg Administration) went to the television station and started putting pressure on the editors [...] resulting in the broadcast of poor quality reports regarding how good everything was in Smolny and how wonderful things were in our city.²²²

3.2.3. *Economic Means of Coercion*

The economic method in my classification encompasses two slightly different types of economic transactions. The first of them is the contracts (both formal and informal) of advertising. The financing of media outlets has become the vital problem since 1992, when price liberalisation started and the Russian state stopped sponsoring the mass media.²²³ Although advertising revenue does not normally cover expenditures of the Russian news media, it is one of the important segments of media budgets.²²⁴

The Moscow advertising market is the most formalized and it resembles the western model. There are three groups of advertising agencies in Moscow. The first group is the so-called *media sellers* which are wholesale advertisement sellers, i.e., they buy huge time or space of any particular media group in order to secure their monopoly of this segment of the advertising market. Media sellers sell the portions of this time or space to less wealthy media buyers (advertisement retailers), which deal with the customers themselves (people or firms that are going to advertise their products or

²²² Koltsova, *Institut SMI v Sovremennoy Rossii: Proizvodstvo Novostey kak Systema Vlastnikh Bzaimootnosheniy*.

²²³ Zassoursky, Y. (1999) "Open society and access to information: To what degree the Russian media contribute to the openness of society", in Y. Zassoursky, E. Vartanova (eds) *Media, Communications and the Open Society*. Moscow: Faculty of Journalism / IKAR, pp. 30-31.

²²⁴ Other possible sources of income were state subsidies and private donations, investments which were secured by stocks in the media groups.

services).²²⁵ The third group is composed of production agencies that produce advertisement.

In regions the situation for advertising is more vague yet straightforward. On the one hand, there are fewer mediators between media outlets and advertisers. On the other hand, their relations are significantly more diversified in terms of the means of paying advertising fees. Because of a severe economic crisis in the last decade, many Russian enterprises, businessmen, state and political groups (especially outside Moscow) had a lack of liquidity. This is why Russian media organisations accepted health and transport services, or informational exchange as an advertising revenue.²²⁶

To a lesser extent this practice took place in Moscow in 1995-96. Sergey Dorenko, one of the leading reporters of one of the Russian TV channels, described this sort of relationship between the mass media and advertisers in the following way:

Reports were paid by a repair of *Zhiguli* (major Russian car), or when a boss said, “Valia needs to replace furniture, that is why we are making this report. She will get two thousand dollars, take one thousand five hundred herself, and give five hundred to our fund.” There were deputies on corruption [persons who were responsible for organising and controlling informal exchanges] in media outlets. I participated in a meeting at a TV channel, where the deputy on corruption reported how many TV reports had been made, how many visits of our children to children camps had been paid by the money earned from airing these reports, how many iron doors [in order to protect houses from burgling] had been provided for the personnel.²²⁷

It is important to note that formal advertising constitutes just a fraction of the Russian advertising market. Covert advertisement, that is stories paid by a business or political sources but presented as news, is a significantly more widespread variation of advertising in Russia. Advertisers prefer covert advertisements to the normal ones because they believe that a hidden advertisement is more efficient (many Russians have started to mistrust direct advertising, especially after a series of big fraud scandals with “financial pyramids”).

²²⁵ Media buyers can also develop the advertisement plan for their clients.

²²⁶ This type of exchange (the informative method) is described later in this chapter.

²²⁷ Dorenko, S. (1998) “Dorenko v shkole Poznera. Stennograma uchebnogo zaniatia v shkole televizionnog masterstva pod rukovodstvom Vladimira Poznera” [Dorenko in Pozner’s school. Notes of a Vladimir Pozner’s lesson], in *Sreda*, No. 2-3, p. 10.

Let us take as an example the case of a new university in St. Petersburg, which was going to increase the awareness of the people of St. Petersburg about its existence. This university asked to broadcast a report about a presentation that took place in this university as a news item. However, a representative from the TV channel decided that this event was not newsworthy enough to be reported without an advertising fee. Finally, the television channel and the university agreed to broadcast this presentation and to acknowledge in the broadcast its sponsors. The university paid US\$ 150 and was given permission to select people who would represent this university in a good light.

Although many Russians might be surprised to learn that some of the media stories that they consider as an unbiased product of the media industry have actually been paid by advertisers, covert advertising is quite legitimate. Koltsova mentioned that there was a news schedule in a media outlet in Russia. In this schedule, hidden advertisements were labelled as *zakaz* [ordered story].²²⁸ Everybody was able to make his *zakaz* by paying advertising revenue to the media commercial department, in accordance with a relevant price list. Journalists might have been paid by a percentage of the revenue (up to twenty per cent if a journalist himself has found the advertisers) and/or little gifts from advertisers.

Covert advertising goes primarily through media managerial involvement.²²⁹ However, a situation when journalists write prepaid stories independently from managerial control in hidden advertising is also possible. This independence from management may be with or without an agreement of the latter. The first situation (agreement) might take place in state TV channels on which their employees have low fixed salaries. There the management may be rather interested in keeping good personnel than in increasing the profitability of the company. The second situation (disagreement) happened with *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [The Independent Newspaper] when its managers tried to avoid dependency on wholesale advertisers. Some of the disobedient journalists of the newspaper started writing paid *zakaz* stories on their own.²³⁰

²²⁸ Koltsova, "Proizvodstvo novostey: Tipy vlianiy na raboty journalistov", pp. 109-123.

²²⁹ It will be illustrated later in this chapter.

²³⁰ Zassoursky, "Open society and access to information: To what degree the Russian media contribute to the openness of society", pp. 68-71.

Advertising is not the only type of economic transactions in which the Russian news media is involved. The normal work of media companies is impossible without interaction with numerous economic suppliers that provide the mass media with essential equipment, energy, telecommunications and paper. Like any economic enterprise, media companies also need to buy or hire offices for their personnel. Apparently dependence on the contractors provides them with a possibility of manipulating the content of media messages. The conditions of these contracts (for instance, the fees of goods or services provided) may well influence the media to cover selected issues in a way which fits the interests of the contractors.

If some media reports do not satisfy the needs of economic actors involved, these contracts may be cancelled. For example, the Committee of the Municipal Property of the Administration of the town Dzerzhinsk in Nizhegordskaya Oblast terminated the contract of leasing with the television company OKA in March 1999. This decision was explained by the necessity of using OKA's headquarters for the needs of the Administration of Dzerzhinsk.²³¹ Another frequently used method is the suspension of energy supply to selected TV channels.

3.2.4. Information Control

Another means of influence is *information control*. It refers to the fact that some actors from outside the media industry have information which is newsworthy from the mass media's point of view. The importance of the sources for news production has been pointed out by Tuchman, Shoemaker, and many other researchers.²³² However, the novelty of the proposed approach is that it enables us to analyse the impact of the informative factor outside the boundaries of a separate group. In fact, politicians, businessmen, and many other groups and people can have valuable information to report through the mass media. In other words, an analysis that distinguishes political and

²³¹ *Monitoring of GDF*, 18.03.1999, (URL <http://www.gdf.ru>).

²³² See, for example, Manning, P. (2001) *News and News Sources: A Critical Introduction*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

economic actors from sources has large overlapping areas. This problem is easily overcome in the proposed classification. It simply postulates that sometimes economic and political actors, as well as many other social groups, can serve as sources, and this allows them to use the informative factor to put pressure on the media.

Why can this newsworthy information (or a possibility of providing it) be considered as a coercive means? The reason is that the mass media are in need of certain information to be presented as news. In other words, this information is a valuable resource. And by reporting or not reporting this information to the news media, the sources are able to have an impact on the content of media messages. To put it in a more practical sense, the sources may report some information to the media, provided the latter present this information in the format or with the content convenient to the sources.

For example, one respondent noted the case when he was able to publish a few articles with a hidden advertisement of an organisation in one of the major newspapers in St. Petersburg. This respondent had neither enough money for advertising nor regulative or administrative power. However, he got access to the information which might be of interest for a large part of the St. Petersburg audience.²³³

It is evident that state officials and politicians are especially skilful in using the informative factor. However, it is possible to presume that this mechanism is widely used by many other Russian social groups and their representatives in such areas as the arts and sports among others.

Of course, an agreement between sources and the media is not always easy to reach. Koltsova noted an example when a reporter was trying to make a story about a famous craftsman who worked at a factory producing New Year decorations. The director of the factory was ready to permit it only if the whole enterprise was to be mentioned in this story. The media representative, in turn, demanded a fee for this report. The director refused and the story was aborted.²³⁴

²³³ Interview with Sergey, a public relation assistant, St. Petersburg, May, 2002.

²³⁴ Koltsova, O. (2001) 'News production in contemporary Russia: Practices of power', *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 16, No. 3, p. 324.

3.2.5. Court Action

The next coercive method is the judicial one. It includes a series of actions which involve court procedures. The judicial method has been widely used in recent disputes amongst Russian media companies. Let us mention just a few examples that happened during the conflict between Gazprom and Media-Most. After several legal battles, Gazprom, the Russian gas monopoly, acquired majority control of NTV, the country's most influential privately-held TV channel.

Gazprom had owned 46 per cent of NTV by the 2001. When a Moscow Court froze the voting rights of a further 19 per cent of NTV held by Media-Most on 26 January 2001,²³⁵ Gazprom had secured a majority and gained a controlling stake in this television company. This allowed the gas monopoly to call the shareholders' meeting which changed the NTV's board in favour of Gazprom's representatives.²³⁶

Although Media-Most disputed the claim, another court ruling at the end of March 2001 in London dismissed a legal action brought by Vladimir Gusinsky, the head of NTV and Media-Most, against Gazprom.²³⁷ The end of Media-Most was also caused by a court decision. This media syndicate was liquidated in line with a 29 May 2001 resolution of the Moscow Court of Arbitration's Department of Appeals.²³⁸ Following this resolution, the meeting of shareholders of Media-Most agreed to liquidate this media corporation on 10 September 2001.

3.2.6. Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is the next method of the proposed classification. There are numerous activities included in this category. However, it is not only the enforcement of court decisions. In Russia, like many other countries, there are many controlling organisations that check whether Russian enterprises pay their taxes properly and whether they follow

²³⁵ That was possible because without those 19 per cent Media-Most owned only 30 per cent of NTV.

²³⁶ Jack, A. (2001) "Gazprom claims victory in the battle for NTV", *Financial Times*, 26.01.2001.

²³⁷ Jack, A. (2001) "Control of NTV hangs in the balance", *Financial Times*, 2.04.2001.

²³⁸ (2001) "Moskva prodolzhaet 'triasti' Media-Most" [Moscow continues to probe Media-Most, *Lenta.ru*, 10.08.2001, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/most/2001/10/08/mediamost/>, consulted on 12 July 2003).

fire and health regulations. If something is wrong, the controlling organisations are powerful enough to suspend the activity of the firms.

Needless to say, law enforcement is being widely used against the Russian mass media as well as against other enterprises. For example, it was reported that twelve armed soldiers came to shut down a TV company in the Rostov oblast. The reason for this closure was a decision by health authorities (*sanpedistantcia*) that the temperature in the company office was 2-3 C below the norm. Another example is the decision of Russian state fire authorities (*Glavnoe Upravlenie Gosudarstvennoy Protivopozharnoy Sluzhbi MVD RF*) to suspend the activity of the newspaper *Kommersant* because of its failure to follow some of the fire regulations.²³⁹

Although it seems paradoxical, these checks are also able to impact the content of media reporting. In Russia the decision to close a media enterprise on the basis of its breaking some of the regulations mentioned above is often made due to its inappropriate coverage of certain events, or an improper policy of the media syndicate. Conversely, when the coverage and policy fit the interests of the powerful actors, these infringements are not taken into account. Let us note, as an example, the fact that *Schetnaia Palata RF* [the Audit Chamber of the Russian Federation] has regularly found many infringements in the finance of RTR during the last 10 years. However, nothing has been done yet to change the situation and this state TV channel continues to function normally.²⁴⁰

The method of law enforcement can be used not only by the actors that are able to have an impact (often regulative or administrative ones) on the work of law enforcement agencies and in such a way to reach their goals through assisting the agencies. In some cases, law enforcement agencies attain their own targets as well; often it is a mutually beneficial exchange. For instance, the management of a St. Petersburg newspaper is thought to have favoured the St. Petersburg FSB by the way it covered the Nikitin's case²⁴¹ in exchange for assistance with issuing an urgently needed passport to a journalist of this newspaper.²⁴²

²³⁹ Interview with Natalia, an expert on the Russian mass media, St. Petersburg, September, 2001.

²⁴⁰ Rikovtseva, E. (1998) "Iama: Pochemu VGTRK bessmislenno proveriat", in *Sreda* No.2-3, pp. 13-17.

²⁴¹ Nikitin was accused of spying while he insisted that he aimed to assist in the protection of environment. This controversial case was widely reported by the Russian media. Nikitin was finally found guilty in spying and sentenced.

²⁴² Interview with Natalia, an expert on the Russian media, St. Petersburg, September, 2001.

3.2.7. Violence

The next method of making an impact on the content of media reports is *violence*. This includes all sorts of criminal action against the people and property of media organizations. It is possible to break the violent means into three subgroups - (1) the most serious crime - murder, (2) grievous bodily harm of some representatives of the media syndicates, and (3) breakage or stealing of the property of media outlets.

The murder of a journalist is an extraordinary event, even in Russia. Nevertheless, several killings of journalists have taken place during last decade. The most well known of them is the murder of Vlad Listev, the director of one of the nationwide TV channels who had been working on this post for only a few days before being assassinated. Other examples of assassinations are killings of editor Larisa Yudina and Dmitry Kholodov, a journalist of *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.

Grievous bodily harm of media workers is a more widely used practice. For example, Ildar Zhandarev, a presenter and co-editor of the show *Without Protocol* [Bez Protokola] on TV-6, was severely punched and robbed on 30 November 2001. It was reported that Zhandarev had been hospitalised with serious concussion.²⁴³ Glasnost Defence Foundation reported another case regarding the punching of an operator of the television company Dialog, his video camera destroyed, by the soldiers of a military unit in Nizhniy Novgorod in 1998.²⁴⁴

Crime against the property of media organisations is also a widespread practice. It includes arson of the offices of media organisations and the destruction of their equipment. Used as a means of intimidation, it also helps in making an impact on media representatives and through them on the content of media reports. For example, during the funeral of Anton Malevsky, an alleged leader of a Moscow organised crime group who died in a parachute accident in November 2001, photo and video cameras of reporters were confiscated by the friends of Malevsky.²⁴⁵ The explosion of the

²⁴³ "Televedushego Ildara Zhandareva izbili i ograbili" [Telereporter Ildar Zhandarev has been punched and robbed], *Lenta.ru*, 30.11.2001, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/most/2001/11/30/zhandaryev/>, consulted on 12 July 2003).

²⁴⁴ *Monitoring of GDF*, 16.01.1998.

²⁴⁵ *Ntvru.com*, 10.11.2001, (URL http://www.ntvru.com/russia/10Nov2001/malevski_poh.html, consulted on 12 July 2003).

broadcasting equipment of radio Visavi in Vladikavkaz on 7 January 2002 is another example.²⁴⁶

3.2.8. Symbolic Pressure

The final coercive means of this classification is called the *symbolic* method. It represents the transmission of negative information regarding any specific media company or its representatives by rival media corporations. This factor is to be examined in depth in Chapter 6. This chapter shows only one example of how this method is used.

On 16 December 2001, Berezovsky accused the FSB of organising the Moscow apartment explosions in 1999 that triggered the second Chechen war and helped Putin win the presidential election. The following day after the Berezovsky's speech, some videoclips of a man "resembling" Kiselyov (the former Director General of NTV and TV-6)²⁴⁷ cavorting with prostitutes and making love with, reportedly, an assistant of his programme *Itogi* were released on the website *Compromat.ru*.

Although leading Russian TV channels decided not to broadcast these videoclips, the information about this case was widely spread through Russian mass communications. Many experts believe that this was done on purpose to discredit Kiselyov and thus help state authorities return control over Berezovsky's TV channel. It should be noted that this affair resembled tactics successfully used to oust Yury Skuratov, Russia's Prosecutor General, in 1999.²⁴⁸

3.2.9. Summary of the Proposed Classification

The complete classification of external factors is presented in Table 3.1. In fact, the methods from the bottom half of this table (from legal to threat) are instrumental to those on the top. Nevertheless, in some cases they can be used independently.

²⁴⁶ *Newsru.com*, 7.01.2002, (URL http://www.ntvru.com/russia/07Jan2002/antenna_d.html, consulted on 12 July 2003).

²⁴⁷ TV-6 was owned by Berezovsky at that time.

²⁴⁸ Jack, A. (2001) "Fight for Russia's TV6 turns into soap opera", *Financial Times*; 18.12.2001.

Table 3.1 External Factors of Influence on Media Content

<i>Factors</i>	Description	Agents²⁴⁹ (with help of which this sort of pressure can be delivered)	On which level
<i>Regulation</i>	Law, Regulative Documents, Licensing, Registration	Government, Local authorities	Management and Editors
<i>Administrative control</i>	Appointment of senior management, Decisions on policy	Owners	Management And Editors
<i>Economic coercion (Advertisement)</i>	Paid direct or indirect advertising	Businessmen, Political groups	Management and Editors
<i>Economic cohesion (Other contracts)</i>	Loans, Contracts for supply of materials necessary for media production	Businessmen, Banks, Firms, Political groups	Owners, Management and Editors
<i>Information control</i>	Desirable coverage in exchange for information	Political groups, Experts Sources of information, culture, sport,	Reporters
<i>Symbolic pressure</i>	Spread of negative information	Mass Media	Whole media organisations, including their managers and reporters
<i>Court action</i>	Legal solution of disputes	Courts	Management and Reporters
<i>Law enforcement</i>	Enforcement of court decisions, Control of conformity to technical regulations	Police, Special forces, Tax and Fire Departments	Management
<i>Violence</i>	Killings, Intimidation	Protection companies, Criminals	Reporters
<i>Threat</i>	Declared intention to use any means if the demanded media policy or coverage is not provided	Any of mentioned above agents or actors	Management and Reporters

A few notes regarding the last row. The threat of applying any of the described above factors is also a means of influencing media coverage. It can be a threat of the arson of some media outlets, of assaulting or even killing their personnel, of destroying their property, of cancelling some contracts, of the closure of the media outlets, of suspension of the license, of a legal persecution, of using the power of law enforcement

²⁴⁹ The difference between agents and actors is that the formers deliver the order of the latter.

agencies. It is the most widely used practice because it does not normally require a lot of efforts and money. In addition, it is not necessary to really possess the declared power to implement the threat, and it is possible to remain anonymous. Many threats are no more seriously considered by the media personnel than some of the widespread threats of explosions in public places.²⁵⁰

However, some threats are well grounded and should be taken very seriously. In fact, such threats are most often used as a preventive means, as a preliminary attempt to avoid using more costly, time-consuming and illegal means. Especially seriously taken by the media are the threats from some leaders of organised crime. For example, after a media story described an assumed leader of one of the St. Petersburg organised crime groups as an invalid, the author of this report preferred to give apologies to this gangster in order to avoid possible repercussions.²⁵¹ During the funeral of Malevsky, the journalists were told about very serious implications if any definite information regarding this event appeared in the mass media. This made the media limit their coverage of the funeral by only reporting that it had happened and that many VIP had participated in it.²⁵²

Actors are less important in my classification because any actor can use any of these means, provided he has sufficient resources. For example, the following powerful groups can be actors:

- Public authorities
- Business people
- Criminals
- Media groups (competitors)
- Other sources of information

Table 3.2 summarises methods used by these actors and indicates how often they are normally used.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Natalia, a media expert, St. Petersburg, September, 2001.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² *Ntvr.ru.com*, 10.11.2001, (URL http://www.ntvru.com/russia/10Nov2001/malevski_poh.html, consulted in July 2003).

Table 3.2 Actors and Their Methods

<i>Actors</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Methods</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>State (Government and Local authorities)</i>	Regulatory	Often	Judicial	Rare
	Administrative	Often	Law enforcement	Often
	Economic	Rare/No	Violent	Rare/No
	Information control	Often	Symbolic	Often
<i>Other political groups</i>	Regulatory	Rare	Judicial	Rare
	Administrative	Often	Law enforcement	Rare
	Economic	Often	Violent	Rare
	Information control	Rare	Symbolic	Often
<i>Business people</i>	Regulatory	Rare	Judicial	Often
	Administrative	Often	Law enforcement	Often
	Economic	Often	Violent	Rare
	Information control	Rare	Symbolic	Often
<i>Criminals</i>	Regulatory	No	Judicial	Rare
	Administrative	Rare	Law enforcement	Rare
	Economic	Rare	Violent	Often
	Information control	Rare	Symbolic	Rare
<i>Other media groups (competitors)</i>	Regulatory	No	Judicial	Often
	Administrative	No	Law enforcement	No
	Economic	Rare	Violent	No
	Information control	Often	Symbolic	Often
<i>Other sources of information</i>	Regulatory	Rare	Judicial	Often
	Administrative	Rare	Law enforcement	Rare
	Economic	Rare	Violent	Rare
	Information control	Often	Symbolic	Rare

It is evident that powerful actors may use several coercive methods together. The events with NTV and TV-6 have shown this. Another example is the closure of the radio station Titan in Bashkirstan (one the autonomous republics of Russia) in May - June 1998, just before the presidential election in this republic. Titan was the only media outlet that broadcast the interviews of candidates of the opposition. On 19 May 1998, the Mayor of Ufa (the capital city of Bashkirstan) requested to cancel Titan's rental contract. During the same day, Gossviaznadzor [Controlling Committee of Russia's Telecommunications] began to investigate Titan's conformity to technical regulations.

A similar investigation of Titan was launched by the Bashkirstan Sanpedistantiya [Health authorities] a few hours later. Then the state secretary of Bashkirstan rang A. Galeev, the President of Titan, and advised him: "not to criticise the Administration of Rakhimov" (the President of the republic).

On the following day, Gossviaznadzor continued the investigation of Titan's other outlets. On 21 May 1998, Gosenergo started checking whether the personnel of Titan were permitted to work with technical equipment. The headquarters of radio Titian were

surrounded by the police (militciya). On 22 May, Russian Radio-Ufa, another mass media organisation, broadcast the show that portrayed the managers of the radio station Titan as drug abusers and mentally disturbed people.

Despite this, the radio station Titan broadcast a show on corruption in the Administration of the President on 25 May. One and a half hours later, the transmitter of Titan was switched off. The Chairman of the Department of Social Services of Bashkirstan, in the offices of which the transmitter had been located, requested the management of Titan take it away. Five hours later, the water supply to Titan was interrupted. Three hours later, the electricity was stopped.

On 26 May, the Chief Executive of Titan was going to take away the transmitter but discovered that it had already been confiscated by the MVD (the Ministry of the Interior) of Bashkirstan. In the evening of that day, the supply of energy to the estates around Titan was terminated and the police (MVD) restricted public access to these estates.

On 27 May, Titan started to use its own power generator in order to broadcast its reports. Shortly afterwards, law enforcement units tried to break into the headquarters of Titan and arrested people who came to support the personnel of Titan. Galeev used his gun and shot upwards from the window of the office. After that, the employees of Titan were informed that a unit of MVD arrived and they were advised to stop their resistance. The personnel of Titan agreed to leave the office. They were taken into the offices of MVD and offered a cup of coffee. After drinking the coffee, the workers of Titan reacted in a way resembling the reaction to abusing drugs. They were requested to undertake a blood test without any regulations allowing this procedure.

After three days of arrest, almost all workers of radio Titan were allowed to leave. However, Galeev was charged with illegal use of the gun and was imprisoned from 27 May 1998 to 30 April 1999.²⁵³ In July 1998, the radio station Titan was officially closed by the rule of the Arbitrary Court of Bashkirstan because of “the infringements of

²⁵³ Then he was released on bail.

technical and health regulations, the abuse of the freedom of speech, and conspiracy to breach of peace.”²⁵⁴

3.3. Possible Ways of Resistance towards Factors Affecting the Content of Media Reports

The last section examines the methods that can be used by journalists in order to diminish the impact of internal and external factors on the content of media messages. This section focuses only on some of internal factors such as the relationship between managers and journalists. According to some researchers, conflicts between Russian journalists and editors are not frequent. It does not mean that managers and journalists are totally in agreement with the content of reports. Nevertheless, decisions of the management are not a matter for discussion.

As it has been shown in the first section of this chapter, executives of media outlets have a set of methods to put pressure on workers. Many journalists do not insist on their views when they differ from the viewpoints of the editors because of the risk of being sacked. Most frequently they seek a consensus with editors' points of view.

For example, one of the Russian journalists said that journalists sell out their professional skills like representatives of any other profession. Another Russian journalist said that “it is not a matter of big difference for journalists whom to support. There are some principal issues: for example, I will never support Zuganov, but on a more vague level, it does not matter for me whether I will write articles in favour of Gorbachev or Luzhkov.”²⁵⁵ This position seems to be very motivated because there is considerable unemployment among journalists, which allows editors to replace the journalistic staff without problems.

It is also true with regard to writing *zakaz* stories (articles-to-order). As it has been stated earlier in this chapter, the management of the news media supervises the production of prepaid stories. Although many journalists do not like writing such stories,

²⁵⁴ Makarov, R. (1998) “Kak zastavili zamolchat radio ‘Titan’” [How radio Titin was forced to keep silence], in A. Simonov (ed.) (1998) *Zoni Bezkonfliktnosti (Polozhenie SMI i Svoboda Slova v Nekotorikh “Blagopoluchnikh Subektakh Rossiyskoy Federatsii”* [Zones without conflicts: mass media and the freedom of speech in some “secure” regions of the Russian Federation], M: Prava Cheloveka, pp. 49-55.

²⁵⁵ Koltsova, “News production in contemporary Russia: Practices of power”, p. 329.

they consider this as a part of their responsibilities. The conflict between management and workers regarding writing *zakaz* stories rarely takes place. Koltsova noted only two cases when a journalist rejected an offer to write a prepaid story. Another journalist tried to persuade the editor that hidden advertisements mislead the audience. These cases of resistance happened during the earlier stages of the privatisation of the Russian mass media, and the journalists did not achieve good results. Gradually, they were forced to leave.

The second method of possible resistance is the departure of media workers. For example, when the executives of NTV were replaced in 2001, many former NTV media workers, including Kiselyov, its Director General, left NTV and started working for TV-6. Another case happened in St. Petersburg in October 1999. When Chernyadev had been appointed the director of Channel 11 (one of the main TV channels in St. Petersburg), he argued in favour of a policy aimed to suppress the political opponents of the Mayor of St. Petersburg. After that, many media workers who were in disagreement with this policy left the channel.²⁵⁶

The personnel who continued working at this channel were encouraged to follow the new policy by several methods. One worker of this channel revealed that the director had offered extra payments in cash. Because of considerable financial needs, only a few of the most principled people rejected this offer. The journalist remembered that the director was persistently asking a reporter to take 100 dollars, but she said: “No, I will not work like that,” and left.²⁵⁷

Conflicts between the executives and owners of media companies are also rare. However, executives can resign if they strongly disagree with owners’ policy. There have been several such cases, reported by Glasnost Defence Foundation and other sources.²⁵⁸ For example, in 1997, Rudnov, the director of the television company Peterburg-5 Channel resigned and explained this by his disagreement with the plans to put the channel under the control of the Moscow management.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ *Monitoring of GDF*, 13.10.1999.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Natalia, a media expert, St. Petersburg, September, 2001.

²⁵⁸ For example, Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia*

²⁵⁹ *Monitoring of GDF*, 15-16.07.1997, (URL <http://www.gdf.ru>).

Although the influence of powerful external actors is usually difficult to resist, there are a number of ways of possible resistance. Perhaps the best example of how the media staff can try to overcome undesirable actions towards them is the response of NTV's personnel to the decision of Gazprom, the major shareholder, to replace some members on the directors board of NTV.

As a result of this change, Vladimir Kulistikov, who had once been a NTV journalist but later worked for *Vesti*, the state-controlled RIA-Vesti news agency, was appointed as the chief editor. However, the most disputed decision was a significant reduction of the power of Yevgeny Kiselyov, the general director of NTV. Instead, Boris Jordan, an American banker, was appointed as the chief executive. Jordan, an American citizen of Russian ancestry, participated in the Russian government's controversial privatisation programme and ran the Sputnik Fund. This replacement encountered a negative response by managers and many of the workers of NTV. They used a set of methods to resist this decision.

First, they appealed for public support. This was done several ways. NTV produced own television shows and news programmes that draw public attention to the conflict. In the evening following the replacement of the management, NTV broadcast its news with journalists standing behind the presenter. This was done in order to illustrate that something very dramatic was happening. In addition, NTV's logo in the corner of the screen was stamped by the word "protest" in red letters.

In addition, Kiselyov in his weekly show *Itogi* presented the interviews with leading Russian politicians and prominent journalists who expressed their support for the former management of NTV. In this show NTV was presented as the channel persecuted for its intention to broadcast unbiased news. This conflict was presented as state intervention against press freedom. A speaker on this show exclaimed: "We have no doubt that Vladimir Putin is completely aware what is going on and is thus responsible for the consequences."²⁶⁰

Another way of attracting public attention was a change in the normal schedule of media reports and shows. On 4 April 2001, as an act of protest against the decision of the

²⁶⁰Zolotov, A. (2001) "NTV managers ousted in Gazprom coup", *The Moscow Times*, 4.04.2001.

meeting of NTV shareholders, all NTV's shows announced earlier were cancelled, broadcasting instead advertisements and news.²⁶¹

In order to mobilize public support, outdoor conferences and public meetings were used. NTV organised the outdoor conference the day after the directors board decision. It was reported that about 70 supporters of NTV, expressing their support for NTV journalists and carrying a Russian flag draped with a black mourning band, gathered near the entrance to the NTV headquarters. In fact, the above-mentioned conference aimed not only to reach the audience but also to encourage political and international support. The majority of its participants were reporters from Russian and Western media organisations.

A more effective form of public protest is public meetings. The former NTV management together with some prominent Russian politicians organised a few of them. Thousands of workers, pensioners and youngsters expressed their support for NTV in St Petersburg and Moscow, which is believed to have been the largest public appeal for the freedom of speech in Russia since 1990. Some experts estimated that more than 15,000 people participated in this action. They shouted, "No TV without NTV" and "We won't give NTV to Putin."

In Moscow, at least 5,000 people attended a rally in front of NTV's offices to support the company's staff. Many attended other political rallies and concerts organised by the channel. NTV journalists made emotional appeals to turn public opinion against Gazprom, which was portrayed as an agent of the state attempting to suppress freedom of speech in Russia. In St. Petersburg, many prominent liberal politicians appealed to protestors from a truck standing close to the Aurora cruiser, a symbol of the 1917 October revolution. Sergey Popov, a parliamentary deputy and member of the liberal party Yabloko, claimed: "What they are doing to NTV is the road to repression. But we will not go down that road."²⁶²

The second way of resistance is the search for *political* support. After the former NTV's management was replaced, some deputies of the Russian Duma were staying

²⁶¹ (2001) "Russia: NTV cancels scheduled programmes", *BBC Monitoring Service - United Kingdom*; 4.04.2001.

²⁶² An additional form of public support is telegrams and emails with the expression of support. NTV reported that it had received thousands such telegrams and e-mails.

together with NTV managers in the NTV headquarters in Ostankino throughout the night. One of them, Grigoriy Yavlinskiy, the leader of Yabloko bloc of the Russian parliament, declared that the situation around NTV would be debated at the State Duma next day.²⁶³

Political support can be found by appealing to the Duma (the Russian parliament). In fact, the Duma itself pays attention to important events amongst nationwide media organizations. For example, Gennadiy Seleznev, the Speaker of the Duma, criticized the NTV shareholders decision regarding the change of NTV's board of directors. "Honestly, I had not expected the NTV shareholders - I mean those representing Gazprom - to make such an inept decision and to appoint the roguish Jordan and Kokh. [...] These people are not qualified to resolve the conflict and solve financial problems," he told reporters. Seleznev underlined that the Duma "will not stand aside" in attempts to "settle the conflict."²⁶⁴ As a result, the State Duma tried to initiate the discussion on the laws about the restriction of state ownership in the Russian news media. Such a call was made by Yavlinsky's party, Yabloko.²⁶⁵

Some state departments and establishments have also assisted media companies in their disputes with shareholders. For example, during the conflict between Media-Most and Gazprom, the state Audit Chamber expressed its opinion that Gazprom was supposed to produce and sell gas, instead of dabbling in media. To some extent, this made Gazprom diminish its pressure on Media-Most. An appeal to the President is another possibility. The media workers of NTV asked Putin to intervene into this conflict. Although Putin did not reply immediately, his response showed that he regarded the conflict as an ordinary commercial dispute, which should be resolved via applying to the court.

A court appeal is one of the most frequent ways of resolving conflicts amongst Russian media companies. It was used many times during the conflict between NTV and Gazprom. The lawyers of Media-Most²⁶⁶ used this method even before the president suggested it. On 10 April 2001, NTV lawyers filed a lawsuit with Moscow's arbitration court in which they asked the court to pronounce the 3 April Gazprom-initiated

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ (2001) "Russian Duma speaker attacks 'inept' decision to change NTV management", *BBC Monitoring Service*, 4.04.2001.

²⁶⁵ Jack, A. (2001) "Duma to enter NTV battle", *Financial Times*, 10.04.2001.

²⁶⁶ NTV was a part of Media-Most, and Gusinsky was the President of Media-Most.

emergency meeting of NTV shareholders void. Unfortunately, the outcome of court applications is unpredictable and this method can hardly be used in conflicts with the Russian state as many experts believe that the rules of the Russian courts are very unlikely to contradict the interests of the state departments and officials.²⁶⁷

Media organisations can also appeal to the Prosecutor's Office to intervene in a conflict. For example, Alexander Gerasmov, the director of the state TV channel AMUR (and the chairmen of the Journalist Union of Amurskaya oblast), appealed to the Prosecutor of Russia. He argued that the human rights of the people of this oblast were being violated by the lack of access to information. This appeal was made after a decision by energy companies to terminate energy supplies to the channel.²⁶⁸

Essential support during a conflict can be found from other media organisations both in Russia and abroad. During the conflict between Media-Most and Gazprom, many Russian media companies supported NTV. For example, *Obshaia Gazeta*, along with one hundred fifty-nine national and local media outlets, published a special issue with an expression of support for NTV personnel. In this issue, the writer Alexander Volodin, the actor Igor Kvasha, and well-known Russian writer Boris Vasilev commented on the NTV events.²⁶⁹

The method of talks for resolving conflicts is also very popular. For example, some representatives of the former NTV management and its prominent reporters tried to resolve the conflict by negotiation with Jordan, the new Director General of NTV, and Alfred Kokh, the head of Gazprom-Media. Although these talks were not successful, it does not imply that such attempts are useless.

Finally, mass media outlets can publish the stories negatively portraying their enemies. Thus, during the conflict between Gusinsky and the Russian Prosecutor's Office, NTV and the newspaper *Segodnia*, controlled by Media-Most, broadcast and published a number of scandalous news stories about officers of the Prosecutor's Office and their relatives in order to alleviate the pressure of the Russian law enforcement agencies on Gusinsky. One example is the ORT's filming (and intention to broadcast it)

²⁶⁷ Interview with Alexander, a former FSB officer, London, June, 2003.

²⁶⁸ (2001) "Amurskaia oblast ostalas bez televidenia" [Television in Amurskaya oblast is suspended], *Lenta.ru*, 7.12.2001, (URL <http://lenta.ru/russia/2000/12/07/no-tv/>, consulted in July 2003).

²⁶⁹ (2001) "Vishel spetsvipusk 'Obshey Gazeti' v podderzhku NTV" [A special edition of *Obshaia Gazeta* released], *Lenta.ru*, 7.04.2001, (URL <http://lenta.ru/most/2001/04/07/gazeta/>, consulted in July 2003).

the action of representatives of the Prosecutor's Office during a probe into the evasion by ORT from customs taxes.²⁷⁰

Another example in this respect is the publication of the story regarding the arrest of the daughter of Vasliy Kolmogorov, a deputy to Prosecutor General, at airport Sheremetevo-2. The newspaper *Segodnia* reported that Kolmogorova had attempted to fly to Geneva, having US\$ 5,000 of undeclared currency. Such an offence could have been regarded as illegal currency laundering under article 88 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, if her father had not had such a high status in law enforcement. The newspaper claimed that having received this information, the Air Transport Department of the Prosecutor's Office informed the Transport Department of the Prosecutor's Office, which picked up all the documents related to the case. Vladimir Ustinov, the Prosecutor General, was informed about this and he requested that all the documents be handed over to him. The documents were at the Prosecutor's Office until 10 January 2001, and then were returned to the Air Department of the Prosecutor's Office reportedly with Ustinov's personal instruction not to open a criminal case against Kolmogorova.²⁷¹

Although the Prosecutor's Office is powerful enough to overcome any negative media coverage, sometimes such a media policy has been successful. For example, Georgiy Tsabriya, a senior investigator of the Prosecutor's Office, who had used armed masked men during a search of the headquarters of ORT, was replaced.²⁷² Nevertheless, it is hardly possible to say that the media is able to achieve anything significant this way.

Unfortunately, the above-mentioned methods of resistance do not allow the Russian mass media to effectively counteract the pressure of powerful external actors. NTV was forced to accept the new management, Media-Most. TV-6, another Russian nationwide television channel, bought by Berezovsky, was terminated soon afterwards.

²⁷⁰ Sinitsina, O. (2000) "Sotrudniki ORT obviniautsia v contrabande" [ORT's personnel is suspected of contraband], *Strana.ru*, 5.12.2000, (URL <http://www.strana.ru/incidents/criminal/2000/12/05/976014425.html>, consulted in July 2003).

²⁷¹ (2001) "Delo docheri zamestitelia genprokurora RF" [The case of the daughter of the deputy to General Prosecutor of the Russian Federation], *RosBusinessConsulting*, (URL http://top.rbc.ru/daythemes/index.shtml?news/daythemes/2001/01/12/12101746_bod.shtml, consulted in July 2003).

²⁷² "Priglasivshiy avtomatchikov na ORT sledovatel otstranen ot dela" [The detective who brought a gun squad into ORT is dismissed], *Lenta.ru*, 6.12.2000, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/russia/2000/12/06/ort/>, consulted in July 2003).

Many other examples can also be quoted, but it does not look essential since they have already been noted in previous section of this chapter.

To sum up, although workers of Russian mass media have a set of methods to resist their managers, this resistance is not efficient due to the reality of a transition country – high unemployment rate in general, and in the media industry in particular. Similarly, the executives of media organisations do not have sufficiently effective methods to resist the pressure of powerful external actors.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the factors that may influence the media content. It has shown that there are several internal and external factors that significantly affect the content of media messages. Although executives of media organisations are able to enforce their decisions on the content of media reports in disputes with the media staff, it has been argued that internal factors make a smaller impact on the media reports than the external factors.

In this chapter I have proposed a new classification of external factors, which is based on methods rather than on actors. The administrative method of this classification has been regarded as the most powerful means of media control. The owners of media companies are able to use their power over their executives in order to secure required coverage of some events.

This chapter has pointed out that the news media can use several methods to resist the pressure of external actors. However, Russian media companies are relatively weak and they are not able to resist external coercion effectively. This makes the Russian mass media serve as an instrument of powerful networks, many of which are linked to organised crime.

Chapter 4

Ties between the Russian Mass Media and Organised Crime

As it has been shown in the previous chapter, the Russian mass media is very vulnerable to the pressure of powerful groups, which are often linked to organised crime. Although information about those links is not easily available, it is possible to note a number of such cases, which were confirmed by a few sources. This is the main purpose of this chapter.

It should be noticed that this chapter reviews ties between the mass media and different types of organised crime. It is hardly possible to place Vladimir Gusinsky, a businessman; Boris Berezovsky, who used to be the deputy to the secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation; and Mikhail Mirilashvili, a card player, on the same board. However, what is common in all these cases is the fact that they are (or were) the owners of major Russian news companies, and they might have been involved in dealings, which are considered illegal by Russian law enforcement agencies.

Also, it is important to note that some of the cases reviewed in this chapter have not been finalised yet, and formally speaking it is premature to consider their participants as being involved in criminal business. Nevertheless, these cases are included in this chapter for two reasons. First, the prosecutor's office normally does not open cases without sufficient reasons. Second, the cases well illustrate the complex interaction between Russian powerful networks and the media.

This chapter starts with a story illustrating the possible involvement of representatives of *thieves in law* in the media business of St. Petersburg. Then some facts about the ties between *bandits* and the Russian mass media are presented. A number of stories about fraud and economic misdoings with the media are to be reviewed in the third section. Finally, various forms of involvement of Russian politicians into the media business are examined and illustrated by several examples from the life of St. Petersburg elites and by the business and political career of such a controversial person as Berezovsky.

4.1. Ties between Russian Media Companies and *Thieves in Law*

The facts of the previous chapter allow us to assume the existence of ties between *thieves in law* and the Russian mass media. Indeed, it is possible to find several examples that some *thieves in law* own or control some media organisations in Russia. One of them is given in this section.

The Fund for the Development of Television is one of the organisations which aim to support television in St. Petersburg. There is something about this fund, which is worth mentioning in this study: this fund was headed by Konstantin Yakovlev, also known as Kostia Mogila [Grave], who allegedly was the chief coordinator of Moscow *thieves in law* in St. Petersburg.

K. Yakovlev gained his nick name while he worked at a St. Petersburg cemetery. He really was very skilful in digging graves, which was his main occupation in the 1980s. It is reported that nobody has been able to do it faster than he used to do. At the beginning of the 1990s, Kostia Mogila became one of the leaders of the *Tambovskaia* crime group, which was the most organised and aggressive criminal syndicate in St. Petersburg. Mogila managed to become a good friend of some *thieves in law* from Moscow²⁷³ and they appointed him to be their chief representative in St. Petersburg.²⁷⁴

The post of President of the Fund for the Development of Television allowed Mogila to be involved in many important processes surrounding the mass media in St. Petersburg. He was seen as one of the most powerful media moguls in St. Petersburg. In addition to the Fund for the Development of Television and the Association of Mass Media Organisations, Mogila reportedly controlled cable television and was involved in advertising business.²⁷⁵ For example, his firm Trend was the major advertising dealer for ORT in St. Petersburg. However, his involvement in media business was not restricted to this city. It is known that he was a business partner of Berezovsky,²⁷⁶ one of the most

²⁷³ In particular with Usoyan whose nick name is Ded Khasan [Grandfather Khasan].

²⁷⁴ *Stringer*, 03.07.2001.

²⁷⁵ "Konstantin Iakovlev: zhizn i smert - v zerkale SMI" [Konstantin Yakovlev-life and death in the mirror of mass media], *Rosbalt*, 27.05.2003.

²⁷⁶ He was a Berezovsky's partner in oil business.

well-known, controversial and influential people of the Russian news media, who owned or controlled some nationwide Russian TV channels, newspapers and magazines.²⁷⁷

As a result of significant political changes in Russia and St. Petersburg, Mogila's status in St. Petersburg's hierarchy was significantly diminished. He lost influence in the Administration of St. Petersburg after the resignation of vice-governors Aleksashin and Malishev, who seemed to have been "his people" in the Administration.²⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Mogila remained to be one of the most powerful and influential businessmen in St. Petersburg until the end of May 2003.²⁷⁹

Unfortunately, even though Mogila became less active in his business projects and is reported to have left his post of "coordinator" of Moscow's *thieves in law* in St. Petersburg, this did not save his life. On 25 May 2003, when St. Petersburg celebrated its 300-year Jubilee, two motorcyclists shot at Mogila's car in Moscow. Konstantin Yakovlev, or Kostia Mogila, who had been inside this car, was killed.²⁸⁰

4.2. Ties between the Mass Media and *Bandits* (Avtoriteti)

Another type of Russian organised crime is *bandits*. *Bandits* are also interested in the media business and ties with the mass media. It can be illustrated by numerous examples. Some of them are presented in this section.

4.2.1. Mikhail Mirilashvili

Mikhail Mirilashvili was the president of the media company Russian Video, and reportedly a close ally of Gusinsky, the former owner of the Russian largest media

²⁷⁷ "Berezovskogo ne vozmut v svetloe budushee" [Berezovsky is not to be taken in the prosperous future], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 13.04.2000.

²⁷⁸ Malishev was accused of corruption and died in May 2002.

²⁷⁹ "'Berezoviy' raskol v blizhayshem okruzenii Kosti Mogili" [Berezov's split in Kostya Mogila's neighbourhood], *Leningradskaya Pravda*, 16.08.01.

²⁸⁰ "V Moskve ubit izvestniy petersburgskiy predprinimatel po klichke Kostia-Mogila" [Influential St. Petersburg entrepreneur nicknamed Kostia-Mogila is assassinated in Moscow], *Rosbalt*, 25.05.2003.

syndicate Media-Most. He was sentenced because of his ties with Russian organised crime.

Mirilashvili was born on 1 May 1960 in the village of Kulashi in Georgia. His grandfather was the director of the Kulashi's fine silk fabrics factory where his father also worked as a senior engineer. Mirilashvili's parents placed great emphasis on education, encouraging him to take a good degree, although Michael liked sport and spent a lot of time to develop his significant athletic abilities.

After secondary school Mikhail followed his parents' advice and passed exams to the Leningrad School of Paediatric Medicine in 1977, in order to receive medical education, which was considered especially prestigious in Georgia. His wife Laura was a pharmacist and worked as a pharmaceutical chemist.

Mirilashvili's studies at the medical college and his active social life allowed him to develop managerial skills. He established numerous contacts with influential people, who still are a significant part of his social life and business projects. According to some of his friends, from this time Mirilashvili considered the principles of honesty and sincerity to be the basis of social order and business ethics.

He graduated with a degree in medical science, specializing in paediatrics. After graduation, Mirilashvili did not return to his home village but became a businessman. His new acquaintances, very influential people in St. Petersburg, trusted him and invested some money in his commercial projects. Mirilashvili's business succeeded, and he was able to repay his debts. Moreover, he reinvested the profit into new business projects. He seemed to be able to adapt to the changing socio-economic reality of Russia quite quickly. This allowed him to become a very rich and powerful man in St. Petersburg.

Mirilashvili is reported to have been a very bright and charismatic man, very skilful in establishing business and social contacts. In addition, he was able to solve very difficult conflicts through negotiations, which was much appreciated among his friends and partners. One of his companions said: "What I realized about partnership at the age of thirty, Mirilashvili knew it when he was three."²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Website *Lichnosti Peterburga* [Famous People of St. Petersburg], URL <http://www.ceu.spb.ru/rus/business/mirilashvili.m.m/index.shtml>, consulted in June 2005.

Mirilashvili's reputation made him the president of numerous firms and associations in the 1990's. He was President of Conti, a large St. Petersburg entertainment corporation, and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Petromir, which included over ten large St. Petersburg enterprises. Mirilashvili focused on the construction industry, pharmaceuticals, food delivery, tourism, and the entertainment industry. Even during his college years, Mirilashvili was very interested in gambling games. He was never ashamed of this passion and became the first man in St. Petersburg to organise legal gambling business. Mirilashvili owned stakes in many of St. Petersburg's firms and is thought to have been one of the richest men in Russia. His daughter lives in Israel, and his son graduated from an American diplomatic school.

Mirilashvili patronised St. Petersburg's large Jewish community. He provided aid to the city's synagogue, and was President of the Maccabi Association of Jewish Aesthetics and Physical Culture of the Commonwealth of Independent Countries and Baltic States. Also, he was President of the St. Petersburg office of Russian Jewish Congress. Mirilashvili voluntarily supported many charities. His Jewish charity organizations "Eve" and "Hesed Abraham" provided humanitarian aid to thousands elderly and disabled citizens of St. Petersburg. His enterprises invested in hospitals and schools. Mirilashvili's charitable activities allowed him to win the nomination "People of Our City" in 1999 and 2000.²⁸²

Mirilashvili played tennis and was one of the strongest amateur players in St. Petersburg. He had a chance to play against world tennis stars Bjorn Borg and Andrei Chesnokov and is reported that he defeated Chesnokov and Lecomte in doubles. His companies sponsored the second largest series of tennis tournaments at St. Petersburg.

Mirilashvili was acquainted with many of the prominent composers and singers in St. Petersburg. Also, he had numerous connections with St. Petersburg well-known politicians, including Sobchak, the former mayor, Sobchak's wife Ludmila Narusova, and Galina Starovoytova, who was assassinated in 2001. Despite Mirilashvili's claims that he preferred not to be involved in politics, he allegedly sponsored Galina Starovoytova and the political party *Democratic Russia*.

²⁸² This public opinion survey was conducted by the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg.

Mirilashvili was involved in the media business. He was President of the media company Russian Video, which released detective serials *Streets with Shuttered Lanterns* and *Menti* (Menti is a rude word for the Russian police). The significance of this company can be illustrated by the fact that it produced the sound track of the Russian release of the soap opera *Santa Barbara*, which was very popular in Russia.

In addition, Mirilashvili was connected with Gusinsky, the former president of the largest Russian media company Media-Most. They both were heads of the Russian Jewish Congress. Mirilashvili was the vice-president of this non-governmental organization, whilst Gusinsky was its president. Also, a good sign of close ties between Gusinsky and Mirilashvili was the acquisition of Russian Video by TNT, which was part of Gusinsky's Media-Most.²⁸³

Although the biography of Mirilashvili was published on the website of the most prominent people of St. Petersburg next to Putin's webpage, St. Petersburg law enforcement agencies suspected Mirilashvili in connection with the criminal underworld of St. Petersburg. According to law enforcement agencies, Mirilashvili had the nick name Misha Kuttaisky. While being at college in St. Petersburg he became a professional card player and established contacts with card players of St. Petersburg.²⁸⁴ (In fact, Mirilashvili himself never denied his passion for playing card games such as poker, and continued to play these games during his business career).

Card players comprise still another branch of the criminal world of St. Petersburg, which is connected with both *thieves in law* and *bandits*. This makes it difficult to identify precisely which branch of organised crime he belongs to. Apparently, he is connected with many of them. It is reported that Mirilashvili was linked to Ivankov (Yaponchik), the boss of the Russian Mafia, who was sentenced in the US,²⁸⁵ and Feoktistov (Feka). According to some sources, Mirilashvili became a close ally of

²⁸³ "Za 'delo Gusinskogo' budte gotovi" [Get ready for "Gusinsky's case"], *RosBusinessConsult*, 24.01.2001.

²⁸⁴ "MMM nachinal s kartezhnogo shulerstva" [MMM started his career with playing cards], *Strana.Ru*, 24.01.2001.

²⁸⁵ Ivankov's sentence was ended in July 2004, he was expatriated to Russia and charged by the Russian police with murder.

Feoktistov, a boss of the St. Petersburg Mafia, who was later arrested by St. Petersburg police.²⁸⁶

Mirilashvili's contacts with the criminal world, is not the only evidence of his involvement in criminal business. It is reported that he organised an illegal channel of the export of antiques and jewellery out of Russia at the beginning of his business career. Mirilashvili was also suspected by Interpol of smuggling diamonds and was denied entry into the European Union.²⁸⁷

Nevertheless, it was difficult for law enforcement to charge Mirilashvili with any crime. His first (and last) arrest happened only in 2001, when Mirilashvili arrived for one day to St. Petersburg from Israel in order to participate in the presentation of Social House, a non-governmental organisation which was sponsored by him and a Swedish charity.²⁸⁸ He was expected to return to Israel, the second country of his citizenship and the main place of residency in recent years, together with a delegation of Israel's president.²⁸⁹ However, St Petersburg law enforcement agencies tracked him, accused him of the murder of a few businessmen, and held him.

Three of these businessmen were killed next to *Astoria*, one of the most fashionable St. Petersburg hotels, which is located just opposite to the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, on 8 September 2000. It was reported that they had left their car Jeep and were on their way to the hotel, when two men left their car *VAZ 2106*. One of these men killed the businessmen with machine gun Agran, while the second shot down the driver of their Jeep with a TT gun. Then, the gangsters left the place of the murder, and changed their car two blocks away. The *VAZ 2106*, with a fabricated number plate, a machine gun Agran and a TT gun, were discovered by the police, while the men managed to escape in a *VAZ 21099*.

The killed businessmen were Gocha Tsakereshvili from Kutaisi, and Anguladze. Both of them had been previously sentenced. Law enforcement agencies linked this

²⁸⁶ "MMM nachinal s kartezhnogo shulerstva" [MMM started his career with playing cards], *Strana.Ru*, 24.01.01.

²⁸⁷ URL <http://northwest.strana.ru/text/stories/2001/01/24/980347476/980344617.html>, consulted in June 2002.

²⁸⁸ "FSB vziala avtoriteta i druga Gusinskogo" [The FSB arrested a lord of organised crime who is a friend of Gusinsky], *Gazeta.ru*, 24.01.2001

²⁸⁹ "Za 'delo Gusinskogo' budte gotovi" [Get ready for "Gusinsky's case"], *RosBusinessConsult*, 24.01.2001.

murder to the kidnapping of Mirilashvili's father, which occurred in the broad daylight at the end of August 2000, allegedly by a gang controlled by Moscow's *thieves in law*.

Mirilashvili had been in Israel, but he returned to St. Petersburg and managed to sort out this incident quickly. The kidnappers agreed to let Mirilashvili's father go the day after negotiations, reportedly without any ransom. (According to the prosecutor's office, the ransom had been paid). Gocha Tsakereshvili and Anguladze, who were killed next to *Astoria*, seemed to have been involved in this kidnapping.²⁹⁰

Despite being suspected of having ordered Anguladze's murder, Mirilashvili was formally accused of creating an organised crime group, which kidnapped and killed two other Georgian businessmen with criminal backgrounds - Koba Kakushadze and Rostom Dvali. They also allegedly were linked to the kidnapping of Mirilashvili's father. As it happened, they disappeared at the same time and nobody has seen them since.²⁹¹

The St. Petersburg Prosecutor's Office declined the arguments of Mirilashvili's relatives (who claimed that this arrest was politically motivated and linked it to the political campaign against Gusinsky and his media company Media-Most) and charged Mirilashvili at the end of January 2001 with the kidnapping of the two businessmen. In addition, law enforcement agencies of St. Petersburg arrested seven other people from Mirilashvili's enterprises, including Sergey Kiselev, Mirilashvili's driver; Demyanenko, the vice-president of the corporation *Conti*; Viktor Petrov, the chief of the security team of this corporation; and a few bodyguards.

Despite all efforts of Mirilashvili's lawyers to prove lawlessness of this arrest, Mirilashvili was remanded in custody from January 2001 to June 2003, and was finally jailed for twelve years. According to some reports, officers of the law enforcement agencies of St. Petersburg were personally motivated to hold Mirilashvili due to his numerous contacts with Western intelligence services, as well as with criminals, some officers of law enforcement agencies, and high-ranking politicians of St. Petersburg.

Mirilashvili's cousin is allegedly an officer of Israel's intelligence service and he is on the board of a transnational corporation, which invested into Mirilashvili's business with diamonds of Yakutiya, a region of Russia. Ivanov, the former head of St. Petersburg

²⁹⁰ *RosBisConsult*, 24.01.2001.

²⁹¹ "Mirilashvili zaderzhan po delu o pokhishenii cheloveka" [Mirilashvili is arrested because of being involved in kidnapping], *Gazeta.ru*, 24.01.2001.

RUBOP (Regional Headquarters to Tackle Organised Crime) is allegedly Mirilashvili's close friend. Viktor Petrov, the head of Mirilashvili's bodyguards, arrested with Mirilashvili, used to be the deputy to the Head of the *Ugolovnoy royska GUVK* of St. Petersburg. V. Yakovlev, the former mayor of St. Petersburg, was also among Mirilashvili's acquaintances.

The prosecutor's office was aware of the strength of Mirilashvili's partners and expected to encounter many obstacles during the investigation of Mirilashvili's case. However, the detectives claimed that they had enough evidence to prove Mirilashvili's crimes and they were certain that Mirilashvili had to be in prison for many years.²⁹²

The arguments of the prosecutor's office were strengthened in June 2001, when a group of criminals was held in Odessa (a well-known city in Ukraine). The gangsters had kidnapped a businessman, and injured some police officers when they tried to rescue him. In spite of severe resistance, the kidnappers were arrested. The police were surprised to discover, that their fingerprints matched those discovered on the guns left in the car *VAZ 2106*, which was involved in the assassination near *Astoria* in St. Petersburg in August 2000.²⁹³

Ukraine agreed to extradite the gangsters to Russia. Fikret Alekperov, Rovshan Mamedov, and Ilgam Frendi, reportedly *thieves in law* from Azerbaydzhan, were convoyed to St. Petersburg at the beginning of July 2001. Interestingly, Mirilashvili was hospitalised because of a heart attack when these criminals arrived to St. Petersburg.²⁹⁴

The gangsters were questioned and pleaded guilty in their involvement in the murder of three businessmen near *Astoria*. They refused to name the man who ordered them to kill these people, though. However, they said that one of Mirilashvili's bodyguards had told them to secretly bury two corpses. The gangsters agreed to show the detectives the place, where they had buried parts of the bodies. At the beginning of July, the detectives dig up this place and found remains, which were identified as the corpses

²⁹² Lianov, Igor "Mirilashvili zamechen v krovnom rodstve s Mossadom" [Mirilashvili has kinship ties with Mossad].

²⁹³ "Protiv Mirilashvili budut svidetelstvovat killeri" [Killers are to give evidence in Mirilashvili's inquest], *Kommersant*, and *Lenta.ru*, 07.06.01.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

of Kakushadze and Dvali. This evidence allowed the prosecutor's office to charge Mirilashvili with the murder of five people.²⁹⁵

In spite of much evidence against Mirilashvili, his supporters claimed that the evidence gathered by the prosecutor's office did not prove anything, and blamed Ivan Sidoruk, the prosecutor, of corruption.²⁹⁶ They argued that he had been paid by Moscow's *thieves in law*, who wanted to control Mirilashvili's business. They insisted that the prosecutors had to be replaced.²⁹⁷ They organised marches and speeches of influential people of St. Petersburg in the favour of Mirilashvili.²⁹⁸ Despite the huge support, Mirilashvili was sentenced for twelve years in the summer of 2003.

4.2.2. Dmitry Rozhdestvensky

Rozhdestvensky, another representative and founder of Russian Video, was also accused of the involvement in illegal business activities.²⁹⁹ He was arrested on 10 September 1998 and accused of corruption and stealing 324, 127, 400 rubles.³⁰⁰ Rozhdestvensky could have been sentenced for up to ten years, if he had been found guilty. (Gusinsky, the owner of Media-Most, was also arrested because of his alleged involvement in this case).

Rozhdestvensky always pleaded not guilty in this crime and argued that this accusation had been organised by his enemies. One of the competitors mentioned by Rozhdestvensky was Berezovsky. It is known, that Gusinsky, who was the major challenger of Berezovsky at that time, bought a significant part of Russian Video in 1997.

²⁹⁵ "V dele Mikhaila Mirilashvili dobavilos trupov" [The number of corpses in Mikhail Mirilashvili's case has increased], *Kommersant*, No.131, 26.07.2001.

²⁹⁶ "U gendirektora kholdinga 'Petromir' trebovali vziatku za prekrashenie dela Mirilashvili" [General Director of *Petromir* was asked to pay bribery if he wants Mirilashvili's inguest to be suspended], *Lenpravda*, 3.11.01.

²⁹⁷ "Mikhail Mirilashvili silno postradaet" [Mikhael Mirilashvili is to be punished], *Kommersant-SPb*, 12.11.2001.

²⁹⁸ "V Peterburge prizvali ubrat 'ruki proch ot Mirilashvili'" [Peterburg urges to leave Mirilashvili alone], *Lenpravda.ru*, 13.09.2001.

²⁹⁹ "Za 'delo Gusinskogo' budte gotovi" [Get ready for "Gusinsky's case"], *RosBussinessConsult*, 24.01.2001.

³⁰⁰ Article 160, part II of the *Criminal Code of the Russian Federation*.

The investigation of Rozhdestvensky's case took five years. Rozhdestvensky was remanded in custody most of the time. He was released on bail due to his deteriorating health only in August 2000.

The trial took place in January 2002. The court dismissed some of the accusations against Rozhdestvensky. For example, the court did not find Rozhdestvensky guilty of concealing advertising revenue taken from some Finnish firms for their advertisement on Channel 11 (Russian Video had the licence for this channel). Neither was charged Rozhdestvensky with taking (together with Alexander Sekretarev, the Director General of the Russian Video–Channel 11) a car as an advertising revenue from another firm.

Nevertheless, Rozhdestvensky still had enough charges against him even without these accusations. According to the verdict of the Federal Court of St. Petersburg in January 2002, Rozhdestvensky was found guilty in corruption. The court sentenced him for three years and confiscated his property. Because of amnesty, this verdict was cancelled and Rozhdestvensky was freed. However, he did not live long after that and died on 6 June 2002.³⁰¹

4.2.3. Oleg Chervonuk's Murder

The list of media firms allegedly involved in criminal business can be extended. The murder of brothers Chervonuk may be a good example of the complexity and multidimensionality of relations between the mass media and organised crime. Oleg Chervonuk was the owner of several press distribution firms and the chairman of the association Baltic Press, the leading St. Petersburg firm for distribution of newspapers and magazines.

Chervonuk's reputation in the publishing business can be illustrated by the fact that the leading Russia's nationwide press distribution firm Rospechat offered him the post of the head of its branch in the North Western Region, one of the biggest regions in Russia, which includes St. Petersburg. Chervonuk was thought to have been independent from criminal influence. Moreover, he tried to create a legal market for the press distribution in St. Petersburg.

³⁰¹ *Fontanka.ru*, 06.06.2002.

Chervonuk, along with his brother, was killed on 28 October 1999. The killer waited for them in the entrance to their flat and escaped in his car. Fortunately, witnesses managed to remember the car and its number plate, and it was quickly found by detectives. Its owner, Vladimir Leyta, was immediately arrested and his flat searched. While searching, the detectives discovered several 9mm bullets, completely identical to those used for the killing of Chervonuks. Nevertheless, Leyta denied his involvement in this murder and insisted that somebody had left these bullets in his car and he brought them home.

In addition to the bullets, the investigators found a notebook with telephone numbers. This notebook had the telephone numbers of two executives of The Union of Producers and Distributors, one of the leading press distribution firms in St. Petersburg. These executives were Alexey Gorbenko, the owner of this firm, and Viktor Shubin, the Director General.³⁰² They both were acquainted with Chervonuk because he had worked for this firm first as a chief of the accounting department, and then as its director, before starting his own press distribution business.

The investigators discovered that when Chervonuk was working for The Union of Producers and Distributors, this firm indirectly belonged to Alexander Sukhov. (He was not an official founder of this firm, but invested some money into it). It is interesting to note, that Sukhov had been sentenced for killing Sergey Roshektaev, a St. Petersburg businessman, in March 1995.

Sukhov was also the owner of another press distribution firm Soglasie [Consensus]. This firm had been registered as a press distribution association. However, activities of this firm had raised suspicion of law enforcement agencies of St. Petersburg. Apparently, it was involved in a protection racket and was a “roof” for a number of press distribution firms in St. Petersburg. Like a normal “roof”, Soglasie gathered money from the press traders and promised to protect them from *bandits*. The Union of Producers and Distributors also paid protection money to Soglasie.

Chervonuk confirmed that Soglasie focused on the extortion of money from press distributors, when he had been questioned by detectives with regard to the Sukhov’s case. He said: “In fact, Soglasie did not provide any services, save taking money from traders,

³⁰² Gorbenko was killed on 24 August 2005.

and it was a kind of 'roof.' People employed by The Union of Producers and Distributors were told that they had to become members of Soglasie, which would protect them."³⁰³ He said that the money gathered by Soglasie, allegedly nearly 30 million rubles per month, had been shared between Sukhov and Gorbenko. Chervonuk's talk might have caused serious problems for Sukhov. Although Chervonuk was trying to soften his words during the trial, Sukhov was sentenced for twelve years. This made the investigators suspect Sukhov of having ordered to kill Chervonuk.

The current heads of The Union of Producers and Distributors (UPD), Shubin and Gorbenko, were also suspected of this murder, but for different reasons. They might have been interested in weakening his major challenger. Chervonuk had left The Union of Producers and Distributors (UPD) a long time before his death, and became a major shareholder of Metropress, the major competitor of UPD.

Also, it became evident that some other people would benefit from Chervonuk's death. One month later his Metropress became controlled by two firms Nord and Stroycorporatciya "Souz", allegedly connected with the brothers Shevchenko.³⁰⁴ (The brothers Shevchenko, members of the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg, were placed on the wanted list of the Russian Federation for their involvement in a series of crimes, which are described later in this thesis.)

Metropress had been owned by Oleg Chervonuk, the family of Bolotovi, and Andrey Shalisko. Chervonuk, who had owned 38 per cent of Metropress, intended to increase his shareholding up to 52 per cent. When he was killed, some people from a protection firm reportedly approached Shalisko and Bolotovi and convinced them to transfer Shalisko's and Bolotovi's shares to the firms Nord and Stroycorporatciya "Souz" almost for free. According to Bolotovi, these people threatened to kill them unless they would have agreed to do so. Whether Bolotovi revealed the whole truth or not, the outcome was that Nord and Union gained 50 per cent and 45 per cent stakes in Metropress.³⁰⁵

³⁰³ "Ubiystvo Olega Chervonjuka: slishkom mnogo versiy" [Oleg Chervonuok's murder: there are too many explanations], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 11.

³⁰⁴ The corpses of Viacheslav Shevchnko and Zorin, the president of Nord, were discovered in Cyprus on 25 March 2004.

³⁰⁵ "Ubiystvo Olega Chervonjuka: slishkom mnogo versiy" [Oleg Chervonuok's murder: there are too many explanations], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 11.

4.2.4. Viacheslav and Sergey Shevchenko and some Cases of Extortion

The Shevchenko themselves are a good example of complex interrelationship existing between the mass media and organised crime. They had acquired publishing rights for the magazine *Televik*. According to some reports, these rights were extorted from Maxim Kuzakmetov, the real owner of this magazine, since he had published some negative articles regarding the management of the club Nights of Hollywood, which was controlled by Shevchenko. In addition, Shevchenko seemed to have extorted ten of thousand dollars from Kuzakmetov and Vladimir Kuznetsov, the journalist who had written these articles. Following this incident, Kuznetsov left Russia in order to save his life.

The prosecutor's office launched an investigation into this extortion in 1999. Vyacheslav Shevchenko, whose membership in the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg had expired, decided to hide. The other of the brothers, Sergey Shevchenko, remained in St. Petersburg. Although he was a member of the Legislative Assembly (who cannot be prosecuted), he was arrested and sentenced for seven and half years.³⁰⁶

Extortion has been used by some other representatives of the media staff. For example, in February 2002, Yury Gorbanev, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper the *Soldier of Luck*, was sentenced for one year for money extortion from the director of a driving school in Nizhniy Novgorod. The journalist had written a scandalous story about this school, gone to its director, and said that he would not publish this article only if the director paid him one thousand dollars. The director told this to the Regional Unit of Tackling Organised Crime, and its officers arrested the editor of the newspaper when he was taking the requested money from the director.³⁰⁷

Nadezhda Kurbatova, the editor-in-chief of the leading regional newspaper *Priokskaya Gazeta*, was also accused of extortion in February 2002. Apparently, she asked politicians and businessmen to give her money for not publishing negative articles about them.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Samoylov, A. (2003) "Brat za brata" [Brother in behalf of the brother], *Novaya Gazeta*, 20.11.2003

³⁰⁷ "Redaktor gazeti *Soldat Udachi NN* prigoveren k godu poseleniy za vimogatelstvo" [Editor of newspaper *Soldat Udachi NN* jailed for 1 year of labour camps for extortion], *Nizny.ru*, 30.01.2002, (URL <http://www.nizhny.ru/report27856/>, consulted in July 2003).

³⁰⁸ *Vesti*, 05.02.2002.

4.2.5. *The Use of the Mass Media by Organised Crime Groups*

The ties between the mass media and organised crime groups might be also confirmed by the words of an executive of an agency of investigative journalists about a St. Petersburg businessman, who was linked to *bandits*. The agency published an article that was considered by the businessman as inappropriately portraying him. He called to the agency and required an explanation why the article had been published. The businessman, who allegedly was one of the lords of organised crime, told the journalists that he himself was connected with the mass media and was able to order the publication of articles which would undermine the reputation of the agency.³⁰⁹

The ties of the criminal underworld of St. Petersburg with the news media are known to the people who are involved in the media business. These connections are so numerous that they allowed the criminal lords to fight with one another by means of publishing compromising articles about their criminal competitors. A good example in this regard is the information war, which took place after the murder of Gurevsky.

Gurevsky, 33, was killed by a gun machine when he left his house. He was very influential in the *Tambovskaja* organised crime group, as well as one of the closest friends of Vladimir Kumarin and the godfather of Kumarin's daughter. According to some experts on organised crime in St. Petersburg, Gurevsky was responsible for killing people who preclude the development of the *Tambovskaja* organised crime group.

Yan Gurevsky had grown up in a family without any criminal background. His father was involved in construction business and his mother was an economist. He was a bright person and won a few school awards in mathematics. Although Gurevsky graduated from a good university and served his term in the Red army, he was involved in one of the first cases launched to tackle organised crime in St. Petersburg in 1992. He was charged with extortion of 300 rubles (US\$ 100) from a man who caused damages to Gurevsky's car, and was sentenced for two and half years conditionally. It is reported that

³⁰⁹ Interview with Nikolay, an executive of an agency of investigative journalists, St. Petersburg, August, 2002.

he continued to deny these charges and tried to convince law enforcement agencies that it had been a wrong accusation even after he was freed in 1994.

There were several assumptions with regard to the Gurevsky's murder. Some of them underlined conflicts between Gurevsky and a few other influential people of this group, in particular Boris Ivanov (Bob Incassator), the owner of the hotel Sputnik and night club Relax. However, the most likely cause of this murder was the conflict between Mikhail Glushenko (reportedly, the second in the *Tambovskaja*'s hierarchy) and Vladimir Golubev (Barmaley), one of the shady owners of Adamant (and reportedly the boyfriend of Oksana Fedorova, the former Miss World from St. Petersburg, who used to work as a police officer).

According to some sources, Barmaley decided to become completely independent from *Tambovskie*. However, he was told that his wealth had been created with the help of the criminal group. In order to gain independency Barmaley was asked to pay one million dollars, which is a huge sum of money even for a rich St. Petersburg businessman.

Reportedly, Barmaley was very upset by this, and he tried to hit Glushenko. However, he was beaten himself, tied, and kept behind a moving ship. After this conflict, Barmaley preferred to leave St. Petersburg and temporarily lived in Israel. Some observers believe that the *Tambovskie* decided to take control over Barmaley's business in St. Petersburg. Gurevsky, along with Sergey Tarasov (Taras), was asked to coordinate this process. Some experts believe that they were behind a few bomb explosions in the restaurant Adamant and in a market place in Vasilevsky Island.

Barmaley did not want to leave his business in St. Petersburg without a fight. He is thought to have helped the Unit of Tackling Organised Crime to arrest Tarasov and some of his gangsters. Gurevsky's fate was even worse. He was killed and his killers have never been found.

The events that followed this murder were quite remarkable. A great number of articles about Gurevsky's killing and about organised crime were published in St. Petersburg. Media companies blamed different organised crime groups for breaking up a relatively peaceful consensus reached between the major criminal clans. Some reporters claimed that this was initiated by the *thieves in law*, others argued that this was done by St. Petersburg *bandits*.

For example, the Bureau of Journalistic Investigations published articles which argued that the *Tambovskaia* organised crime group financially supported the city and helped to solve many of its problems. At the same time, some other crime groups were blamed in an attempt to destabilise the situation in St. Petersburg. They were described as being linked to Moscow's *thieves in law* and Berezovsky. These publications clearly intended to put pressure on Kostia Mogila, who was accused of sponsorship of his own media companies, which reportedly included the Agency of Investigative Reporters and the editorial office of the magazine *Your Secret Adviser*.³¹⁰

It was a remarkable moment in the history of the relationship between the mass media and organised crime. First, these events showed that the leaders of criminal underworlds started to try to defend their reputation as businessmen (not as criminals). Second, it showed that the crime lords started to rely on the mass media in order to reach this goal. For example, Vladimir Barsukov (Kumarin), the alleged gang lord of *Tambovskaia* crime group, even published an article in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Smena*, in which he denied any involvement of the gangsters-businessmen of his group in crimes.

Third, these events signified that the news media became a very important instrument in competition between criminal syndicates. It is interesting to note that when the wave of articles with accusations of different criminal groups filled the St. Petersburg mass media, the head of *Tambovskaia* crime group and Kostia Mogila decided to meet each other to prevent irreversible damages to their images of "non-criminal" businessmen. This meeting took place in the hotel Astoria in the centre of St. Petersburg, and apparently a new compromise had been reached.³¹¹

4.3. Illegal Entrepreneurs and the Russian Mass Media

The management of news media was also known to be involved in some illegal or doubtful business enterprises and transactions. This allows us to review some of their

³¹⁰ Maksimov, M. (2000) "Kak khoteli possorit Vladimira Sergeevicha i Konstantina Karlovicha" [Some details of an intention to force Vladimir Sergeevich and Konstantina Karlovich to argue with one another], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 10.

³¹¹ Ibid.

deals in this section. These transactions are the most complicated from a legal viewpoint. That is why only the simplest cases are presented. The first is concerned with corruption of senior managers of St. Petersburg television. The second involves Gusinsky, one of the most powerful media moguls in Russia.

4.3.1. Bella Kurkova

Bella Kurkova, a member of the Russian Parliament and St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, was appointed the director of Channel 5 in 1992. She had had a long career in journalism. She graduated from Leningrad University with a degree in journalism. Then she worked for the newspaper *Sovetskaya Chukotka*. After returning to St. Petersburg, she became the editor of the newspaper *Leninskie Iskri*. Kurkova started her career on television in 1965. Then she was the host of popular shows *Na Politicheskom Olimpe* and *Piatoe Koleso* [The Fifth Wheel]. She worked as an editor of television programmes and then she became the editor-in-chief.

After Kurkova had become the director of Channel 5, she was accused of corruption. First, it became known that she had illegally got a very good apartment in the centre of St. Petersburg. The administration of Channel 5 had sent a letter to Sobchak, the former mayor of St. Petersburg. This letter asked Sobchak to give Kurkova a new accommodation in the centre of St. Petersburg, and he agreed to do so. Because the flats in some districts of St. Petersburg do not cost nearly as much as those in the centre, this decision upset many people in St. Petersburg.

Furthermore, it was found that Kurkova had agreed to give a 35 per cent discount in advertising to an organisation, which was called Commercial Centre TV and Radio. At the same time, this organisation agreed to subsidise another firm, which published the newspaper *Nevsky Glashatay*. In order to prove its sponsorship, the Commercial Centre paid 12 million rubles to Vadim Tareev, the head of the firm. These contracts might not have caused any problems, if Tareev, had not been the husband of Kurkova. This led some members of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly to accuse Kurkova of bribery taking and to ask the prosecutor's office to launch an investigation.

The prosecutor's office managed to obtain the copies of the above-mentioned contracts as well as Tareev's confirmation that he had received the twelve million rubles. In fact, it was discovered that there were two similar confirmations. In the second of them, Tareev also confirmed that he had received twelve million rubles. However, these twelve million rubles had been paid to Tareev by another subsidiary of Channel 5.³¹²

Even this bribery scandal had not been Kurkova's last accusation of corruption. The investigation of the project that aimed to build some houses for the personnel of the television company revealed that the largest part of the project money (which had been taken from the city budget) had dissolved and disappeared in the long chain of contractors. Only a fraction of the money had been spent for the construction of the houses themselves.³¹³

Kurkova was also involved in the scandal about the transferring of US\$ 2 million abroad to the firm TV and Radio St. Petersburg, registered in the United States. The details of this transaction are not clear yet. Kurkova claimed that this money had been stolen by one of her deputies Mikhail Siroezhkin. However, some experts believed that a part of the money transferred abroad returned to some Russian firms linked to Kurkova.

In total, while being the director of Channel 5, Kurkova was accused of mispending 13.7 billion rubles. Although Kurkova always claimed that these accusations were politically motivated, she was sacked from her post in June 1995.

4.3.2. TV Company Samara

The situation with St. Petersburg television is not unique. Some executives of media organisations in other parts of Russia have also been accused of similar crimes. For example, on 15 February 2002, the prosecutor's office of Samara charged Alexander Kniazev, the director of TV company Samara, with fraud. Some business transactions of this company caught the attention of detectives in 1998. They discovered that this company transferred 3.6 million rubles (US\$ 100,000), which it obtained from the local budget, to a few firms.

³¹² Konstantinov, *Corrumptirovanniy Peterburg*, p. 367.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

Although the firms seemed to provide services to this company, it was claimed that the firms themselves used the personnel and equipment of Samara. However, the investigation in this respect was launched only after the beginning of the conflict between Kniazev and Konstantin Titov, the governor of Samara (the regional centre in the middle of Russia). This conflict followed by a series of articles, which were published by several local mass media companies, concerning financial misdoings in the TV company Samara.

After these articles had been published, the prosecutor's office launched its investigation and arrested a few men. One of them was Sergey Ezhov, the Director General of the firm Video International Volga, who used to be the head of the firm Prime Time, which coordinated the transfer of the money from the bank account of the television company Samara to subsidiaries of Prime Time. After that the money was transferred to other companies and finally disappeared.

Ezhov agreed with all accusations and said that he had wanted to inform the prosecutors about this, but Kniazev promised to kill him if he would go to the police. Ezhov's words made the prosecutors invite Kniazev for interrogation. He arrived to the prosecutor's office with his lawyers and bodyguards, but denied to answer any questions due to his right not to do so, written in the article 51 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Kniazev was arrested and released on bail.³¹⁴

4.3.3. Vladimir Gusinsky and Media-Most

The most well known case of fraud in the media business is the case of Gusinsky's Media-Most. Gusinsky, the founder of the group of companies Most, was the owner and the president of Media-Most, the largest of the Russian private media syndicates. Media-Most used to include a few Russian TV channels, several newspapers and magazines.

Gusinsky's political views, in particular with regard to the Chechen war and the conflict in Kosovo, were different from the viewpoints of other Russian influential politicians and officials. In addition, the relationship between Media-Most and its main sponsor Gazprom changed for worse. As a result of this, the Russian prosecutor's office

³¹⁴ "Lesin zagovoril...o svobode slova" [Lesin starts talking about the freedom of speech], *Novaia Gazeta*, 14.02.2002.

launched an investigation into the finance of Media-Most, and Gusinsky lost the controlling stake in this company.

Nevertheless, even after this loss Gusinsky reportedly still owned 30 per cent of NTV, 42.5 per cent of satellite channel NTV+, 48.3 per cent of local television TNT, 25 per cent minus one share of publishing group *Sem Dney* and 14.5 per cent of radio Moscow Echo. According to most recent reports, Gusinsky decided to sell his stake in NTV for allegedly 50 million dollars.

As it has already been noted, Gusinsky has been suspected of several criminal offences. He was charged with alleged fraud associated with his purchase of a state-owned TV channel and the withdrawal of the company's mortgaged assets. On 13 June 2000, Gusinsky was arrested. Having spent three days in prison, he was unexpectedly released on bail. Soon the criminal case against Gusinsky was suspended and he was allowed to go abroad.

In September 2000, a possible reason for this decision was revealed. Gusinsky had sold his Media-Most, along with NTV, to Gazprom. After Gusinsky had left Russia, he claimed that he had been forced to sell Media-Most for nothing under the pressure of law enforcement agencies. Gusinsky announced the deal void and initiated new negotiations with Gazprom. This move made the Prosecutor's Office launch a new investigation. Viacheslav Soltaganov, the head of Federal Tax Police Office, said that the prosecutor's office had very serious proof of Gusinsky's involvement in illegal business.³¹⁵

Gusinsky was repeatedly summoned for interrogation, but he was outside the country, and decided not to attend these meetings. After Russia's request, Gusinsky was placed on the Interpol wanted list and was arrested by Spanish police on 12 December 2000. Russian prosecutors asked to extradite Gusinsky and claimed that they have enough evidence to prove Gusinsky's guilt. On the other hand, Gusinsky's lawyers and supporters argued that his case was politically motivated, and that the Russian presidential team attempted to take Gusinsky's media empire under the state control.

³¹⁵ "Glava FCHP: Spokoynie nochi dlia nashih kapitalistov konchilis", [Head of FTPO: The quiet nights for our capitalists are over], *Lenta.ru*, 14.11.2000.

Three months later, the Spanish Court decided that allegations against Gusinsky were politically motivated, and Gusinsky was freed on 17 March 2001.

4.4. Ties between the Mass Media and the *Administrative Mafia* (Politicians)

Apparently the type of organised crime that consists of politicians and state officials (so-called the *Red Mafia*)³¹⁶ has most links to the Russian mass media and other criminal branches. It should be noted that it is difficult to verify whether scandalous stories regarding politicians are correct, or they are partly falsified in order to prove what the authors of these reports wanted to prove. Nevertheless, this section shows that some Russian leading politicians who are connected with the media might be involved in criminal business.

4.4.1. *Vladimir Yakovlev*

Vladimir Yakovlev was the mayor of St. Petersburg until his resignation in July 2003. Information regarding his ties with the criminal world is taken not only from rumours published in the press. The facts support these rumours. Irina Yakovleva (his wife) was even invited to the headquarters of the FSB, the new KGB, and questioned with regard to a number of cases that involved several businessmen who were connected with the Yakovlevs and their relatives.

Yakovleva used to work as a deputy to the director of one of the best-known cultural sights of St. Petersburg, the Russian Museum. She was responsible for construction and repairs. Then she was the manager of the firm Business Prosperity International, which organised large bank forums for top Russian and European managers. Her husband's position as the vice-mayor of St. Petersburg for construction and development was very useful for both of her jobs. The only reason he was not

³¹⁶ It is least considered as organised crime in the West.

accused of corruption is that it was such a fact of life that people did not recognise it as such.

After Vladimir Yakovlev was elected the mayor of St. Petersburg, his wife established informal ties with some large construction firms. This was mutually beneficial. For example, Yakovleva is thought to have influenced the decision regarding the ownership of a site in the centre of St. Petersburg which used to belong to the Rozhdestvensky bank. This site was taken by the firm Nevsky Syndicate, which was one of the firms linked to Irina Yakovleva.

The link from Yakovleva to Nevsky Syndicate can be extended to its subsidiary firm Severo-Zapadny Souz [North Western Union]. This firm had taken money from many residents of St. Petersburg and promised to pay good interest. However, this did not happen. North Western Union disappeared and its investors lost their money. Interestingly, no criminal investigation was launched concerning the disappearance of this firm.³¹⁷

Another Turkish firm ATA, apparently connected with Yakovleva through the firm Start +T (one of its founders), was involved in several criminal scandals covered by several newspapers in St. Petersburg. Although the deputy to the prosecutor had made a speech at a press conference concerning this and said that there had been no criminal case launched against ATA, it became known later that a case had been opened, but it had been investigated secretly.³¹⁸

Yakovleva was a patron of a few charities in St. Petersburg, such as Peterburgskie Traditsii [Traditions of Peterburg] and Fond Zashiti Materinstva i Detstva [Motherhood and Childhood Defence Foundation]. It took public money from the city budget for buying medical equipment and drugs for children. There were rumours that this equipment and drugs had been bought for half of the money reported. The difference between the declared and spent money had allegedly been spent for personal needs of the people involved in this project. Some officers of the Fond Zashiti Materinstva i Detstva were suspected of corruption in 1999.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Reported by *Stolitsa* in April 2000.

³¹⁸ Irina Yakovleva is also linked to concessions that were given to the firm Lenzhilpromkomplex. Vladimir Yakovlev was the manager of this firm until 1996.

³¹⁹ The Prosecutor Office decided not to launch any investigation in this respect.

Yakovlev's family is connected with some shady businessmen through the contacts of Igor Yakovlev, 33, the son of the former mayor. He is a businessman who is involved in the energy business of St. Petersburg. According to some reports, he has acquired property in Spain and the source of this expensive purchase has not been known.

The major supplier of energy to St. Petersburg used to be the company TEK St. Petersburg, which bought energy from main producers such as Lenenergo and sold it to residents of St. Petersburg. The equipment of TEK St. Petersburg became outdated, and it was decided to reform the whole energy distribution system of St. Petersburg.

Although experts argued that privatisation and de-monopolization of TEK St. Petersburg was hardly necessary, Yakovlev decided to reform it in 2001. As a result of this reform, TEK St. Petersburg was supposed to be reorganised into several firms, which would eventually be privatised. It was suspected that Yakovlev or his friends would control these private firms. The reason for Yakovlev's opponents to argue that such a scenario was a real possibility was based on the previous privatisation of two subsidiaries of TEK St. Petersburg. These two companies were merged, privatised, and transformed into the new private firm Lenteplosnab, which was controlled by Igor Yakovlev, the son of the mayor.³²⁰

The family of Yakovlev might have been connected with criminal lords. Ludmila Narusova, the widow of Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg before Yakovlev, claimed that Yakovlev had established numerous contacts with *bandits*. Although the hate between the families of the two previous mayors is well known, it is possible to find some evidence that this may be true.

For example, Alexander Cheluskin is thought to be a friend of the Yakovlevs. However, since 1984, Cheluskin had been suspected of links to the organised crime group controlled by the brothers Vasilevi. Then he had been suspected of extortion and of being involved in other crimes committed by *Malishevskaja* criminal group.

After a clash between the *Malishevskaja* and *Tambovskaja* groups in December 1989, Malishev³²¹ and Cheluskin left Russia. They applied for asylum in Sweden, but their applications were rejected by the Swedish Home Office. Then Cheluskin was

³²⁰ Kirillov, P. (2001) "Sem 'Ya'" [Seven "Ya"], *Versia*, 26.06.2001.

³²¹ The ganglord of the *Malishevskaja* crime group.

allegedly involved in car trafficking from Poland and Germany to Russia. He was even accused of several contract murders and arrested, but was not charged with any of these offences.

When Malishev and Kudryashov moved to Spain to avoid prosecution and possible revenge for their alleged involvement in the murder of Vladimir Kirpichev, an influential *thief in law*,³²² Cheluskin remained in St. Petersburg. He helped Yakovlev to win the mayor election in 1996. Cheluskin coordinated the activities of Yakovlev's supporters and searched for sponsors. After that he was seen as informal chief of Yakovlev's bodyguards. Cheluskin is believed to have helped the new elected mayor to overcome some conflicts with the representatives of *Kazansky* and *Tambovskaia* organised crime groups.

Although Cheluskin had been suspected of many offences and links to organised crime, the deputy to the Head of the North Western Regional Unit for Tackling Organised Crime ordered to suspend Cheluskin's criminal investigations. It is reported that many his files were deleted. This made many people believe that Cheluskin was protected by someone who is linked to the political elite of St. Petersburg, maybe the mayor itself.³²³

Yakovlev had other friends in the criminal underworld of St. Petersburg, such as Mustafin, Oleynik, Lashmanov and Ebralidze. Konstantin Yakovlev, who has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, was also connected to the family of the mayor (he was not a relative of the mayor's family, though). All the evidence mentioned above allow us to regard Vladimir Yakovlev as a typical representative of the *Red Mafia*.³²⁴

Yakovlev's family and their friends were well connected with the mass media. Konstantin Yakovlev, the President of the Fund for the Development of Television, reportedly controlled financial flows of the major St. Petersburg TV channel. Irina Prudnikova, the former Director General of TRK Peterburg, is thought to be the best friend to Irina Yakovleva, the mayor's wife. Some experts believe that Prudnikova got her post due to Yakovlev's support. In turn, Irina Yakovleva seemed to have become an informal manager of this major television company of St. Petersburg and controlled many of its activities. She even invited some managers from nationwide Moscow TV channels

³²² His nickname was Kirpich [Brick].

³²³ Kirillov, "Sem 'Ya'", 2001.

³²⁴ Vladimir Yakovlev resigned from the post of the mayor of St. Petersburg in July 2003.

to work for this company. One of these managers, Maxim Yakovlev from ORT, was appointed the first deputy to the Director General of TRK Peterburg.

4.4.2. Boris Berezovsky

Although all people whose stories have been reviewed in this chapter are remarkable, Boris Berezovsky is a very special personage even among them. Berezovsky used to be one of the major Russian media moguls, and he continues to own shares of some nationwide newspapers and TV companies. In addition, Berezovsky used to be one of the most powerful Russian politicians: he was linked to the family of the previous Russian President and influenced many aspects of the Russian foreign and domestic policies.

The status of a high-ranking politician did not prevent Berezovsky from being accused of connections with all types of organised crime. Because of these allegations he was placed on Russia's wanted list. The Russian prosecutor's office asked the British Home Office to extradite Berezovsky and his business partner Julian Dubov. London's Magistrates Court discussed the validity of these accusations but ruled out that they were politically motivated. Nevertheless, a new criminal investigation regarding Berezovsky was launched in Switzerland in December 2003. This section reviews the biography of this remarkable man and his ties with the Russian mass media and organised crime.

Berezovsky was a representative of the Soviet elite. He was a doctor of mathematical science and worked for a rather important state organisation. However, after the launch of *perestroika*, Berezovsky decided to change his life. He became a very successful businessman, and managed to secure a high post in the Russian government.

Berezovsky started his business career by importing western computer software. However, his real business success was the establishment of the firm Logovaz that traded cars of Avtovaz, the leading Russian car plant in Toliati. Logovaz soon became the major Avtovaz's car dealer. However, it was by no means Berezovsky's main source of income. Berezovsky's success was a result of his business projects in banking, oil and aluminum business, as well as an involvement with the business of the state airline company

Aeroflot. In 1997, *Forbes* named him the ninth most powerful businessman in the world. Berezovsky fortune was rated at US\$ 3 billion.³²⁵

Berezovsky is one of major owners of the Russian news media. Actually, his involvement into the media business started with large advertising campaigns for Logovaz. In this process, Berezovsky extensively used advertising campaign, which resulted in establishing and strengthening his links to the management of leading Russian mass media companies. Although Berezovsky did not own any media outlets at that time, he had established numerous contacts with the editors of the leading Moscow news organisations, which helped him gain a high political status.

In particular, Berezovsky had a good relationship with Yumashev, the deputy to the editor of *Ogonyok*. Yumashev was the biographer of Yeltsin, the Russian President at that time, and a close friend of Yeltsin's family (later he married Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana Dyachenko). Yumashev recommended Berezovsky to Yeltsin as a possible major sponsor and publisher of Yeltsin's book *Zapiski Prezidenta* [Presidential Notes]. Berezovsky is believed to have used the payments to Yeltsin as a tool to strengthen his position in the Kremlin.

In the 1990s Berezovsky became a senior adviser to Yeltsin and was appointed to the post of Deputy Secretary of the Security Council. He played a key role in implementing the 1996 Peace Agreement between Russia and Chechen separatists. Also, he played a leading role during talks between the Russian government and Chechen rebels concerning hostages taken by them.³²⁶

The informal ties with the Russian President allowed Berezovsky to promote his supporters into the top management of ORT, the leading Russian TV channel. Since then, Berezovsky's media empire continuously expanded. In 2000, Berezovsky owned 49 per cent of the largest Russian television channel ORT and a number of leading nationwide newspapers.

This allowed Berezovsky to play a very important role in the 1996 presidential election, when he, along with other oligarchs, rescued President Yeltsin from well expected defeat. Berezovsky's media companies helped him in parliamentary elections in

³²⁵ Gentleman, A. (2000) "Oligarch hits out at his Kremlin monster", *The Guardian*, 21.12.2000.

³²⁶ Reported by *Transition on Line*.

1999, when he won a seat in the Russian Parliament, which could have saved him from criminal prosecution.

Paradoxically, Berezovsky's dominance in the media world seemed to have fastened his fall in 2000. It is well recognized that ORT news programmes effectively eliminated key rivals of Vladimir Putin during the presidential election in 2000, and it helped Putin to be elected. However, despite this support, Putin launched a campaign against some of the oligarchs who had flourished during Yeltsin's presidency. Berezovsky had the bad luck to be one of them.

It is believed that the major conflict between Putin and Berezovsky happened when ORT covered the tragic events regarding the Russian submarine in 2000. In fact, one of the ORT reports accused the Russian government of using illegal (if not to say criminal) means to lessen the protest of the families of those who perished during the tragic accident. Berezovsky has claimed that Putin called him and said that if Berezovsky did not change his views (and his ORT - its coverage) it would cost him his TV company.

Soon afterwards, the Russian courts stripped Berezovsky of some of his media outlets. In order to avoid charges, Berezovsky sold his shareholding in ORT. During this process, he also lost many of his people in leading positions in this major Russian TV company. In July 2000, Berezovsky resigned from his seat in the Russian Parliament because of his protest against what he saw as Putin's "authoritarian trends." In turn, Russian prosecutors probed some of his business transactions, and Berezovsky decided to leave Russia as he did not want to be a "political prisoner."³²⁷

Berezovsky did not want to lose his influence over the Russian media even being outside the country. In order to compensate his loss, Berezovsky decided to buy the controlling stake in TV-6, which was the fourth major TV channel in Russia. He skilfully used the situation at NTV, and when the personnel of NTV was thinking about the possibility of working under the new management appointed by Gazprom, Berezovsky invited them to work for his channel TV-6. Some of NTV's staff, including its executive director Evgeniy Kiselyov, accepted this offer. However, the licence of TV-6 was soon

³²⁷ URL <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,414070,00.html>, consulted in December 2002.

cancelled by the Ministry of the Press and Television of the Russian Federation, and Berezovsky's company was banned from broadcasting.

In addition to TV- 6, Berezovsky owned shares of STS, a Moscow TV channel, which can be considered as the fifth most important TV channel in Russia. Berezovsky still has a stake in the newspaper *Kommersant*, the leading Russian business daily, and the *Independent Newspaper*. Berezovsky controls Cityline and the news website *Grani.ru*.³²⁸ There were non-confirmed reports that Berezovsky planned to create the biggest Russian Internet corporation that would join three telecommunication companies Cityline, Golden Telecom, and Sovintel.³²⁹

Berezovsky was allegedly involved in many illegal affairs. He was accused of money laundering, frauds, murders and corruption. These accusations were so serious that the Russian Prosecutor's Office launched a series of investigations regarding Berezovsky. After Berezovsky's escape from Russia, he was placed on the international wanted list and arrested by the British police.

Surprisingly, the current prosecutor's investigation refers to the beginning of Berezovsky's business career, when he established close ties with the managers of Avtovaz, the leading Russia's car producing plant. In particular, Berezovsky became a good friend of Kadannikov, the director of this plant.

Berezovsky used his ties with Kadannikov in order to launch a trade scheme that was considered later by the Russian prosecutors to be a large-scale fraud and money laundering scheme. It refers to the contract between Avtovaz and Berezovsky's firm Logovaz. According to that contract, Logovaz took several thousands of cars to sell and promised to pay for them after they would be sold. This trade scheme proved to be a success and Logovaz soon became the major trading dealer of Avtovaz. However, it has been revealed that the price that Logovaz paid for these cars was several times cheaper than their market value and even well below their production costs.

To make the matter worse, the prosecutor's office claims that the money for 2033 cars was not returned to Avtovaz and to the Administration of the Samara region at all. In other words, the local budget of the Administration was defrauded of 60 billion rubles

³²⁸ "Berezovsky's plans to create Internet holding are 'an enemy invention'", *Allnews.ru*, 30.11.2001, (URL <http://allnews.ru/>, consulted in May 2003).

³²⁹ Ibid.

(US\$ 1.9 billion).³³⁰ It is claimed that some of this sum (7.5 billion rubles) was spent for three villas in the Odintsovo district of the Moscow region. These villas are believed to have been bought for Logovaz's managers Krasneker and Ismailov. The third villa was left on the balance of Logovaz, apparently for Berezovsky himself. It used to be the villa of Tikhonov, the former chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. The villa cost more than one milliard rubles and it was later used by one of Berezovsky's daughters.

In addition, 5.1 billion rubles were spent for Berezovsky's office on Morskaya Street in St. Petersburg.³³¹ Other money earned in this business project was reportedly used by Berezovsky for purchasing shares in leading Russian media companies. It is believed that nine billion rubles were paid for a stake in ORT (now Channel One). One and a half billion rubles were spent for acquiring shares of TV-6, and 3 billion rubles allegedly were used for buying *Ogonyok*, a popular Russian magazine.³³²

Another of Berezovsky's schemes, which can be seen as a large-scale fraud, was his project to produce a new Russian car that might have been affordable for most Russian citizens. The idea was not bad at all, as the market price of the produced cars had been higher than an average Russian could save in a decade. Evidently, such a big project was impossible without political support. Berezovsky had this support because he was a friend of Yeltsin's family, and the project was advertised as a state programme to support the domestic car industry.

However, the project *AVVA* turned out to be a typical *financial pyramid*. *Financial pyramids* were fraudulent financial schemes that were used in Russia by some firms in order to take money from citizens without paying promised dividends. In fact, these firms did not pay to their investors (*vkladchikam*) at all, but spent the money of their investors for advertising campaigns that aimed to attract new investors. Then these firms disappeared and the investors were neither able to find the firms' founders nor to claim the return of their investments.

The outcome of Berezovsky's campaign to collect investments for the *AVVA* project was very much the same. Nationwide advertising campaigns encouraged many

³³⁰ *Gazeta.ru*, 26.03.2003.

³³¹ "Prosecutor's office accuses Berezovsky of stealing 2,000 *zhiguley*", *Ntvru.com*, 11.09.2002.

³³² *Gazeta.ru*, 26.03.2003.

Russians to buy *AVVA*'s vouchers. However, the investors were later told that the investment required to launch the production of the new car had not been achieved. The new car has never been produced and most of the investors have never seen their money.

Berezovsky's business projects with Avtovaz could not avoid being involved in conflicts or cooperation with organised crime groups. Car business was very profitable and, according to many reports, the output of Avtovaz was divided between several local organised crime groups. Conflicts between these groups often resulted in shooting and murders. The gangster wars around Avtovaz at the beginning of the 1990s have been described by local newspapers, and some episodes of the struggle between them has been recently filmed by one of the major Russian TV channels.

Berezovsky traded cars in Moscow, which was divided between different criminal syndicates. Berezovsky was thought to have had good contacts with the Chechen gang. It does not necessarily mean that he wanted to establish those ties. Organised crime groups were very powerful in Moscow, and in order to defend their own business, many businessmen decided to pay one of them in a hope to avoid an intervention from the others.

In any case, Berezovsky seemed to have good ties with one of the most powerful criminal syndicates in Moscow. Some conflicts with the representatives of other criminal groups finished in his favour. One of the bloodiest shooting of 1993 took place next to the main office of Berezovsky's Logovaz on Leninsky Prospect next to the cinema Kazakhstan in Moscow. Igor Ovchinnikov, one of the lords of the *Solntsevskaja* organised crime group, and his gangsters arrived at this place in three expensive cars and started gun shooting. Berezovsky's security officers shoot back. As a result of this armed conflict, three men, including Ovchinnikov himself, were killed and six other injured. Berezovsky's bodyguards, or Chechens, won this conflict.³³³

Berezovsky's ties with the Chechens allowed detectives to accuse him of being involved in several contract killings. One of them is the murder of Vladislav Listev, the Director General of ORT. When Berezovsky increased his political status, he tried to gain

³³³ Klebnikov, P. (2001) *Krestniy Otets Kremliia Boris Berezovsky, ili Istoria Razgrablenia Rossii* [Godfather of the Kremlin: Boris Berezovsky and the looting of Russia]. Moscow: Detective Press, p. 16.

control over ORT, the leading Russian TV channel with an 80 million audience. Some experts believed that this Berezovsky's target forced him to kill Listev on 1 March 1995.

Listev was the anchorman of the most popular shows *Vzgliad* [Look], *Pole Chudes* [The Wonder Field], *Tema* [Topic], and *Chas Pik* [Rush Hour]. In February 1995, Listev was appointed the Director General of ORT. Immediately after his appointment Listev ordered to take away all advertising on this TV channel, and was found shot dead with US\$ 800³³⁴ in his pocket in the entrance to his house only few days afterwards.

Berezovsky was one of the people who were most suspected of this murder. Some witnesses remembered that Berezovsky had wanted to have Irena Lesnevskaja, one of his supporters, in Listev's post. It was a very lucrative position. The Director General could control all advertising revenue. At that time, the largest part of advertising money was so-called "cherny nal" [black cash]. In other words, this money was not formally paid or transferred through banks and, consequently, was tax-free. Many businessmen wanted to take up this money, including Berezovsky.

Some of the witnesses revealed that Berezovsky had frequently argued with Listev, and one of the conflicts had happened a few days before the killing. Also, it was very suspicious that Berezovsky had flown to London just a few hours before Listev's murder. In addition, law enforcement agencies found the evidence that Berezovsky had paid a big sum of money to a *thief in law* at that time. Berezovsky's explanation that this money was given in order to find the people who coordinated an attempt to kill him did not satisfy the detectives at all.³³⁵ Since 1995, the Russian Prosecutor's Office has been repeating that Berezovsky might have ordered to kill Listev, and that they have gained some new evidence of his involvement.³³⁶

³³⁴ A two-year salary of an average Russian at that time.

³³⁵ This attempted murder took place on 7 June, 1994. Berezovsky's car was exploded and his bodyguard was killed, but Berezovsky was just slightly injured.

³³⁶ "Ustanovleni ubiytsi zhurnalista Vlada Listeva" [Vlad Listev's killers are identified], *Novaia Gazeta*, 21.02.2002, (URL <http://news.ng.ru/2002/02/21/1014284197.html>).

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined relations between the Russian mass media and organised crime. As it had been shown in the previous chapter, the Russian media is very vulnerable to the pressure from various powerful groups. Not surprisingly, there is some evidence of connections between the Russian news media and criminal organisations.

Some of the lords of organised crime became owners of media companies. A simple explanation might suggest that *thieves in law* and *bandits* are involved in legal businesses and often try to hide their criminal background. The ownership of media companies could help them improve their political and social statuses. In addition, it could allow these criminals/businessmen to reduce transaction costs for their commercial projects. In other words, the control of some media organisations increases their chances to gain political and economic advantages over their rivals.

To some extent, the management of media companies is also involved in illegal transactions. It has been shown, that the complex reality of capitalist reforms in Russia encouraged some of the managers of the news media to seek economic profit from their positions and being either part of *illegal entrepreneurs* or the *administrative Mafia*.

The main objective of this chapter is to show the existence of different ties between organised crime and the mass media in Russia. Numerous examples of this chapter have proved this. Certainly, any connections between organised crime and the media can hardly be considered appropriate for any healthy society. However, regardless of whether it is good or bad, it has been the reality in Russia in the last few decades.

Chapter 5

Difficulties of Reporting on Organised Crime in Russia

Journalism has always been a dangerous profession. Many reporters and journalists have been beaten, kidnapped, or even killed.³³⁷ One of the most recent examples in this respect is the murder of Daniel Pearl, a journalist for the *Wall Street Journal*. The dangers are especially true with regard to Russian journalists, particularly those who write stories on organised crime and corruption. “We leave under continuous pressure. We are prosecuted, threatened, and killed,” claimed one well-known Russian journalist during the interview.³³⁸

The previous chapter has shown the presence of ties between organised crime and the mass media. In addition, there is a wide range of methods that can be used in order to put pressure on the media, as it has been outlined in Chapter 3. Lastly, sometimes it is difficult to decide whether some economic action or actors are linked to organised crime or not. This makes the work of journalists reporting on organised crime and corruption very difficult.

This chapter presents a summary of the main problems encountered by Russian journalists. In my opinion, they are mostly caused by the *administrative Mafia* and *bandits*. The *administrative Mafia* relies heavily on legal action (the use of the court and law enforcement agencies) while the *bandits* prefer to use violence. An additional problem for journalists may be brought about by ethical issues. Many published stories can strongly affect the careers, health, and even lives of those in the report. As it is not always clear in each particular case whether the accusations of corruption or links to organised crime have been accurate, some journalists might feel themselves morose because of being a possible cause of such a tragic event.

First, this chapter describes the problems while searching for data on organised crime. Then, it reviews the legal cases that involve Russian journalists and summarises the cases of violence against them, including serious crimes such as murder. Finally, it

³³⁷ Many criminal offences against journalists are reported by *IFEX Communiqué*. Data for 2004 can be found in (2005) *Journalists and Media Staff Killed in 2004: An IFJ Report on Media Casualties in the Field of Journalism and Newsgathering*, The International Federation of Journalists.

³³⁸ Interview with Elena, a newspaper journalist, London, August 2003.

gives an example of ethical problems faced by some media companies of St. Petersburg while reporting corruption and organised crime.

5.1. Difficulties of Data Collection and Verification

Journalists writing criminal stories encounter many problems. The first set are the difficulties the journalists face while seeking for data on organised crime and corruption. Because links with organised crime or involvement in corrupt practices are illegal, any information about them is hidden. To complicate matters even more, a lot of Russian media companies have financial difficulties and, consequently, limited capacities to use cash as a reward to their sources, which makes the task of finding sources for the information on organised crime and corruption difficult.

Search for data might also be stopped by law enforcement agencies. For example, Alexey Malkov, along with some other reporters of NTV, was held by the police at Kazansky Vokzal [Kazan train station] on 15 March 2002 while they filmed an action of a unit of RUBOP (Regional Unit to Tackle Organised Crime). The police explained this arrest by claiming that the reporters did not have special permission to film at this place (according to the Russian Law, it is illegal to film at train stations without special permission). However, the management of NTV pointed out that their reporters filmed outside the Kazan train station and, consequently, the intervention of the police could not be justified.³³⁹

The verification of the data is another problem. Reliability of reports is essential for the mass media. This means that the data obtained should be checked and verified. Without such a test, there is a risk of airing some false reports. For example, on 30 August 2001, Pavel Lisovsky, a technical director of the firm Pomon, phoned to the headquarters of NTV at St. Petersburg and said that he was a gangster. According to Lisovsky, his criminal group intended to organise some bomb attacks on train stations Moskovskaya–Sortirovochnaya and Kupchino.

³³⁹ Reported by *Lenta.Ru*, 16.03.2002.

Lisovsky said that he wanted to reveal that information in order to prevent the attacks. However, when some officers of UFSB (Department of Federal Security), invited by NTV, checked out the Lisovsky's words, they discovered that it was completely untrue. Later Lisovsky admitted that the real reason for reporting the false story was that he had just liked to be in the spotlight.³⁴⁰

This example not only demonstrates that any data has to be checked before it can be published or broadcast, but also that it is very unwise for respondents to present inaccurate information (Lisovsky was forced to pay 35,000 rouble (\$1,000) compensation to NTV). However, the verification of information is an additional problem because there is considerable conspiracy around corruption and organised crime. Very few people would admit their involvement in illegal activities without very strong reasons.

Although the problems of searching and verifying data for reports on illegal activities are very important for journalists, they are not explored in more detail because these issues are rather marginal to the goals of this thesis. Instead, this chapter focuses on the problems that journalists are likely to face after their stories on organised crime and corruption were published or broadcast. They are examined in the following sections.

5.2. Difficulties Associated with Law Enforcement

If the people mentioned in a report on corruption or organised crime feel offended, they can claim compensation through law. If the people in the reports consider that the facts which have been noted in these publications are false, they can sue the media organisation that has published or aired these reports. It forces Russian investigative agencies and media companies to employ well qualified lawyers in order to win these disputes.³⁴¹ This section presents several examples which show how often legal methods are used in Russia.

³⁴⁰ "Telefonniy terrorist raskaialsia" [Telephone terrorist changed his mind], *Lenpravda.ru*, 30.08.2001, (URL <http://lenpravda.ru/newsarch.phtml?cat=3&day=30&month=08&year=01#838>, consulted in September 2001).

³⁴¹ Interview with Evgeniy, an investigative journalist, St. Petersburg, April, 1999.

Let us start with Berezovsky's claim that he was brought into disrepute by an article in *Forbes*. This article on the state of criminality in Russia during Yeltsin's presidency was written by Paul Klebnikov. It implied that Berezovsky was a gangster boss who had amassed his fortune by large-scale fraud and intimidation. The article also assumed that Berezovsky killed many of his political and business rivals. While this case was still on going, in July 2001, *Forbes* was forced to pay US\$ 250,000 to Berezovsky.³⁴² Finally, in 2003, *Forbes* admitted that it could not prove many points of the article, and published its apologies.

In November 2001, Mezhhregionalnaya Kolegiya Advokatov³⁴³ (MKA) Klishin and Partners sued Andrey Karaulov, the director and anchorman of the show *Moment Istini* [The moment of truth] and the TV company TVTC, one of Moscow's leading TV channels, which broadcast the show. MKA Klishin and Partners claimed that its reputation was significantly damaged by one of the clips of the show which portrayed Khimprom, a chemical enterprise in Chuvashiya (one of the autonomous republics in Russia), as a firm bought by MKA Klishin and Partners.

According to Karaulov, the MKA Klishin and Partners had an agreement to manage a 26 per cent stake in Khimprom, which gave them 16 million rouble profit per month. On the contrary, MKA Klishin and Partners denied having any stake in *Khimprom*, and the registration department confirmed this. As a result, Karaulov, Nikolay Ivanov (a representative of Chuvashiya in the Council of Federations), and General-Lieutenant Sergey Voronov (an officer of the FSB, who also participated in the show) were accused of slander.

In fact, it was not the first libel case won by MKA Klishin and Partners against a Russian media organisation. In the summer of 2001, the TV channel RTR was supposed to apologise and to correct its similar report regarding MKA Klishin and Partners, and so did the newspaper *Novie Izvestia* on 13 October 2001.³⁴⁴

Karaulov was also involved in other legal hearings. On 6 June 2002, Sergey Darkin, the governor of the Primorsky Kray, sued Karaulov and his show *Moment Istini*

³⁴² For example, URL http://www.sem40.ru/politics/berez_15.shtml, consulted in June 2002.

³⁴³ Association of Solicitors.

³⁴⁴ Balutenko, M. (2001) "Oshibka Karaulova: Na *Moment istini* podali v sud" [Karaulov's mistake: *Moment Istini* is sued], *Vremia Novostey*, 19.11.2001, (URL <http://www.tvc.ru/anons/error.html>, consulted in November 2001).

over Karaulov's comments on a video clip that showed Darkin partying with his friends on the ship *Lubov Orlova* ten years ago. On the show, Karaulov said that the video clip had been filmed during a birthday party of one of Vladivostok's criminal lords. In addition, Karaulov told viewers that the ship of one of Darkin's advisors injured an eleven-year-old girl. The official representatives of the Administration of the Primorsky Krai claimed that Karaulov's report was inaccurate and pressed charges against him.³⁴⁵

The above case illustrates an aspect of the relationship between the news media and public authorities. Another example is the dispute between the Administration of St. Petersburg and the newspaper *Kommersant-St. Petersburg*. On 4 March 2002, Alexander Afanasev, the spokesman for the governor of St. Petersburg, brought Alexander Samoilov, a correspondent of the newspaper *Kommersant-St. Petersburg*, to the Frunzensky Federal Court. Afanasev claimed compensation from Samoilov and from the newspaper because he considered himself seriously offended by the report, published in the newspaper on 5 February 2002, regarding an incident with Ivan Korniev, the director of St. Petersburg Zoo, in which Korniev was severely injured.

It was well known that Ivan Korniev was "an enemy" of Yakovlev, the mayor of St. Petersburg. The newspaper story implied that the incident was organised by people linked to Yakovlev. On the day the story was published, Afanasev paid a visit to the headquarters of *Kommersant-St. Petersburg* and asked its editors to explain their reasons for publishing the story. Two weeks after the incident, Afanasev published an open letter in the weekly *Argumenti i Fakti-St. Petersburg* and submitted his case to the Frunzensky Court, claiming a compensation of fifty thousand rubles (US\$ 17,000) from the newspaper.³⁴⁶

Even people who are allegedly linked to organised crime can press charges against the mass media. For example, on 24 April 2002, Yury Shutov, a member of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly and a crime lord, sued journalist Denis Terentev and the newspaper *Vecherny Peterburg* [Evening Petersburg]. Shutov claimed that the stories about his involvement in the business of organised crime, published by the newspaper, were false.

³⁴⁵ *Lenta.Ru*, 7.06.2002.

³⁴⁶ Vishnevsky, B. (2002) "Zhenskie istorii Vladimira Yakovleva [Women's stories of Vladimir Yakovlev]", *Novaia Gazeta*, 21.02.2002.

It should be noted that Shutov has sued quite a few people and newspapers in this respect. He pressed charges against Ludmila Narusova, the wife of Sobchak (the former mayor of St. Petersburg and Shutov's adversary), the newspaper *Argumenti i Fakti*, and the Agency of Business News (ABN). On 16 May 2002, he sued the newspaper *Novaia Gazeta* [New Newspaper] because he believed that some of the stories in the newspaper portraying him as a gangster were untrue.³⁴⁷ Also, Shutov sued the journal *Vne Zakona* [Outside the Law] because it published Terentev's story "Shutov's Case: A Publicly Elected *Pakhan* [Godfather]."³⁴⁸

Due to Shutov's involvement in the media business³⁴⁹ he was also sued on similar grounds. Grigory Yavlinsky, a prominent Russian politician, pressed charges against Shutov and the newspaper *Noviy Peterburg* [New Peterburg] with regards to the damage caused to his reputation by Shutov's words about him and his political party Yabloko [Apple] published in the newspaper on 17 December 1998.³⁵⁰ Yavlinsky considered those words to be offensive, distasteful, and incorrect. He demanded 100,000 rubles (US\$ 3,300) compensation from Shutov and 250,000 rubles (US\$ 8,000) from the newspaper.

As it has been shown, there are connections between organised crime, corrupt officialdom, and the mass media in Russia. As a result of this, sometimes media organisations sue one another. For example, on 28 May 2002, the information agency Rosbalt sued Alexander Afanasev, the spokesman for Yakovlev (the mayor of St. Petersburg), and the TV company Peterburg of slander. Rosbalt claimed that Ekaterina Dodzina, a reporter for the TV company Peterburg, wrongly accused the information agency of discrediting some of the officials of the St. Petersburg Administration in the film *The Unfinished Case of Valery Malishev* shown in May 2002. Tatyana Chesnikova, the editor of Rosbalt, said that the television company Peterburg "practically accused our agency of an informational campaign against Malishev that might have caused his death. We consider this accusation to be false and it damages the reputation of our agency. Rosbalt insists that the TV company Peterburg must apologize and publicly correct their

³⁴⁷ "Yury Shutov budet suditsia s *Novoy Gazetoy*" [Yury Shutov is going to sue *Novaia Gazeta*], *Fontanka.ru*, 16.05.2002.

³⁴⁸ "Ocherednoy isk Yuriya Shutova k zhurnalistam" [Yury Shutov sues journalists again], *Fontanka.ru*, 22.05.2002.

³⁴⁹ Yury Shutov published many his articles in the newspaper *Noviy Petersburg* [New Peterburg].

³⁵⁰ Shutov, Y. (1998) "Kto takoy Grigoriy Iavlinskiy, chto takoe Iabloko" [Who is Grigory Iavlisnky, what is Yabloko], *Noviy Peterburg*, 17.12.1998.

previous statements.”³⁵¹ Chesnikova also said that Rosbalt was going to sue another media outlet, the website *Flb.ru*.³⁵²

Law enforcement agencies can intervene in the activities of the news media in several ways. For example, in 1999 the St. Petersburg Prosecutor’s Office launched an investigation into the brothers Shevchenko (Vyacheslav and Sergey), who were members of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly and owners of a few media companies. They were accused of the extortion of US\$ 10,000 and the publication rights of the magazine *Televik* (*Televik* is a combination of Russian and English words, meaning “television week”) from the publisher Maxim Kuzakhmetov, and of the extortion of US\$5,000 from Vladimir Kuznetsov, a correspondent of the newspaper *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti*. As a result of this, Vyacheslav Shevchenko, who had already finished his term in office in the Legislative Assembly, preferred to leave St. Petersburg for an undisclosed location, while Sergey Shevchenko was arrested in spite of having immunity as a member of the Legislative Assembly.

On 15 November 2001, the Kuybishevsky Federal Court of St. Petersburg conditionally jailed Sergey Shevchenko for seven-and-a-half years - due to his illness and the necessity to take care of his small child. On 19 February 2002, Shevchenko appealed against the court verdict. On the same day, the St. Petersburg Prosecutor’s Office also appealed against this ruling, but because of its leniency. The Kuybishevsky Federal Court heard the arguments of both sides of the case and upheld the original verdict.

Law enforcement agencies react quickly, especially when a media report criticizes their activities or performance. For example, on 1 March 2002, Alexey Andreev, the editor of the newspaper *Noviy Peterburg*, was accused of the dissemination of false information regarding the senior officers of the Prosecutor’s Office, and of an intervention in the private life of its personnel. The Prosecutor’s Office pressed charges against Andreev because of two anonymous reports published in the newspaper. These stories were interviews with the above-mentioned Shutov, in which he insisted that Ivan Sidoruk, the head of the Prosecutor’s Office in St. Petersburg and his deputy Nikolay

³⁵¹ “Rosbalt budet suditsia s Alexandrom Afanasevim i TRK Peterburg” [Rosbalt to be sued by Alexander Afanasev], *Fontanka.ru*, (URL <http://www.fontanka.ru/society.shtml?mday=29&mon=5&year=2002&id=75885293>, consulted in September 2003).

³⁵² *Kommersant-SPb*, 30.05.2002.

Vinnichenko, along with investigators Vladimir Kirilenko, Natalia Litvinova, Alexey Dudkin and Sergey Tcutcuriak, were bribed by some criminal lords (*avtoritetami*) in order to force the Prosecutor's Office to press charges against their (gangsters') adversaries. The Prosecutor's Office had charged the newspaper with slander and Andreev received a two-year sentence.³⁵³

On 6 March 2002, the Prosecutor's Office in Samara, a large Russian industrial city, launched an investigation against Alexander Kniazev, the chairman of the local TV company VGTRK. He was accused of fraud and the intimidation of witnesses. Kniazev was temporarily dismissed for the time of the investigation.³⁵⁴

On 4 March 2002, Chernov, the Chairman of the Krasnodarsky Regional Court, pressed charges against *Novaia Gazeta*. Chernov said that the article "Lie Down, The Court is in Session!" caused damages to his reputation and he claimed US\$ 10 million compensation from *Novaia Gazeta*. The Basmanniy Court of Moscow ruled that the newspaper had to pay the money, even though the fine would be the size of the annual budget of the newspaper. In other words, the newspaper was literally shut down as a result of its negative reporting on the court.

This chapter does not describe the legal procedures against Media-Most in detail because they have already been reviewed in the previous chapters. However, it is possible to add that Anton Titov, the finance director of Media-Most, was accused of a 5 billion rouble fraud, and was remanded in custody until he died.³⁵⁵

On 1 April 2002, Igor Zotov, the deputy to the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* [the Independent Newspaper] was accused of slander for publishing the story "One million dollar prohibition to leave" in November 2001. The story claimed that some of the court workers of the Moscow Meshansky Court were paid for helping Anatoly Bikov (reportedly the lord of organised crime in Krasnoyarsk) to be released on bail. Although the story was signed by Alena Tarasova, Zotov was the editor for the issue on that day and the Prosecutor's Office decided that he was mainly responsible for the

³⁵³ The website of the party Zemlia Rossii [Soil of Russia], (URL <http://www.zr21.narod.ru>, consulted in June 2003).

³⁵⁴ "Lesin zagovoril...o svobode slova" [Lesin starts talking about the freedom of speech], *Novaia Gazeta*, 14.02.2002.

³⁵⁵ *Lenta.ru*, 13.03.2002.

story, and could be tried in accordance with the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation for the dissemination of untrue information regarding law enforcement agencies.³⁵⁶

Law enforcement agencies accused the mass media of the infringement of quite a few laws. The data in Table 5.1 demonstrate this and shows the comparative frequency of the accusations.

Table 5.1 Accusation of the Mass Media of the Infringement of law from 1997 to 1999

Infringements	1997		1998		1999	
		%		%		%
Defamation, Damages to Reputation	255	72.9	406	64.7	417	49.6
Intrusion in Private Life	37.0	10.5	14.0	2.2	16.0	1.9
Infringements associated with political advertisement during election campaigns.	14.0	4.0	55.0	8.9	101	12.0
License and Registration Infringements	18.0	5.1	89.0	14.2	219	26.1
Infringement of the Law on Advertising	9.0	2.6	21.0	3.3	24.0	2.9
The use of the media for criminal purposes	9.0	2.6	22.0	3.5	58.0	6.9
Other infringements	8.0	2.3	20.0	3.2	5.0	0.6
Total	350	100	627	100	840	100

Source: Glasnost Defence Foundation.

Although it seems paradoxical, law enforcement agencies can and do interfere with journalistic investigations on organised crime. For example, on 30 November 2001, Evgeniy Vishenkov, a deputy to the director of St. Petersburg Agency of Investigative Reporters (AIR), was arrested for the kidnapping of a student of a St. Petersburg university. The Agency of Investigative Reporters defended Vishenkov by saying that he was involved in the investigation of several murders that took place in St. Petersburg in the autumn 2001. Vishenkov, along with other reporters of the agency, met the people who might have committed the killings. One of those suspected of the killings was the student, and he had agreed to come to their office and be interviewed (this agreement and the interview were audio-taped). During the talks the journalists concluded that he could be involved in the killings, and invited some of the officers of the Department of

³⁵⁶ *Lenta.ru*, 02.04.2002.

Criminal Justice of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs to take part in the interview. After the interview, the officers charged the student with conspiracy to kill and arrested him.³⁵⁷ This case demonstrates that even when the interests of investigative journalists and detectives coincide, the former can be persecuted by another department of the law enforcement.

Finally, it should be noticed that such law enforcement practices against the mass media are used not only in Russia but also in many countries of the former Soviet Union. For example, on 20 June 2002, Viktor Ivashkevich, the editor-in-chief of the weekly *Rabochy* [The Worker] was charged with libel against the president of Belarus as a result of Ivashkevich's article published in 2001. It was called "A Thief Must Go to Prison" and it accused Lukashenka of economic crimes. The police of Belarus confiscated all copies of that edition.

On 24 June 2002, Mikola Markevich and Pavel Mazheika of *Pahonia* [Pursuit], a regional, privately owned newspaper, were charged with "defamation of character" of Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Belarus, and received a two-and-a-half year sentence, and two years of work in labour camps. According to the judge, the journalists got a relatively easy punishment just because one of them had two under-age children, and another journalist was only twenty-four years old.

The journalists were held after *Pahonia*, edited by Markevich, published a Mazheika's article blaming Lukashenka for the unexplained disappearances of some of his political opponents. This edition never reached the public because it had been immediately seized by the police. After Lukashenka was re-elected as the President of Belarus, the newspaper *Pahonia* was shut down and an investigation against Markevich and Mazheika was launched.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ "Ofitsialnoe zaiavlenie Agenstva jurnalistkikh rassledovaniy" [An official statement of the Agency of Investigative Reporters], *Fontanka.ru*, 30.11.2001, (URL <http://www.fontanka.ru/?map=incidents&mday=30&mon=11&year=2001&id=60269290>, consulted in October 2003).

³⁵⁸ Znatkevich, A. (2002) "Belarusian journalists jailed for libel", *Transition on Line*, 26.06.2002.

5.3. Serious Crimes against Journalists

The previous section has reviewed various problems caused by the use of legal procedures against the Russian mass media. However, no matter how severe were the verdicts of law, they do not normally impose a threat to the lives of the journalists, reporters and the management of the media. Unfortunately, there are organisations and people who find it possible to cause even more serious damages to the media staff.

Many reporters, journalists, and managers of the media have been assaulted or even killed. According to the data of the organisation Reporters without Boundaries, over 500 journalists who had been covering corruption, money laundering and organised crime have been murdered or kidnapped over the decade. It means that nearly 50 reporters have become the victims of serious crimes every year. From fifteen to twenty of these cases happen in Russia alone. This section summarises the cases involving serious crimes against the personnel of the Russian media organisations.

5.3.1. Serious Crimes in which the Mass Media Personnel did not Lose their Lives.

Threat is the most common and least serious crime against reporters. On 18 February 2002, Viktor Merezhko, a reporter, and Sergey Moskvina, the General Director of the TV channel M-1, revealed that some people had threatened them. Merezhko and Moskvina said that these people ordered them not to take part in the tender for the broadcasting license on the frequency of the channel TV-6. Otherwise, these people promised to cause serious problems to Merezhko and Moskvina. According to Merezhko, he received these calls on his mobile phone and at home. He said, “They have threatened me, my son and daughters, and I think it makes sense to hire bodyguards.”³⁵⁹

As has been noted in the previous section, on 15 November 2001, the Kuybishevsky Federal Court of St. Petersburg found Sergey Shevchenko, a member of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, guilty in the extortion of large sums of money from Kuzakhmetov and Kuznetsov. They published some stories about a few illegal

³⁵⁹ *Pressing.spb*, (URL <http://www.pressing.spb.ru/>).

dealings by the managers of the club Golivudskie Nochi [Nights of Hollywood] owned by the brothers Shevchenko.

These publications are believed to have made the brothers claim the above-mentioned “compensation”. As the brothers Shevchenko had the reputation of being very serious and powerful people, Kuzakhmetov preferred to pay US\$ 10,000, and transferred the publishing rights of the magazine *Televik* to Shevchenko, while Kuznetsov chose to secure his life by living outside Russia for several years.³⁶⁰

In July 2000, the former personal cameraman of the President of Belarus, Dmitry Zavadski, a reporter for ORT at that time, disappeared. Although two men were charged with his kidnapping and were sentenced to life imprisonment on 14 March 2002, the trial failed to explain what happened to the journalist after he was abducted,³⁶¹ and Zavadsky’s relatives were very disappointed by the verdict of the court.

The brutal beating of Ildar Zhandarev, an anchorman for the shows *Interesnoe Kino* [Interesting movie] and *Bez Protokola* [Without Protocol], has already been mentioned in Chapter 3. He believed that this was an action against the policy of the TV channel. He said, “During the attack I heard: ‘You have annoyed some people by your show and they “ordered” you.’”³⁶²

The following examples refer to more serious crime against journalists such as conspiracy to kill. On 6 December 2000, Maya Shekina, the General Director of the publishing company *Dalpress* in Vladivostok, was assaulted. Two unknown gangsters shot her when she and her bodyguard were leaving a lift on their way to office. Shekina and her bodyguard were seriously wounded. The gangsters managed to escape.

Shekina had been appointed the General Director of *Dalpress*,³⁶³ even though Nazdratenko, the governor of the Primorsky Kray, would have preferred to have his representative in the post instead of her. The promotion of Shekina was forced by Pulikovsky, the Representative of the Russian President.

³⁶⁰ Asamov, A. (2003) “Brat za brata” [A brother backs a brother], *Rosbalt*, 17.11.2003.

³⁶¹ Znatkevich, A. (2002) “Belarusian Journalists Jailed for Libel”, *Transition on Line*, 26.06.2002.

³⁶² “Telehurnalist Ildar Zhandarev uveren chto ego ‘zakazali’” [Television reporter Ildar Zhandarev is sure that he was “ordered”], *Strana.ru*, 30.11.2001, (URL <http://www.strana.ru/news/88987.html>, consulted in October 2003).

³⁶³ It publishes 90 percent of the periodicals of the region.

It was reported that before her new appointment, while being the deputy to the General Director of the company, Shekina had been repeatedly threatened by unknown people. They wanted her to quit the job. One year before, someone had put an explosive device by the door of her apartment. A few days before the assault, she once more had been asked to resign from the top post of *Dalpressa*. Some local reporters linked her assassination to the fact that the publishing company published some of the newspapers and journals that opposed the policy of the Administration of the region.³⁶⁴

Furthermore, there were a few assaults on the employees of Independent Media³⁶⁵ in Moscow. On 24 January 2001, Vladislav Maximov, a deputy editor of *Vedomosti*, a daily published by this company in cooperation with *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times*, was stabbed and seriously wounded next to the tube station Dinamo. Another man, Maxim Maslakov, the editor of the Russian edition of *Playboy*, was shot and injured by an unknown attacker in the parking area in front of the magazine's headquarters in the middle of March. Fortunately, Maslakov was shot with buckshot and no vital organs were damaged. It was unclear what had caused the assault. A witness said that the assailant had said nothing before firing.³⁶⁶

On 6 February 2002, Sergey Leybgrad, the editor-in-chief of the radio Ekho Moskvi v Samare [Moscow's Echo in Samara] and an anchorman of a show on a local television channel, was attacked and beaten by two criminals. On 28 February 2002, in broad daylight in the view of many witnesses, Marina Popova, a local correspondent of the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, was attacked and seriously wounded by two men in Vladivostok. She believed that this was caused by her stories on illegal business and prostitution.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ "Kto 'zakazal' izdatelia?" [Who "ordered" a publisher?], *Utro.ru*, 6.12.2000, (URL <http://www.uto.ru/articles/accidents/2000/12/06/200012060036105157.shtml?2000/12/06>, consulted in December 2000).

³⁶⁵ *Independent Media* is the parent company of *The Moscow Times*. In addition to *Playboy*, *Independent Media* publishes the Russian editions of glossy magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health*, *Good Housekeeping*, and some others.

³⁶⁶ "Russian Playboy Editor Shot", *The Moscow Times*, (URL <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2001/03/15/017.html>, consulted in March 2001).

³⁶⁷ "Vo Vladivostoke izbili korrespondenta *Moskovskogo Komsomoltsa*" [A correspondent of *Moskovsky Komsomolets* is beaten in Vladivostok], *Pravda.ru*, 3.01.2002, (URL <http://pravda.ru/moscow/2002/03/01/37706.html>, consulted in April 2002).

On 11 March 2002, Sergey Zolovkin, a journalist for the newspaper *Novaia Gazeta*, was assaulted in Adler. A man shot Zolovkin twice but did not hurt him. Zolovkin had a gun and managed to hold the attacker and to bring him to a police station. In *Novaia Gazeta*, Zolovkin published his journalistic investigations on corruption in Krasnodar, including the case of Ruben Grigoryan, who was charged with the attack on Elu Kondratjuk, “Miss Sochi”, a beauty from the major Russian resort Sochi.

It should be noticed that it was not the first violence against Zolovkin and the members of his family. Some unknown gangsters had badly beaten the brother of Zolovkin’s wife during his trip from Sochi to Adler, that caused his hospitalisation with a diagnosis of a possible fracture of spinal bones. Zolovkin himself had been repeatedly threatened by telephone calls and advised to stop publishing his investigative stories.³⁶⁸

On 18 March 2002, Vladimir Kuznetsov, a St. Petersburg journalist, was severely beaten. As a result of the attack, he was hospitalised with serious injuries. It should be noted that Kuznetsov was one of the major witnesses in Shevchenko’s case on extortion and his statement allowed the court to convict Shevchenko.³⁶⁹

On 30 March 2002, a group of youngsters beat Sergey Topchiy, the chief editor of the newspaper *Sertovolo and Okrestnosti* [Sertovolo and neighborhood]. The gangsters had asked him to come out of his house and when he did so they beat him with sticks. As a result of this beating, Topchiy was hospitalised with brain concussion.³⁷⁰

On 17 April 2002, Anatoly Ezhelev, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Terra Incognita*, was attacked, injured, and robbed by unknown people. Ezhelev is one of the most well-known journalists in St. Petersburg. He was the head of the Union of St. Petersburg Journalists and one of the founders of the leading St. Petersburg newspaper *Chas Pik* [Rush Hour].³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ “Jurnalist Novoy Gazeti dostavil svoego killera v militsiu” [A journalist for *Novaia Gazeta* brought his killer to the police station], *Russian Courier*, 13.03.2002, (URL <http://www.russiancourier.com/news/2002/03/13/4919/>, consulted in October 2003).

³⁶⁹ *Lenpravda.ru*, 19.03.2002.

³⁷⁰ “Jurnalist iz doma vishel, na nego napala ‘krisha’” [A journalist left his house and was attacked by a “roof”], *The Court of the Russian Federation, Obzor deyatel'nosti arbitrazhnikov sudov v SMI*, 25.04.2002, (URL <http://www.garweb.ru/project/vas/news/smi/02/04/20020425/2247268.htm>, consulted in September 2003).

³⁷¹ Reported by *Pressing.spb.ru*.

On 14 June 2002, German Galkin, the deputy to the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Vecherny Chelyabinsk* (and a correspondent of the newspaper *Kommersant*) was badly beaten. In his articles, Galkin criticized the administration of the Chelyabinsk Oblast (a big Russian borough) and Peter Sumin, its governor. According to Oleg Grachev, the editor-in-chief of the *Vecherny Chelyabinsk*, Chelyabinsk's major newspaper, the last story investigated by Galkin was about the holidays taken by some VIP of the Chelyabinsk oblast. For example, he obtained a letter sent by Konstantin Bochkarev, the CEO of governor Sumin, to the American Consulate in Yekaterinburg. This letter was on behalf of seven of Chelyabinsk's residents who were awarded with holidays to the USA paid from the budget of the Chelyabinsk Oblast because of their "good work achievements." Galkin discovered that these people worked for a protection company and were Sumin's bodyguards.

Galkin's wife, Ekaterina, revealed some details of the attack. She said that while Galkin was opening the door of their house, a robust man punched him in the face silently. Then another man joined the first one in the beating. When the neighbours heard Galkin's cries and turned up, the gangsters run away. As a result of this incident, Galkin was hospitalised with heavy bruises and brain concussion, his face badly injured, his eye bleeding.

The Prosecutor's Office opened an investigation into that incident and questioned its witnesses, including Galkin himself. Galkin said afterwards:

I was questioned who might have been interested in beating me and I replied that it maybe Andrey Kosilov, the first vice-governor of the oblast. *Vecherny Chelyabinsk*, where I am coordinating the work of economic and political departments, have recently published many stories which might have encouraged someone to make me silent: I have written much on misuses of the billions of rubles from the budget, and about other cases of corruption in the administration. A couple of weeks ago, Kosilov publicly demanded me to stop publishing unfavourable stories about some people of the administration.³⁷²

³⁷² "V Chelyabinske zhestoko izbit izvestniy journalist German Galkin" [German Galkin, a well-known journalist, is severely beaten in Chelyabinsk], *UralPolit.ru*, 17.06.02.

An attempt to kill Maksim Tkachev, the chairman of the Directors Board of the advertising agency News Outdoor,³⁷³ took place on 4 June 2002. Fortunately, he was just slightly injured. According to media reports, Tkachev was approaching one of the offices of that firm when a gangster appeared behind him and let off two shots. Fortunately, the wounds caused by that shooting happened to be not all that serious, Tkachev managed to take up his mobile phone and to call the police. He was immediately hospitalised.

Investigators believed that the incident was connected with a new split within the advertising market in Moscow. It was widely known about a tender on all advertising in the Moscow Metro, which was scheduled for the middle of June. The annual profit of the winner of the tender was expected to reach US\$ 20 million and many companies would have been interested in taking out one of the strongest competitors.

There is another version of that assault. Reportedly, there had been a conflict with an advertising firm, which had bought the licence for placing standard advertising stands (3x6 m) but chose to place larger advertising stands (4x8 m) there. Tkachev had been very annoyed by such an action of that firm and even posted a complaint to Yury Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, a few days before the incident. Also, Tkachev had continuously arguing with Kanevsky, the director of the advertising agency Aton, who was assassinated in the February 2002. This case is examined in detail in the next section, which reviews killings of journalists.³⁷⁴

5.3.2. Murders of journalists

Beating is not the most serious crime committed against journalists: many of them have been killed. According to the data of the Glasnost Defence Foundation, nineteen Russian journalists were murdered in 1996 and another fifteen in 1997. Other sources report that

³⁷³ The company *News Outdoor* is the second biggest advertising company in Moscow which specialised on outdoor advertising and hold 12 per cent of the market. Annual turnover of the company was about \$30 million.

³⁷⁴ *Mediaatlas*, 06.06.2002.

fourteen journalists were killed during Putin's presidency.³⁷⁵ This section aims to present some cases concerning the murder of journalists that have happened over the last decade.

Let us start with the killing of Dmitry Kholodov, the correspondent of the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.³⁷⁶ Dmitry Kholodov, 27, wrote a number of stories on the corruption within the Russian Army. He was acknowledged as a leading expert in this respect and invited to talk at the Parliament hearings on the corruption within the western group of the Soviet troops. However, he never managed to do so because he was killed by a bomb explosion.

On 17 October 1994, Kholodov arrived at the editorial office with a case, which he had taken from a luggage locker in the Kazan train station. He had been told that there were some evidences on corruption. In the afternoon he went to the office of the deputy to the editor-in-chief, took a seat, opened the case, and was critically injured by the explosion caused by the bomb that was hidden in it. According to medical reports, Kholodov was terribly shocked, lost a huge amount of blood, and died one hour later. Kholodov's last words were: "This should not have happened."

The Prosecutor's Office had investigated the murder of Kholodov for six years. Six officers of the Soviet army were charged with conspiracy to kill, including Pavel Popovsky, a colonel of MIA, Vladimir Morozov, the mayor, Alexander Soroka and Konstantin Mirzayants, Morozov's deputies, Alexander Kapuntsov, a security officer of a protection agency, and Konstantin Barkovsky, a businessman. The prosecutors claimed that this group was involved in the killing after Pavel Grachov, the defence Minister of Russia, had told them to "work out the things with Kholodov."³⁷⁷

Another nationwide known case was the killing of Vladislav Listev, the Director General of ORT, on 1 March 1995, which has been reviewed in detail in the previous chapter. Listev was appointed the Director General of ORT, the leading Russian TV channel and ordered to drop all advertising on the channel. A few days after, he was found shot dead in the doorway of his house.

³⁷⁵ "Smert journalista oslozhniaet popitku opravdat peregibi Putina" [The death of the journalist complicates a justification of Putin's policy] *Inopressa.ru*, 20.07.2004, (A translation of Shmaman's article from *New York Times*, 13.07.2004).

³⁷⁶ The end of June 2002.

³⁷⁷ URL <http://www.strana.ru/stories/00/11/14/149/134238.html>, consulted in December 2000.

There were several assumptions on why and who might have killed him. The first explanation linked this murder to the lords of the Russian advertising market. Most people believed that Listev's decision to take away advertising from his channel was a move to enforce a better contract. However, it caused huge business losses for Lisovsky, the president of the company which was the monopoly wholesaler of advertising and had many contracts with advertisers.

Berezovsky was among the people who might have been involved in the murder. Some witnesses revealed that Berezovsky had wanted to have Lesnevskaya, a supporter of his, in Listev's post and frequently had an argument with Listev. Also, it was suspicious that Berezovsky had left Moscow a few hours before the incident.³⁷⁸ In turn, Berezovsky expressed his views on who might have murdered Listev. Berezovsky argued that Listev's killers were Korzhakov, the head of presidential bodyguards, and the Russian secret police. Berezovsky even asked President Yeltsin to intervene and sack Gennady Ponomarev, the Prosecutor of Moscow, and his deputy who investigated Listev's murder.

Other killings of journalists have been less known but more numerous. For example, on 25 January 1996, Oleg Slabyanko, who used to be the director of television at Ostankino, and the producer of the programme *Moment Istini*,³⁷⁹ was assassinated. According to some reports, this killing was caused by the programme's plans to report on corruption in the Russian government.³⁸⁰

On 15 January 1999, Nikolay Lapin, the editor-in-chief of the local newspaper *Obo Vsem* [About everything], was murdered in Toliati, the city mostly known due to its car producing plant Avtovaz. It has been reported that a gangster approached Lapin, shot him, ran to his car, and escaped. Lapin was hospitalised but lately lost his fight for life. On the same day, Alexey Eldashov, a correspondent of the newspaper *Khabarovsk Express*, was found dead in Khabarovsk. Investigators discovered that Eldashov had been suffocated and then stabbed.

³⁷⁸ "Ustanovleni ubiytsi jurnalista Vlada Litseva" [Vlad Listev's killers are identified], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 21.02.2002, (URL <http://news.ng.ru/2002/02/21/1014284197.html>, consulted in February 2002).

³⁷⁹ Karaulov's program, to be reviewed in detail in Chapter 7.

³⁸⁰ McNair, B. (1996) "Television in Post-Soviet Russia: From Monolith to Mafia", in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 18, pp. 489-499, p. 496.

On 1 February 1999, Yury Baldin, the editor-in-chief of the television company Focus TV in Chelyabinsk was hospitalised with severe head injuries. He had parked his car and was on his way home when he was attacked. Baldin was in a coma for three days and never managed to recover. A similar incident happened in Kursk on 12 February 1999. Vyacheslav Zvonarev, an editor of the independent television company Tact, was attacked, beaten, robbed, and strangled. He was found the following morning and the doctors were unable to save him.

On 24 February 1999, Vadim Birukov, a deputy to the Director General of the publishing company *Izdatelstvo Press Contact*, one of the founders of the magazine *Delovie Ludi* [Business people] and a former reporter for the leading Russian news agency *ITAR TASS*, was assassinated in Moscow. His strangled corpse was found next day with extensive head injuries, the mouth sealed by tape. Detectives reported that Birukov had been tortured before being murdered.

On 4 March 1999, Antonina Lukina, the director of the TV channel Don, was run over by two cars while crossing a street in Voronezh, a city in the central part of Russia. The drivers of both cars escaped. Lukina was hospitalised but died soon afterwards.

Vladimir Aliev, a correspondent of the Radio of the Republic of Cabardino-Balcaria, was attacked, robbed and killed by unknown gangsters in Nalchik, the capital city of the republic, at the end of March. He was found unconscious, his head severely wounded. Although Aliev was hospitalised, he never managed to recover. According to Aliev's co-workers, some people threatened him before his death.

In March 1999, Nikolay Mozolin, a freelance journalist for the newspaper *Noviy Peterburg* [New Petersburg], was attacked in Kirovsk, a suburb of St. Petersburg. Although Mozolin had been a former police officer, he was badly injured, and died. The detectives believed that his murder had been caused by his stories on illegal child trade.

Alexander Korkin, a publisher, was murdered by some unknown gangsters in Pereslavl-Zalesk (Yaroslavl oblast) on 10 May 1999. Korkin was reportedly tortured before his death, the attackers broke his tooth and cut away his ear.

At the end of June 1999, Munjuk Zhazhoyan, a reporter for the newspaper *Russkaya Misl* [Russian Mind], was knocked over by a car on Nevsky Prospect in St. Petersburg and died in the hospital. The driver of the car has never been found. In his

newspaper, Zhazhoyan had monitored the development of Nikitin's case, in which the former Russian officer had been charged with spying.

Valery Krivosheev, a correspondent of the daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, was killed in Lipetsk on 5 September 2002. On that day he had gone to an important meeting for his investigative stories and never come back. His co-workers believed that his murder was the result of his investigative reports on conflicts between several major enterprises in Lipetsk.

Lidia Lazarenko, an editor of the newspaper *Birzha Plus Svoy Dom* [Stock Exchange Plus your House], was found dead in the waste area in Dzerzhinsk (Nizhegorodskaya Oblast) on 19 October 1999. The Prosecutor's Office of Dzerzhinsk launched a criminal investigation into her murder.

On 12 May 2000, Igor Domnikov, a journalist for the newspaper *Novaia Gazeta* [The New Newspaper], was assassinated in Moscow. The gangsters hammered his head. Domnikov received medical treatment but died on 16 July. Dmitry Muratov, the chief editor of *Novaia Gazeta*, told the radio Ekho Moscow that it was a contract murder, but the gangsters most likely aimed to assassinate Oleg Sultanov, the executive of the investigative department of the newspaper, living in the same house, after the investigative department had published several stories about organised crime in Moscow.³⁸¹

Sergey Novikov, the president of the independent radio Vesna [Spring], was assassinated in Smolensk on 26 July 2000. Although Novikov might have been killed because he ruled the board of the Pervomaysky Glass Plant, almost everyone was certain that his murder was caused by the radio show *The Globes of the Smolensky Oblast* which was aired on that day. On the show, Novikov and other journalists talked about a vice-governor of the Smolensky Oblast, who allegedly was the most corrupt official in the region.³⁸²

In October 1999, Oleg Chervonuk, a chairman of the firm The Baltic Press, and his brother were assassinated. Chervonuk was a prosperous businessman, a leader of media distribution market in St. Petersburg, and he tried to create a "civilised" market of

³⁸¹ Interview with Elena, a journalist for *Novay Gazeta*, London, August, 2003.

³⁸² Reported by the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, (URL http://www.cjes.ru/lib/prof_2000/4.shtml, consulted in June 2001).

periodicals, which would be free from criminal influences. After Chervonuk's death, the press distribution market in St. Petersburg was reshaped.³⁸³

Tolati, the current capital of the Russia's car industry, proved to be one of the most dangerous places to live for investigative journalists. Five journalists were killed there between 2000 and 2002. None of the killers have been found. On 3 October 2000, Sergey Ivanov, the Director General of the channel Lada-TV was assassinated. A gangster shot him several times and escaped.

Three weeks after, on 28 October 2000, Sergey Loginov, the editor-in-chief of the same channel, was found severely injured and unconscious at his dacha in a suburb of Tolati. According to the witnesses of the incident, Loginov, along with his wife and mother-in-law, arrived to the dacha and went to park his car in the garage. He drove his car inside, and was opening the gate when another car hit them and drove away quickly. Loginov fell into the garage hole and seriously injured his head. Relatives found Sergey a few minutes after the incident and he was hospitalised.

The circumstances of the accident were unclear. A criminal investigation was not launched because the police did not believe that Loginov was hit. Nevertheless, the mass media in Tolati received a letter from an unknown the Council of Tolati's Editors. The letter recommended the media companies "to consider Loginov's traumas as a sad accident, to believe in doctor skills, and not to make quick assumptions."

Valeriy Ivanov, the editor of *Tolyatinskoye Obozreniye* and a member of the local Legislative Assembly, was assassinated next to his house on 30 April 2002. A gangster shot Ivanov eight times while he was boarding his car. Several people witnessed the murder, but the gangster managed to escape. The Prosecutor Office opened a criminal investigation into Ivanov's death.³⁸⁴ Ivanov's colleagues and the prosecutor's office were certain that Ivanov's death had been caused by his reports on local organised crime, official corruption and drug trafficking.

Valery Ivanov was the first journalist in the region who investigated organised crime in Tolati. He established the newspaper *Toliatinskoe Obozrenie* [Tolati's Review] in 1996. That newspaper published stories on the local elite and on gangster wars around

³⁸³ "Ubiystvo Olega Chervonuoka: slishkom mnogo versiy" [Oleg Chervonuok's murder: there are too many explanations], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 11.

³⁸⁴ "Russia: Newspaper editor killed", *IFEX Communique*, 11-19, 14.05.2002, (URL <http://www.cpj.org>).

Avtovaz. The newspaper had connections with law enforcement agencies and even presented awards for several police officers. One of the most well-known corruption stories written by Ivanov was his report on some illegal financial transactions of Sergey Zhitkin, the former mayor of Toliati.³⁸⁵

Vladimir Suprun, the head of UVD (the Department of the Interior) claimed that Ivanov was targeted because of his investigative stories. Evgeniy Novozhilov, the prosecutor of Toliati said: “There have been published many stories about Toliati’s organised crime in the *Toliati Obozrenie* over last three months. Also, there have been reports that might offend one influential man. I will not tell you his name right now, he is not a criminal character, but he is very wealthy.”³⁸⁶

It was possible to assume who was this anonymous rich man because Nikolay Utkin, the mayor of Toliati, did not attend Ivanov’s funeral. He did not even send a telegram of condolences. He and his friend Nikolay Abramov were making a holiday abroad at that time. According to Alexey Sidorov, Ivanov’s deputy, Abramov phoned to the editorial office of the newspaper and intimidate them after *Toliati’s Obozrenie* had published stories on money laundering by the municipal enterprise headed by Oleg Abramov, the son of Nikolay Abramov.

However, that was not the only possible explanation. Zhilkin, the former mayor of Toliati, might have been linked to the murder because of Ivanov’s earlier investigation. Also, some time before his death, Ivanov had been threatened by local criminal *avtoriteti* Igor Sirotenko (nickname Sirota) and Suleyman Akhmadov (Suleyman–Chechen, BeBe), the lords of the Chechen gang. Sidorov said, “Many people knew about Ivanov’s conflict with the Chechens and Sirota. They were aware that Ivanov would never compromise with them, and might have decided to kill him.”³⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Ivanov’s co-workers doubted that the prosecutor’s office would manage to find the killers of Ivanov.³⁸⁸ Chechens and Sirota were not imprisoned and their business continued.

³⁸⁵ “V Samarskoy oblasti zastrelen glavniy redactor gazetia Toliatinskoe obozrenie” [The editor-in-chief of *Toliatinskoe Obozrenie* is shot dead in Samarskaia Oblast], *Ntvru.com*, 30.04.2002, (URL <http://www.ntvru.com/crime/30Apr2002/killing.html>, consulted in May 2002).

³⁸⁶ *Kommersant-Daily*, 6.05.2002.

³⁸⁷ *Kommersant-Daily*, 6.05.2002.

³⁸⁸ It is interesting to note that Ivanov himself had been charged with defamation by the prosecutor’s office one year before this event.

Many killings of journalists took place in other Russian regions. Oleg Polukeev, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Moskovsky Predprinimatel* [Moscow Entrepreneur] was attacked and robbed next to the tube station Altufevskaya in Moscow on 12 April 2000. According to the *Independent Newspaper*, Polukeev was also a correspondent of *Stroitel'naya Gazeta* [Construction Newspaper], of the newspaper *Business and Banks*, of the magazine *Moya Moskva* [My Moscow], and the editor of the department on the economic issues in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* [Independent Newspaper]. Although Polukeev was hospitalised, he died on 17 April.

The body of Nikolay Kolesov, a journalist for the local newspaper *Revdinsky Rabochiy* [The Worker of Revdin], was found in his flat on 19 July 2000. It was a rather curious murder. Although it was evident that he had been stabbed, the door and windows of his flat were locked from inside. The detectives did not find any evidence that anything had been stolen from the house.

Oleg Goryansky, 32, the reporter for the local TV channel Provintcia [The Countryside], disappeared in Cherepovets in September 2000. At the beginning of September, the channel Provintcia asked Goryansky to write a story regarding drug trade in Cherepovets. Nobody has seen him in the editorial office since then.

At the beginning of October, Goryansky's landlord phoned to the editorial office and asked to pick up Goryansky's belongings. That phone call made the editors of the channel inform the police about Goryansky's disappearance. In the middle of October, the police finally identified a severely beaten and unconscious man brought to a hospital in Cherepovets as Goryansky. However, the doctors were unable to save him and he died on 20 October.

Georgiy Garibian, 39, the anchorman of the show *Actualniy Reportazh* [Urgent Talk] of the television Park, was murdered on 18 October 2000 in Rostov-na-Dony. In his show he reported about extraordinary events in the city. The ultimate reason of the murder has not been found.

The body of Pavel Asaulchenko, an operator of state company Austria Radio and Television, was discovered on the stairs of his home in Moscow on 20 November. The medical examination showed that he was knifed. In this case, the detectives managed to identify who ordered and committed this killing. They accused Mikhail Shuvmun, 42,

from town Chekhov, of this murder and arrested him. He latter admitted that an unknown person had ordered him and Alexey Chupin, 19, from Serphukhovo district of Moscow, to kill Asaulchenko, and paid US\$ 5,000.

Valeriy Kondakov, a photojournalist, was murdered in Armavir, a town in the Krasnodar Kray. He participated in an election campaign and made several photos of the houses of the local political elite. They were published in an Armavir newspaper just before the election. The magnificent homes of some of the pretendents could divert poor people (a considerable part of the electorate) from voting for them. Apparently, the publication of these pictures displeased some powerful actors, and they ordered to punish Kondakov.

According to reports, some gangsters attacked Kondakov next to the dormitory where he lived. Nobody was brave enough to stop the beating and to help Kondakov. Bleeding, he managed to phone to the police from the front desk of the dormitory. However, the gangsters entered the dormitory and killed him. Although this case caused serious protests in the town, the administration and law enforcement agencies of the town apparently were not especially interested in finding the criminals who committed the murder. The killers of Kondakov have never been found.³⁸⁹

Sergey Kalinovsky, the editor-in-chief of the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* and the radio MK- Smolensk, disappeared in Smolensk on 14 December 2001. Kalinovsky was the anchorman of the show *Bodry Vecher* [Fresh Evening] at the radio ST and the news programme *Smolensky Nedelka* [Smolensky's week] on the TV channel SCS. The most important of all, Kalinovsky was the anchorman of the show *Kriminarium* [Criminal News] on the channel TV-30. This show presented criminal news, covered conflicts between law enforcement agencies and *bandits*, and reported on contract killings. Some Kalinovsky's stories about crime and corruption in Smolensk had been published in the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets*. Kalinovsky's colleagues were certain that he was targeted because of his reports.³⁹⁰

Kalinovsky had already been involved in an accident. At the end of March 2001, his flat caught fire. Although many people believed that it could have been the result of

³⁸⁹ Reported by *the Centre of Journalism in Extreme Situations*, 03.02.2001, (URL http://www.cjes.ru/lib/prof_2000/4.shtml, consulted in March 2001).

³⁹⁰ *IFEX Communique*, 11-19, 14.05.2002.

his reports, the police did not find any evidence of arson.³⁹¹ The outcome of the following incident was much worse. On 14 December 2001, Kalinovsky and a guest, who turned in Kalinovsky's house, went to a shop Okean [Ocean]. Even though this shop was not far away from Kalinovsky's house, nobody saw Kalinovsky since that time. The investigation launched in this regard had not yielded any result until his body was discovered outside Smolensk on 1 April 2002. Detectives found numerous wounds on the corpse and confirmed that he was killed.

Furthermore, in March 2002, Natalia Skryl, a reporter for the newspaper *Nashe Vremia* [Our Time], was murdered near her home in Rostov-na-Don. *Nashe Vremia*'s editor-in-chief said that her killing most likely was caused by her investigations into the business of several large local companies.³⁹²

Alexander Plotnikov, one of the owners of the biggest advertising newspaper *Gostiny Dvor* [The Guests' Yard], was assassinated on 21 May 2002. His corpse was found by the police at his dacha in Tumen. His death was caused by a shot in the head. He was apparently killed by the other owners of the newspaper in an attempt to push him away from the business. It was known that they had transferred all assets of the newspaper *Gostiny Dvor* to the firms beyond of Plotnikov's control and launched the bankruptcy procedure. Plotnikov brought his partners to the court and won the case, but when he was trying to return to his office with the court officers on 17 May, he was not allowed to go in. Plotnikov planned to repeat his attempt at the end of May but was murdered.³⁹³

On 25 June 2002, Oleg Sedinko, an owner of the TV company Novaia Volna [A New Wave], was assassinated in Vladivostok. His death was caused by the explosion of a bomb hidden in the entrance of his home. The bomb had been so skillfully concealed that Sedinko's bodyguard did not find it during checking out the entrance before the arrival of his patron. When Sedinko, along with the bodyguard, came in, he was shattered in pieces

³⁹¹ "Propavshiy bez vesti redactor 'MK v Smolenske' nayden mertvim" [The missing editor of *MK* in Smolensk is found dead], *Ntvru.com*, 1.04.2002, (URL http://www.ntvru.com/crime/01Apr2002/kalin_sky.html, consulted in June, 2003).

³⁹² *IFEX Communiqué*, 11-19, 14.05.2002.

³⁹³ Newsletter of the *Mediaatlas*, 22.05.2002.

by the explosion. According to reports, it was even impossible to officially identify the corpse.³⁹⁴

Even foreign journalists can become an object of assassination in Russia. For example, Hartmut Shults, a photo reporter from Germany, was allegedly killed on 14 March 2000. He had arrived in Kaliningrad a few days before his death and rented a long-term accommodation. The landlord founded his strangled corpse on 16 March. Apparently, it was not a result of a robbery because his car was still parked nearby and nothing had been stolen from the house. Five months later, on 21 September 2000, Iskandar Khatlony, the reporter for the radio BBC and the radio Svoboda in Tadzhikistan, was found seriously injured nearby the underground station Rechnoy Vokzal in Moscow. He died in hospital soon afterwards.

Murders of journalists take place not only in Russia but also in many other countries of the former Soviet Union. The killing of Geogre Gongadze, publisher of the Internet journal *Ukrainska Pravda* (www.pravda.com.ua) in Ukraine, is an example. Gongadze had disappeared on 16 September 2000 and his corpse was later found headless in a suburb of Kiev.³⁹⁵

It was known that Gongadze investigated corruption in the Ukraine's government. In September 1999, a few days before Ukraine's presidential elections, he asked President Leonid Kuchma in a television show why the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior never caught former prime minister Pavlo Lazarenko, who had been involved in multi-million dollar corruption scandals on gas trading in 1995-97 and was waiting a trial in an American custody, charged with money-laundering.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ "Pri vzrive bombi vo Vladivostoke pogib uchreditel telekompanii" [A founder of a TV company was killed by a bomb explosion], *Ntvru.com*, 25.06. 2002, (URL <http://ntvru.com/crime/25Jun2002/sedinko.html>, consulted in June, 2002).

³⁹⁵ For example, URL <http://media.gn.apc.org/gongadze/>, consulted in June 2001.

³⁹⁶ The energy sector, particularly the gas industry, remains the biggest feeding-trough for corrupt business. The biggest gas scandal of all began with an industrial slump in the early and mid-1990s as Ukraine plunged into a vicious cycle of debt and barter payments. In 1995, when Western advisers were feeding a mania for privatisation in the Soviet republics, the business of importing, trading and distributing Russian gas was handed to traders, who needed licences and import quotas from the state. The state granted larger import quotas to gas traders it liked, assigning them solvent customers. Traders made money by paying producers, mostly Gazprom of Russia, far less than they themselves collected.

Three trading companies dominated the market: United Energy Systems of Ukraine (UESU), Interhaz, and Itera-Ukraina, the Ukrainian subsidiary of a much larger Russian gas trader.

Gongadze wanted to find out why Kuchma gave awards to some heads officers of the Ministry shortly after Lazarenko's had left Ukraine, if they had failed to discover his crimes? Or, if the Ministry had known about this, why did not it arrest Lazarenko? Gongadze asked Kuchma: "Your [security] ministers messed up. Millions of dollars went abroad. And now you're giving them medals?" The president reportedly scowled with the answer and asked Gongadze's name.

Two months after Gongadze's murder, Mykola Melnychenko, a former Kuchma's bodyguard, left the country and revealed audio tapes, recorded from a microphone hidden in the president's couch. On these tapes, it was possible to hear that two people were discussing the need to sort out the case with Gongadze. As their voices were similar to those of the president and his interior minister, it triggered a political scandal. Although Kuchma remained in office, most Ukrainians believed that Gongadze was murdered because of his questions.

The killing of Gongadze was not the only crime against journalists in Ukraine. Jean-Christophe Menet, a Reporters Sans Frontières representative, noted that, in fact, Gongadze was the thirteenth of the Ukrainian journalists killed in five years.³⁹⁷ This list includes Igor Alexandrov, the Director General of the television station TOR, who was attacked and beaten to death on 3 July 2000. He published stories on corrupt links between politicians, police officers and businessmen in eastern Ukraine. Oleg Breus, a founder of the newspaper *XX Vek*, was assassinated on the same day. One week after, Oleg Velychko, the head of a Ukraine media group, was attacked and seriously wounded.³⁹⁸

Pavlo Lazarenko, who was energy minister in the early 1990s and prime minister in 1996-97, helped these companies get rich. The most successful gas trader, UESU, was given exclusive contracts to supply gas to most of Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland and grew rapidly to notch up a \$10 billion annual turnover. In December 1998, Lazarenko - who was heading a movement against Kuchma - fled to Switzerland after Ukrainian officials accused him of siphoning millions of dollars of public money into Swiss bank accounts. Swiss authorities arrested him but he posted bail and skipped the country, resurfacing in the US three months later.

He has since been arrested and is in jail awaiting trial on money-laundering charges in the US. He has been convicted in absentia by a Geneva court for money laundering in Switzerland and faces extradition proceedings to return him to Ukraine (reported by Simon Pirani).

³⁹⁷ "Don't forget murdered journalists", *Freelance*, November, 2001, (URL <http://media.gn.apc.org/fl/0111gong.html>, consulted in July 2003).

³⁹⁸ Pirani, S. (2001) "Practising journalism is lethal in the Ukraine, Gas, guns & Gongadze", *Gemini News Servic*, (URL <http://media.gn.apc.org/gongadze/pirani.html>, cosulted in September 2003).

5.4. Other Difficulties

5.4.1. *The Dangers of Following Powerful Actors*

Sometimes reporters can perish during routine trips and meetings. It was shown in the previous chapters that the boundary between businessmen, criminals and politicians in Russia is very vague, and the powerful groups in the country continue to use many illegal methods to fight one another. It means that the reporters interested in working with politicians are in risk of being injured or killed even while interviewing or convoying them. The death of General Alexander Lebed in a helicopter crash is an unfortunate example in this respect.

General Lebed was a very remarkable and popular person in Russia. His father, a factory worker, was sentenced to 12 years in the prison camps for showing up late at work twice. When he was a twelve-year-boy, Lebed became nearly a victim of the crushing of a strike in Novocherkassk, when over twenty people were shot dead.

Later Lebed graduated with distinction from an elite military academy and fought during the war in Afghanistan. He proved a good soldier and was eventually appointed the commander of the Tula paratroop division, the elite division of the Red Army, which participated in the bloody suppression of nationalistic protests in Baku and in Tbilisi before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Lebed showed by his refusal to fire on the defenders of the Russian Parliament (the White House) in 1991 that he was not a blindly obedient soldier.

Lebed began his political career by brokering an end to a separatist conflict in Transnistria, a breakaway region of Moldova. In 1995, when he was dismissed from the army because of his sharp criticisms of the Defence Minister of Russia, Lebed's reputation of being a hard man helps him to gather considerable political support among Russians who were fed up with the widespread corruption and violence in Russia. He claimed that the diversity of political parties in Russia did not help much to its development and looked to Chile as his ideal political model, arguing that General Pinochet had been able to revive Chile by "putting the army first" and "preserving the

army as the basis for preserving the government.” He was, Lebed said proudly, a General, not a liberal.

In 1996 presidential election, Lebed was third with 15 per cent of the vote. To increase his own chances to be re-elected, Yeltsin made Lebed the secretary of the Security Council. During a short time being in the office, Lebed managed to end the first Chechen War. However, soon Yeltsin accused Lebed of plotting a coup and sacked him.

In 1998, Lebed was elected the Governor of Krasnoyarsky Kray, a region of Siberia four times the size of France.³⁹⁹ Although this rich Russian region was known as being the Mecca of organised crime, Lebed seemed to have managed to establish himself as the leading powerful actor of the region. However, he died in a helicopter crash on 28 April 2002. His helicopter is believed to have hit an electric pylon while trying to land at a large Siberian ski resort. Lebed was found alive at the scene of the crash, but died soon afterwards while being transported to the hospital.⁴⁰⁰

There have been a number of suggestions that enemies of the general might be behind the accident. It is known that Lebed had some conflicts with Bikov, reportedly a lord of organised crime in Krasnoyarsk. Alexei Arbatov, a member of the faction Yabloko in the Russian Duma, told the correspondents of ORT that “malicious intent” might have played a role, and that “Lebed had long been at the epicentre of a battle between various groups and interests in Krasnoyarsk, among them economic, administrative, criminal, and political.” Consequently, he had many rivals who might have wanted to get rid of Lebed before the coming governor elections.⁴⁰¹

Berezovsky said that Lebed’s enemies were most likely to be involved in the incident and he personally believed that Putin might have ordered to kill the general. According to Berezovsky, Lebed was a bright figure. Unfortunately, “In the dispute between the grey president-colonel and the bright general-governor, the grey always

³⁹⁹ Gardner, A. (2002) “Lebed”, *Transition On Line*, 29.04.2002.

⁴⁰⁰ “Kransoyartsi prostilis s Alexandrom Lebedem” [Citizens of Krasnoyarsk said the last “forgive us” to Alexander Lebed], *Ntvru.com*, 29.04.2002, (URL <http://www.ntvru.com/russia/29Apr2002/lebed.html>, consulted in October 2003).

⁴⁰¹ *Ntvru.com*, 29.04.2002.

celebrates a victory. That is the essence of Russian history: the grey always wins by one or another way,” said Berezovsky.⁴⁰²

Let us note that there were quite a few people in the general’s helicopter during that crash – Lebed’s bodyguards, Nadezhda Kolba, his deputy on social issues, and Gennadiy Tonachev, the chairman of Committee on Tourism and Sport in the Krasnoyarsky Kray. Gennady Klimik, Lebed’s press officer, also was on the board of the helicopter as well as several journalists. In this collusion seven out of nineteen people on board died while the others were seriously injured. Igor Gareev, a television reporter, journalists Natalya Pivovarova, Konstantin Stepanov and Emma Mamutova died in the crash while correspondent Stanislav and the deputy to the chief editor of the newspaper *Krasnoyarsky Rabochiy* [The Krasnoyarsky Worker]⁴⁰³ were seriously wounded.⁴⁰⁴

5.4.2. Ethical Issues

After this extended analysis of the dangers of being a journalist in Russia, another matter that can cause some problems for journalists writing on corruption and organised crime should be mentioned. This problem refers to ethical issues. Sometimes it is very difficult to assess the real involvement of a person in organised crime or corruption. Consequently, the correspondents are in continuous risk of blaming innocent people who might be deeply offended by the stories. Some of the authors of such stories might hold themselves responsible for causing such a sad outcome. The case of the St. Petersburg vice-governor Valery Malishev is an example among many.

Almost all vice-governors of St. Petersburg have been charged with corruption since Putin became the President of Russia, and Malishev was one of them. In October

⁴⁰² “Chto sgubilo Alexandra Lebedia: tuman samonadeyanosti ili kozni serogo polkovnika” [What caused Alexander Lebed’s death: the fog of self-confidence or the intrigues of a grey colonel], *Lenta.ru*, 29.04.2002.

⁴⁰³ “V Moskve nachalas tseremonia proshania s Alexandrom Lebedem” [Memorial service for Alexander Lebed has started in Moscow], *Lenta.ru*, 30.04.2002, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/russia/2002/04/30/body/>, consulted in March 2003).

⁴⁰⁴ Another example is the death of Adam Khasanov, a Reuters cameraman, in the accident, when Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov was assassinated in Grozny in May 2004 (*Journalists and Media Staff Killed in 2004: An IFJ Report on Media Casualties in the Field of Journalism and Newsgatehring*, p. 19).

2001 he was accused of corruption and tax evasion. After that, Malishev was temporarily dismissed, although he and his lawyers argued that this accusation was ridiculous.⁴⁰⁵

Malishev held high posts in the Soviet state and in the Communist Party. However, Sobchak, a democratically elected leader, invited Malishev (along with Putin) to work for his administration in 1993. Malishev worked in the St. Petersburg Administration for nine years. He was responsible for sport, tourism and transport. Malishev continued to work in the Administration even after Sobchak lost the mayoral election. Despite swearing to collectively resign if Sobchak did not win the election, Malishev (in contrast to Putin) accepted the invitation of Yakovlev, the new mayor, to continue working for the Administration of St. Petersburg.

Malishev supervised the distribution of a huge amount of money (billions of American dollars) and was repeatedly accused of misdoing while financing the Good Will Games in 1994 and while organising a Party congress of Edinaia Rossia in May 1999. Although Malishev was also suspected of being involved in several other criminal offences, nobody had been able to find anything compromising about him personally until he was charged by the Prosecutor's Office in October 2001.

Because Malishev was formally accused of only taking a low interest bank loan to build his *dacha* (a house outside the city) and of accepting a mobile phone Nokia as a gift, the charges surprised not only Malishev and his lawyers but also many other people. Although this could be regarded as corruption, it was such a common misdoing, that it was unclear why all the other members of the St. Petersburg Administration and the Russian government had not been charged together with Malishev.⁴⁰⁶

Several journalists decided to investigate Malishev's case and visited Malishev's *dacha*. They were surprised to find that this house was relatively modest for a "new Russian." They estimated its cost as US\$ 50,000 at most. Although this is a huge amount of money for the average Russian, there were plenty of houses ten times more expensive than Malishev's *dacha* in elite regions of St. Petersburg. According to neighbours, Malishev and his brother visited the house only in the evenings. For the rest of the time,

⁴⁰⁵ "Vitse-gubernator bral, zloupotreblial i ne platil nalogi" [Vice-governor took bribes and did not pay tax], *Kommersant-SPb*, 09.01.2002, (URL

<http://www.lenpravda.ru/reading1.phtml?id=1592>, consulted in January 2002).

⁴⁰⁶ "Posledniy vitse" [The last vice (-governor)], *Novaia gazeta – SPb*, 14.05.2002, (URL <http://www.lenpravda.ru/reading1.phtml?id=2791>, consulted in May 2002).

the house was inhabited only by their mother. The neighbours said they had respect for Malishev because he helped them a lot.⁴⁰⁷

After charging him, Malishev was soon hospitalised in the Cancer Research Institute in Pesochnoe (a suburb of St. Petersburg). He died on 7 May 2002, when he was only fifty-two years old. His funeral service took place in the Tavrichesky Palace. Similar respect had previously been given only to Sobchak, Dmitry Likhachev (a well-known Russian scholar), and Lev Zaykov (a member of the Soviet Government). The Tavrichesky Palace is thought to have been chosen in order to highlight the similarity between Malishev and Sobchak, who had also been persecuted and died.

Let us make a long quote from a witnesses' report on Malishev's funeral:

All the elite of St. Petersburg attended the memorial service in the Tavrichesky Palace. Although no ordinary people attended it [...], it was the most sombre funeral service of all. In the dead silence Malishev's mother cried out through her tears: "Look what you have done! Why?! I am asking you, people! Why have you done this to him?! Has he stolen something from anybody? God, we lived as everyone else, and no richer! Then, why?!" The elite kept silence. The pale mayor of St. Petersburg, along with Antonov, Krotov, Kagan, Potekhina and Potekhin, stayed by the coffin. It was evident that he was very disappointed.

The memorial ceremonial started. Yakovlev said just a few words. The main point of his speech was that "evil tongues are more dangerous than guns." This idea was repeated by almost all of the speakers. One of them, lawyer Semen Kheyfetc, extended it by saying: "We are burying an innocent man. The detectives do not have any evidence to prove Malishev's guilt. He died an honest man."

After these words, both Irina Potekhina, a vice-deputy of St. Petersburg, and Varvara Vasilevna Malisheva cried. Everybody waited for what the deputy representative of the President of Russia in St. Petersburg would say. He said almost nothing, which perhaps was the best option in the situation. Yudin, who replaced Malishev in the Russian Duma, was the most laconic of all. He came to the microphone and said: "Forgive us!"⁴⁰⁸

This media report demonstrates the attitude of partial guilt on the part of the media for Malishev's death. In fact, this case allowed some of the media companies in St.

⁴⁰⁷Zasorin, O. (2002) "Sekretnaia vziatka Valeria Malisheva" [A secret Malishev's bribe], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 22.

⁴⁰⁸"Chto imeem—to khoronim" [We bury what we have], *Izvestiya-SPb*, 14.05.2002, *Lenpravda.ru*, (URL <http://www.lenpravda.ru/reading1.phtml?id=2792>, consulted in August 2002).

Petersburg to blame others in speeding up Malishev's death. As it has been noted at the beginning of this chapter, one large St. Petersburg news agency even took another media organization to court for reporting stories about a possible involvement of the agency in Malishev's case. This example shows the importance of ethical issues amongst the difficulties faced by the media while reporting on corruption and organised crime.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has described dangers and difficulties of reporting on organised crime in Russia. I have reviewed the cases of threats, violence and crimes against journalists, including such serious crime as murder. In addition, the availability of legal action as a means of making life difficult for those who write and publish reports on organised crime and corruption has been shown.

It has been pointed out that Russia continues to be one of the most dangerous regions for journalistic work. The third of the all murdered journalists have been killed in Russia. Russian law enforcement is not able or does not want to secure the safety of journalists. In average, only one out of twenty murders of reporters has been conclusively investigated.⁴⁰⁹

It has been proved that talks about difficulties and dangers of working for the mass media in Russia are based on evidence, especially with regards to the people writing on corruption and organised crime. There is significant risk for the people to be legally persecuted, to be injured or even killed during a journalistic investigation, after broadcasting (publishing) the stories, or simply while conveying the people who might be linked to or tackle against organised crime.

In this chapter I argued that the Russian news media should take into account many possible obstacles, difficulties and dangers before making a decision to start its journalistic investigations and to publish stories on corruption and organised crime. Or, to put it in another way, the media should have very significant reasons to do so.

⁴⁰⁹ *Mass Media v Rossii Zakoni, Konflikty, Pravyonaruszeniya (Po Dannim Monitoringa Fonda Zashiti Glasnosti)* [Mass media in Russia: Laws, conflicts, infringements (According to data by Glasnost Defense Fund)].

Chapter 6

Why the Russian Mass Media Reports on Organised Crime and Corruption

The previous chapter has shown that organised crime stories may cause a lot of problems for the news media organisations which report them. The powerful actors can use various coercive methods in order to penalize journalists for negative stories about them. In spite of the above-mentioned difficulties, there are numerous reports on organised crime and corruption in the Russian media. The question arises why they take risk to report on organised crime and corruption. This chapter offers an explanation and argues that reports on organised crime and corruption reflect the changed role of the Russian mass media in the competition between power elites. It shows that the news media have become an important tool in a strategy of powerful actors.

This chapter refers to the extent of democratic values in Russia and shows that democratic elections have become an essential part of the Russia's political system. All the governmental posts in Russia are now being filled through democratic elections. However, it is often very difficult for the electorate to distinguish between the candidates for any particular post because of significant similarity in their political slogans, and powerful groups need to use various practices in order to succeed in their political campaigns.

This chapter points out that negative media coverage of political opponents is frequently regarded as a very efficient instrument of the pre-election campaign, which may give significant competitive advantages. Media reports about connections between the opponents and organised crime, or their involvement in corrupt practices, normally diminish the chances of the rivals. The belief of some politicians in the effectiveness and efficiency of this method make them use the mass media for this purpose, and many organised crime reports have been a part of these political campaigns.

The first section attempts to prove the increased importance of the Russian mass media in intense political competition. Section 6.2. will review some examples of the use of the media in "information wars" (wars where information is used as a weapon). The

final section focuses on the use of organised crime and corruption stories in the information wars.

Chapter 5 has shown that reporting on organised crime may cause a lot of problems for the media organisations. The lack of a clear definition of organised crime and corruption makes it difficult to prove links of any particular people or firms to organised crime. Investigative journalism is often very expensive. Also, it can be very dangerous because powerful actors can use numerous coercive practices and put pressures on the media organisations that publish or broadcast negative stories about them. Finally, inaccurate accusations of being involved in corrupt practices or to be linked to organised crime can heavily hurt the health of those in reports and even cause their death.

Nevertheless, Russian TV channels, newspapers and news websites publish many stories about organised crime and corruption. No systematic research has been done so far, but to some extent the popularity of criminal stories in the media can be illustrated by a study of the content of stories aired by a St. Petersburg television channel in 1998-1999, results of which are summarised in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Topics and Reports of a St. Petersburg TV Channel from July 1998 to January 1999

№	Topics	Frequency	Per cent
1	Criminal stories: Any criminal offences including political killings	52	23.3
2	Social issues: protest marches, strikes, crises, everything related to the social sphere	39	17.5
3	Issues related to national identity (55 Jubilee of the end of Leningrad's blockade, other national bank holidays, and so on)	31	13.9
4	Cultural events: Exhibitions, cultural festivals	30	13.5
5	Holidays and festivals	18	8.1
6	Technical achievements and catastrophes	15	6.7
7	Politics: visits, speeches and appointments of prominent politicians, elections, governmental policies, political murders, and so on	9	4.0
8	Economic and financial issues	8	3.6
9	Nature: Natural catastrophes	7	3.1
10	Entertainment	5	2.2
11	Other	9	4.0
	<i>Total</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: Koltsova, *Proizvodstvo Novostey: Tipi Vliyaniy na Rabotu Jurnalistov* [News production: Types of influence on journalistic work].

This table shows that criminal reports were the prevalent topic on this TV channel. Almost quarter of all reports referred to criminal topics. Although this table does not distinguish between crime and organised crime stories, a significant part of these reports were about organised crime and corruption.

Why the Russian mass media reports organised crime and corruption? Why journalists forget about dangers of violence and expensive trials? The first possible answer is that the media seek to satisfy interests of the public, who like to read about organised crime and corruption. It probably is a valid hypothesis because the Russia's audience likes criminal topics.⁴¹⁰ Almost all leading Russian television channels broadcast crime serials such as *Ulitci Razbitikh Fonarey* [The Streets with Shattered Lanterns], *Banditsky Peterburg-1*, *Banditsky Peterburg-2*, *Banditsky Peterburg-3*, *Menti* [Cops], *Dalnoboysniki*, *Mesto Vstrechi Izmenit Nelzia* [The place of meeting cannot be changed] and a number of others. The film *Brat* [Brother], which has been widely acclaimed as the best Russian film of the last five years, is also about organised crime.

However, even the popularity of crime series can hardly explain why media organisations are ready to take serious risks. The major income of the media is not taken from subscription fees and, consequently, there is no direct need to satisfy the interest of consumers (audience). Furthermore, it is possible to find numerous examples that the management of some Russian media organisations did not try to meet audience's needs, but focused on their own. In other words, the argument about the needs of audience does not sound convincing enough. Why do some of the mass media companies gamble their money, reputation, the health and life of their personnel? This chapter suggests an answer to this question.

6.1. The Involvement of the Russian Mass Media in the Space of Politics

I shall argue that a possible explanation of the large number of reports about connections with organised crime could be found in the changed role of the Russian mass media. As it

⁴¹⁰ The reason of such popularity is not entirely clear, but it is not the task of this thesis to explore it. This may be a result of Stalin's policies that sentenced many citizens to prisons and labour camps, or the mentality of the Russian people.

has been pointed out in Chapter 1, the Soviet media was controlled by the Communist Party and the Soviet State.⁴¹¹ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, independent media organisations encountered numerous problems. Little by little, they lost their independence and became an important mediator in the competition between power elites. In other words, they began playing a very important role in Russian politics.

The dominance of the mass media in the space of politics in many other countries has already been noticed by researchers.⁴¹² For example, Manuel Castells has noted that contemporary democracies rely heavily on the ability of political parties to mobilise the majority of votes.⁴¹³ In the informational age, the media, or at least the most credible of its outlets, is a very powerful instrument in election campaigns, which allows politicians to inform the public about their political programmes and persuade the citizens to vote for them.

As a result, the role of the news media in many democracies is crucial and has forced political actors to organise political action around the media. Nowadays, political parties carefully plan their media campaigns and develop informational leakings in order to advance their competitive political advantages. In other words, the mass media is becoming the battleground where political groups try to undermine one another.

Castells shows that the growing dominance of the media in the space of politics does not mean that the other methods of political competition have become of no importance. Demonstrations, mass gatherings and town meetings are essential for political campaigns in some countries. However, he has to admit that “without an active presence in the media, political proposal or candidates do not stand a chance of gathering broad support.”⁴¹⁴

The mass media play a very important role in European and American politics in spite of differences between the political structures of these countries. As far as the United States is concerned, it should be noted that there have been a number of changes in the political system and the media since the 1960s. The role of political parties has

⁴¹¹ There are many interesting notes on the role of the media during the Soviet time in Dzirkals, L. (1982) *The Media and Intra-Elite Communication in the USSR*, Santa Monica CA: Rand Corporation.

⁴¹² For example, McNair, B. (2003) *An Introduction to Political Communications*. London: Routledge; Franklin, B. and Murphy, D. (1990) *What News? The Market, Politics, and the Local Press*. London, New York: Routledge.

⁴¹³ Castells, M. (1997) *The Power of Identity*. Blackwell Publishers, p. 313.

⁴¹⁴ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p. 317.

decreased while political marketing has been becoming increasingly popular. Similarly, the role of the mass media has been changed both in terms of organisation and technology. Currently, the American mass media is a set of interconnected media organisations, components of which are functionally different. While newspapers are normally responsible for gathering news and elaborating on it, television disperses selected news to a broader audience.⁴¹⁵

The new pattern of relations between the mass media and politics was rooted after John Kennedy won the presidential campaign because of his victory in televised debate with Nixon.⁴¹⁶ Current politics relies heavily on television and huge political advertising. In other words, debates around an event have become more important than the event itself. The reflection of politics in the media is more important than politics itself, and this increases the status of the mass media.

Technology has only strengthened the role of the media in American politics by linking up in real time the mass media with political marketing.⁴¹⁷ The technology has increased the speed, spread and comprehensiveness of informational flows. Cable television allowed the media to focus on segments of the audience by decentralising and diversifying its services.

Europe differs from the USA in many respects. Europe has a different political system, and European interrelation between the mass media and politics has its own features. European culture and tradition create a number of ethical barriers, which make an impact on the contents of European mass media and restrict the range of stories available for publishing and airing.⁴¹⁸ However, in terms of making an impact on the result of political bids, the mass media in Europe⁴¹⁹ are as important as in the USA.⁴²⁰

The growth of political importance of the mass media in Russia took place later than in the United State and Europe. During the Soviet period the Russian media was

⁴¹⁵ Friedland, L. (1996) "Electronic democracy and the new citizenship", *Media, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 18, pp. 185-211.

⁴¹⁶ Jacobs, L. and Shapiro, R. (1995) "The rise of presidential polling: the Nixon White House in historical perspective", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, No. 59, pp. 163-95.

⁴¹⁷ West, D. (1993) *Air Wars: Television Advertising in Election Campaigns, 1952-1992*. Washington DC: CQ Press.

⁴¹⁸ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p. 324.

⁴¹⁹ Semetko, H. and Schoenbach, K. (2003) "News and Election", *Press / Politics* 8 (3) Summer, pp. 54-69.

⁴²⁰ Kaid, L.L, Holtz -Bacha, C. (eds) (1995) *Political Advertising in Western Democracies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

controlled by the Communist Party. The growing political status of the mass media in Russia became visible only during Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

The increased status of the mass media can be illustrated by the effect of Nevzorov's video report about the events in Riga, the capital city of Lithuania, in 1991. When supporters of Lithuanian independence went to the streets, the Soviet government decided to use the army in order to end the uprising. At the beginning of the events, the official Soviet Press did not report what happened in Riga. However, radio Echo Moskvi, which was the least dependent on the government, almost immediately aired news about these events.

It should be noted that the government did not put pressure on the radio station Echo Moskvi. Instead, Alexander Nevzorov, who was a very popular journalist at that time,⁴²¹ moved to Riga and produced a video report, which was seen by many representatives of opposition as a pro-governmental attempt to hide the truth.

While almost all of the independent media companies reported this event as the invasion of the Soviet troops into an independent Republic, Nevzorov showed it from a completely different point of view. His video report showed young Soviet soldiers who were left almost defenceless against wild crowds of Lithuanian rebels. Nevzorov portrayed the soldiers of Russian special troops (SOBR) as the heroes who choose to die from the bullets of enemies in their attempt to uphold the honour of their Fatherhood.⁴²²

Nevzorov's report was shown by Soviet television and welcomed by patriotic and nationalistic parties of the Soviet Union as well as by many common people. In any case, this report significantly diminished criticism towards the action of the Soviet government among a significant part of the population of Russia. Although the Soviet army left Riga soon afterwards, this example shows the awareness of the importance of media reports and their clever use by power elites (in this case, by pro-governmental forces).

The further involvement of mass media in politics took place very rapidly and got closer to the western model. Russia first adopted the Western style political campaigns

⁴²¹ Nevzorov's career is reviewed in the last chapter of this thesis.

⁴²² A very interesting description of the impression created by Nevzorov's video report is presented in the book by Dubov, Y. (2003) *Bolshay Payka* [Large share]. Moskva, Vagrius; Androunas, E. (1993) *Soviet Media in Transition: Structural and Economic Alternatives*. London: Praeger, p. 84.

based on the mass media in 1993. Three years later the mass media is believed to have played a crucial role in helping Yeltsin to be re-elected.

Almost all elements of the western political model were used in Yeltsin's presidential campaign, including segmented propaganda and direct mailing. Russia's private and state TV channels launched a strong anti-Communist propaganda, which effectively undermined the chances of Yeltsin's major opponent Zughanov, the leader of the Communist Party, to end Yeltsin's presidency.⁴²³ Yeltsin's advertising campaign was carefully planned by a foreign political consultant company. Yeltsin did not appear on television very often because it might have bored the Russian audience. Instead, political advertisements portrayed common people who revealed why they were Yeltsin's supporters. All advertisements ended with the words "I believe, I love, I hope", followed by Yeltsin's signature.⁴²⁴

The growing importance of the media in post-Soviet Russia can be indirectly illustrated by graduate employment records of the School of Journalism at St. Petersburg State University in the mid-1990s. It should be noted that there was a very high unemployment rate in Russia. Graduates were one of the least secure groups in this respect. For example, only a fraction of the graduates of St. Petersburg State University (SPbSU) were able to find a job soon after graduation.

In fact, those who were lucky in employment were the graduates of three schools: the School of Law (Putin's Alma Mater), the School of Economics (Kudrin, the current Russian Finance Minister, graduated from this school), and the School of Journalism. According to an administrator of the School of Journalism, not only were all of its graduates employed during the last year of study but also the number of vacancies exceeded the number of the graduates.⁴²⁵

The importance of the media became evident when Russian oligarchs started to form alliances in order to control nationwide TV channels. For example, in 1993, the Most-Bank, the bank Stolichniy-SBS and the bank National Credit established the first

⁴²³ Oates, S. and Roselle, L. (2000) "Russian elections and TV news: Comparison of campaign news on state-controlled and commercial television channels, *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 30-51.

⁴²⁴ Observation, also reported in Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p. 326.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Shishkina, an Administrator of the School of Journalism, St. Petersburg, 1994.

Russian private TV company NTV.⁴²⁶ Another alliance, Consortium of Banks-ORT, was created in order to finance the nationwide TV channel ORT (Obshestvennoe Rossiyskoe Televidenie). Fifty-four per cent of ORT belonged to the Russian state, and 46 per cent was given to the alliance consisted of a group of influential bankers and businessmen, including Boris Berezovsky.⁴²⁷

The importance of the mass media in political communications can be proved by other kinds of evidence.⁴²⁸ I would like to show how significant the mass media is in Russia by a number of examples taken from the trial on Zakaev's extradition to Russia, which took place in London in 2003. Akhmed Zakaev, who used to be a commander of the Chechen rebels, was arrested by British authorities after Russia had charged him with a number of criminal offences, including the kidnapping of two Russian priests, one of whom was apparently killed, and the other was held for six months. Zakaev had also been charged with the torture of innocent people.⁴²⁹ Zakaev's defence was sponsored by the Fund of Civil Liberties, which is financially supported by Berezovsky.

Defence and prosecution invited numerous witnesses. As a matter of fact, the prosecutors, lawyers and witnesses repeatedly referred to media reports in order to prove Zakaev's guilt or innocence.⁴³⁰ For example, while questioning priest Sergey, the lawyers pointed out several of priest Sergey's interviews to the Russian mass media. Priest Sergey was in the Chechen Republic in order to find one man who had disappeared. Sergey talked with Zakaev in this respect and stayed in his house. After Sergey left Zakaev's house, he was arrested by Chechen rebels, and he spotted one of Zakaev's bodyguards among the people who arrested him. Priest Sergey was held by rebels for almost six months before being released by the Russian army. He met Zakaev once after that, and

⁴²⁶ Mukhin, A. (2001) *Bizness-Elita i Gosudarstvennaia Vlast: Kto Vladeet Rossiei na Rubezhe Vekov* [The business elite and state power: Who owns Russia between the last centuries]. Moskva: Izdatelstvo GNOM & D, p. 7.

⁴²⁷ In a little while, the private stake was increased to 49 per cent, which was entirely bought by Berezovsky.

⁴²⁸ For example, see Gerol, I. and Molyneux, G. (1988) *The Manipulators*. Stoddart: Gemol Publications Ltd; Mickiewicz, *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia*; McNair, *Glasnost, perestroika and the Soviet media*.

⁴²⁹ For example, he was accused of shooting out two fingers of Solovev, who worked as a driver for Russian military forces in Grozny.

⁴³⁰ Personal observation (here and in the following references it means that I was an eyewitness), also confirmed by publication on www.grani.ru (consulted in August 2003).

Zakaev seemed to be very surprised to see him and told Sergey that it was not his (Zakaev's) fault.

Zakaev's lawyers tried to show that priest Sergey changed his words in the last interviews in order to satisfy the Russian Prosecutor's Office, which decided to arrest Zakaev after the hostage crisis in Moscow in November 2002. The lawyers argued that in the earlier interviews the priest apparently did not link Zakaev to his kidnapping. Then the lawyers referred to priest Sergey's last interview and his press conference, in which he claimed that Zakaev had been involved in his capture.

Priest Sergey replied that he had never claimed whether Zakaev was involved in his kidnapping or not. He just presented facts, but the reporters modified his words in such a way as to satisfy their own understanding of what had happened. Priest Sergey said that he spoke to the journalists very briefly, and they did not show him what they intended to publish. On the contrary, after he read these interviews, he even tried to persuade the media companies to announce that what they had published was incorrect.⁴³¹

Solovev, another witness invited by the prosecution, was also asked about his exchange with the mass media. He claimed that he had been arrested by Chechen rebels because he worked as a driver for a military unit in Grozny, the capital city of the Chechen Republic, and Zakaev shoot out two of his fingers during interrogation. Lawyers tried to persuade the judge that Solovev just wanted to be portrayed by the media. The reason for this was the fact that video report in which Solovev accused Zakaev was broadcast by NTV.

The lawyers argued that the Russian prosecutor's office in the Chechen Republic deliberately invited reporters from NTV in order to create a video report that would satisfy the Russian government. Solovev replied that the video report was filmed rather occasionally, because the reporters of NTV happened to be next to the Prosecutor's Office in the Chechen Republic, when he told the detectives about the incident. The reporters became interested in Solovev's evidence and decided to broadcast it. Solovev himself was not shown in the video report; only his speech was recorded.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Interview with priest Sergey and his answers during the trial.

⁴³² Personal observation during the trial, also confirmed by publication on *www.grani.ru* (consulted in August 2003).

The questioning of another witness revealed another interesting fact of the involvement of the Russian mass media in political communications. The witness told the jury a story that had happened several months before Zakaev's trial. According to him, the Russian prosecutors forced him to give false evidence against Zakaev and invited reporters from NTV's programme *Sovershenno Sekretno* so that they filmed his evidence, which he gave because of an imminent threat to his life.⁴³³ Although the witness was held in prison at that time, this video report was broadcast in order to mobilise negative public opinion towards Zakaev.

It should be noted that many of the trial's other witnesses referred to media reports. For example, Kovalev, who used to be the head of the Department of Human Rights in the State Duma, indirectly illustrated the importance of mass media reports during his questioning. When he was asked whether he personally knew people who were mercilessly treated in Russian prisons, he noted several cases that had been reported by one or another news media organisation, rather than remembering any case from his own experience.⁴³⁴ Another witness, Ribkin, the former chairman of the State Duma, also referred to reports by the media while being asked about his personal experience.⁴³⁵

In addition, almost all the witnesses of the trial were asked to comment on their interviews with the media about any particular events during the Chechen war. If any of the witnesses had not given any interview, they were asked why they had not expressed their opinion publicly.⁴³⁶

In conclusion of this section, it is worth mentioning that the boundary between political parties and the mass media in Russia sometimes disappears. For example, German Galkin, the deputy to the editor of the newspaper *Vecherny Chelyabinsk*,⁴³⁷ is the head of the regional branch of the party Liberalnaya Rossia [Liberal Russia].⁴³⁸ The owner of this newspaper is Mikhail Yourevich, a member of the Russian Duma, who is well-known due to his critics of the policies of President Putin. Galkin used to work for the newspaper *Rabochaia Gazeta*, which was controlled by another member of the

⁴³³ Observation.

⁴³⁴ Observation.

⁴³⁵ Observation.

⁴³⁶ Observation.

⁴³⁷ One of the major newspapers of Chelyabinsk, a big industrial city in the centre of Russia.

⁴³⁸ Gurevich, A. (2003) Dela Deputatskie...Ugolovnie [Issues of the MP ... Criminal Issues], *Vozrozhdenie Urala*, No. 22 (252), August, p. 1.

Russian Parliament, Berezovsky's supporter Golovlev, who co-ordinated privatisation in the Chelyabinsk Oblast and was killed in 2002.

To sum up, the mass media has become an important instrument in political confrontation between Russian power elites. In the next section we shall discuss why the Russian mass media has become so important in the space of politics.

6.2. Symbolic Power as the Major Asset of the Mass Media

6.2.1. *The Symbolic Method: An Introduction*

Vyacheslav Kuznetsov, a counsellor to the chairman of Gazprom,⁴³⁹ when asked why Gazprom invested or subsidised 29 television stations and newspapers in 1997, explained that the Russian mass media was involved in a fight between Russian financial moguls, similar to the struggle for power by such American magnates as John D. Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan. He said: "Gazprom must be very careful about its image. That is why we have to work with the mass media. Not just work. We have to invest in them."⁴⁴⁰ This section explains why the image created by the mass media is very important, and why the most powerful Russian actors are ready to invest enormous sums of money in it.

I shall argue that the power of the mass media is in its monopoly of the use of *symbolic power*. The symbolic method, which is based on symbolic power, has been introduced in Chapter 3. This describes different methods of influence on the content of media reports. The symbolic method was associated with the transmission of negative information regarding rival media corporations. However, it can be used not only against the mass media but also by the media itself against industrial, financial and political groups.

The enormous importance and significance of the symbolic method is explained by the dominance of informational technologies in the contemporary world. The news media is a considerable part of the informational field and the symbolic method is the

⁴³⁹ Rem Vyakhirev, a Russian oligarch.

⁴⁴⁰ Hoffman, D. (1997) "Powerful Few Rule Russian Mass Media", *Washington Post*, Foreign Service, 31.03.1997, p. A01.

main weapon of the mass media. It can be explained in more detail by referring to the Manuel Castells's concept of *informational* society.⁴⁴¹

Castells argues that a new mode of production is becoming dominant. He calls this mode of production *informational*. The informational mode of production is based on the production of knowledge, informational technologies and symbolic communication.⁴⁴² The major feature of this mode of production is the impact of knowledge on the process of the production of knowledge. Castells points out that the difference is based on "the eventual realisation of the productivity potential contained in the mature industrial economy because of the shift toward a technological paradigm based on information technologies."⁴⁴³

According to Castells, the sectors of national economies that deal with informational technologies are gradually becoming dominant. These sectors are finance, telecommunications and the media. It should be noticed that these sectors are important not only for national economies. They are also vital for the global economy. Castells argues that the contemporary world economy is not only the informational economy but also a global one. In his opinion, the global economy is "an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale."⁴⁴⁴

However, the informational, global economy is not totally symmetric and integrated. There are numerous national industries that are not connected with the world economy. At present, there are only a few sectors that have international links, and, they are again finance, telecommunication and the mass media. Thus, these sectors are not only enormously important for national economies but also they join the parts of the world economy into the global system.

In other words, the mass media is one of the main components of the informational economy, and this explains the increased status of the mass media in the contemporary world. There are a number of other factors that make an impact on the dominance of the mass media. The first of the factors has been indirectly noted by

⁴⁴¹ Kastels, M. (2000) *Informatsionnaia Epokha, Ekonomika, Obshestvo i Kultura* [*The Informational Age: Economy, Society and Culture*]. Moskva: GU VShE.

⁴⁴² Ibid., p. 39

⁴⁴³ Castells, M. (1996) *The Informational Age: Economy, Society and Culture*, Vol.1, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Blackwell Publishers, p. 91.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 92

Castells when he points out that the informational economy is not only an information based one, but an economy which is embedded into cultural and social systems.⁴⁴⁵ It is clear that the mass media is the major bridge between the informational economy and national socio-cultural institutions.

In my opinion, another factor explaining the special position of the mass media in some countries is connected with the fact that any information (or media message) can be broken into two principal components. One of the components is an unbiased description of an event. Ideally, it describes what has happened without any subjective comments. That is the main component of any media report, especially of the Anglo-American mass media that aims to present events as objectively as possible.⁴⁴⁶

The second component is a remarkably less visible yet apparently unavoidable part of any media message. Any media message can hardly avoid assessing events in terms of goodness or badness. Negative or positive attitudes towards a particular event reflect its author's viewpoint or the preferences of the editors of the media company, which publishes or broadcasts it. Which component (informational or symbolic) is more presented in the content of media messages, and how the symbolic component is used in the media reports depend on many factors, especially on cultural, social, economic and political ones. The more a particular media company is biased in its political preferences, the more symbolically engaged are its reports. Some factors that may twist the objectivity of media messages have been noted in Chapter 3.

This thesis refers to the informational component that directly or indirectly reflects opinions, ideas and viewpoints as to the symbolic component. The skilful use of the symbolic component is a very powerful instrument in showing events in a particular light. Although the symbolic component is not frequently used in the contemporary Anglo-American mass media, it played an important role during the early period of Western democracies. Its importance was well understood by many politicians, and some of them acquired mass media companies in order to support their political campaigns.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁴⁶ Chalaby, J. (1998) *An Invention of Journalism*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.

⁴⁴⁷ Chalaby, J. (1997) "No ordinary press owners - press barons as a Weberian ideal type", in *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 19, pp. 621-641.

The symbolic component is one of the main constituents of the “symbolic method”, a new theoretical construct, which I shall try to describe in some detail in the final part of this section. Although it is a new concept, it is closely related to a number of important elements of political theory. Thus, the symbolic method is closely associated with the concepts of *symbolic power*, which have been suggested by John Thompson and Pierre Bourdieu. Thompson uses the term *symbolic power* in order to describe “the capacity to influence actions and beliefs of others [...] by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms.”⁴⁴⁸ Symbolic power is very important for political groups (especially in democratic societies), since their political success depends on their ability to persuade others and control events.

Any power, however, needs agents and methods of exercising it. In my view, this important dimension has not been adequately developed, yet. Although Bourdieu used the notion of *symbolic systems*, which may be regarded as main vehicles of symbolic power,⁴⁴⁹ he did not pay much attention to the methods. I am attempting to address this important issue by stating that the symbolic method, introduced in this chapter, is a means of exercising symbolic power.

In order to define the symbolic method in more precise terms, the concept of *symbolic capital*, another very important construct of political communications, introduced by Bourdieu,⁴⁵⁰ needs to be taken into account. Symbolic capital is “any type of capital (economic, cultural, and so on) that happened to be legitimised or prestigious in a particular field.”⁴⁵¹ Although it may be associated with any field, symbolic capital is an essential asset of political success because it reflects the accumulated reputation, prestige and respect of political groups or individuals.

As symbolic capital is important, anything that impacts the symbolic capital of a politician is naturally of particular importance for him.⁴⁵² Any blow to the reputation of a

⁴⁴⁸ Thompson, J. (2000) *Political Scandal, Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, Polity, p. 98.

⁴⁴⁹ Bourdieu, P. (1990) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press, Chapter 7; Couldry, N. (2004) “Media meta-capital: Extending the range of Bourdieu’s field theory”, in D. Swartz and V. Zolberg (eds) *After Bourdieu: Influence, Critique, Elaboration*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 177.

⁴⁵⁰ Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press.

⁴⁵¹ Bourdieu, P. (1986) “The Production of Belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods”, in R. Collins et al. (eds) *Media, Culture and Society: A Critical Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 132, 133, Bourdieu, P. *Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 230.

⁴⁵² Thompson, *Political Scandal, Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, p. 102.

politician affects his political career and even the prosperity of the political group to which he belongs, since it is likely to diminish his ability to gain wide public support, which is very important in democratic societies.⁴⁵³ This is the ultimate purpose of the symbolic method. Consequently, the relationship between symbolic capital, symbolic power and symbolic method can be outlined by this definition: the symbolic method is a means of exercising symbolic power that aims to impact the symbolic capital of parties involved.

The importance of symbolic capital for politicians has been realised for a long time. The entire industry, called public relations, has been developed with the purpose of managing social capital and mediating relations between politicians and the media.⁴⁵⁴ Public relations strategies aim to affect social capital by means of image engineering techniques and by manipulating media content. Public relations departments provide media organisations with symbolically engaged information that can be reported as news. Rodney Tiffen has outlined some characteristics and patterns of news through which press secretaries can influence news agenda, including fresh supply, completeness, brief formats, and drama content among others.⁴⁵⁵

Although communication between publicity strategists and the media are far from being straightforward and explicit, it is possible to identify two main principles of this relationship:

1. a low proportion of PR material given to news organisations appears in the news and even less appears exactly as its promoters wanted;
2. a large proportion of news is predominantly or partially the product of PR efforts.⁴⁵⁶

The relationship between sources and journalists can be compared to a dance, in which, however, more often than not, the sources do the leading.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ This may explain why political scandals have been so widespread and effectively used by political opponents in recent years.

⁴⁵⁴ Public relations - media and information management tactics designed to ensure that a party receives maximum favorable publicity, and the minimum of negative (B. McNair's definition, from McNair, *An Introduction to Political Communications*, p. 7).

⁴⁵⁵ Tiffen, *News and Power*, pp. 75, 76

⁴⁵⁶ Tiffen, *News and Power*, p. 74

⁴⁵⁷ Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 116.

It should be noted, that sometimes sources remain concealed. The unauthorised release of confidential information provided by concealed sources is frequently defined as a *leak*. Leaks are a very frequent form of supplying information to the media and they play an important role in contemporary politics. Another form of revealing discrete information is *briefing*. Background briefings differ from leaks by their semi-institutional nature, as they are normally given to a group of journalists rather than an individual reporter.⁴⁵⁸

Various public relations strategies, leaks and briefings can be used in numerous forms and varieties. Thus, the symbolic method includes not only the use of the symbolic component, which has been analysed earlier in this section. Damage to a political reputation can also be caused by political scandals, large media campaigns, and by a series of relatively minor blows, which step by step demolish the symbolic capital of the politician or politicians who are under media attack. The symbolic method encompasses all forms of disseminating information that targets the reputation of politicians, and some of its most popular forms are discussed in the next section.

6.2.2. *Political Scandal, Information Wars and other Forms of the Symbolic Method*

Let us start this section with an analysis of *scandals*. There are several definitions of scandal in academic studies. Thompson points out that “scandal” refers to “action or events involving certain kind of transgressions which become known to others and are sufficiently serious to elicit a public response.”⁴⁵⁹ Little by little, scandals become more closely associated with the mass media. In simple terms, political scandal is a media campaign which publicly criticises something that has been done by a politician which is considered to be unacceptable for a man involved in politics.

Scandals as a mediated event have been happening in democratic societies since the eighteenth century. Several factors why democratic societies are prone to scandal have been noticed by social researchers. First, democratic societies consist of many political

⁴⁵⁸ Tiffen, *News and Power*, p. 97

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

parties that compete with each other in order to gain political power. Competition is the norm in this society, which makes the parties search for strategies and techniques that may effectively undermine their opponents.

The second factor refers to the fact that political election is an essential part of democracy. Consequently, politicians' reputation is a very important asset, and since scandals can affect the politicians' reputation, they are regarded as a powerful weapon. Thompson explains this as follows: "Scandal can destroy a vital resource upon which politicians must to some extent rely – namely, their reputation and good name – destroy ability to persuade others."⁴⁶⁰

The third factor is a relative autonomy of the media in most democratic countries. Although the mass media is not entirely independent from political actors, it is more self-regulating than the mass media in authoritarian regimes. The fourth factor is the commercial nature of Western media companies. This forces them to attract public attention by publishing high profile stories. The final factor is the dominance of the rule of law. It makes the space of politics more open for criticism than in authoritarian countries because powerful actors have less power to put pressures on the mass media.⁴⁶¹

Political scandals can be broken into several groups: sexual-political scandals, financial-political scandals and power scandals. Sex scandals reveal activities of politicians which transgress prevailing norms of sexual relations. Financial-political scandals disclosure illegal practises of acquisition and relocation of economic resources. Power scandals target events and political groups which transgress norms of acquisition and exercising political power.⁴⁶²

Although political scandals are widespread in democratic countries, this form of the symbolic method is less common in Russia because the Russian mass media are significantly less independent from powerful actors than the media in Western democracies. In the West, a political scandal is a rather unanimous involvement of mass media companies into the blaming of a politician, in which the mass media acts as an independent watchdog of moral norms.

⁴⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media*.

⁴⁶¹ Thompson, *Political Scandal, Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, p. 97.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Russian media organisations are more dependent on powerful actors and are more likely to promote their political will. Because of that many researchers call this phase of the development of the Russian mass media *instrumental*.⁴⁶³ There is much evidence of this created by politicians, researchers and journalists themselves. For example, Ludmila Telen, the deputy editor of *Moscow News*, said, “Freedom of speech and the independent attitude of the mass media were the first gains of *perestroika*. Today, disappointment and disillusionment in the mass media are becoming disappointment in democracy itself.”⁴⁶⁴

Some other examples are to be noted later in this section. In the meantime, this can be illustrated by the words of Litvinenko, the former lieutenant-colonel of the FSB, who worked closely with the Russian mass media. In an interview, he said he believed that nearly 90 per cent of the stories in the Russian mass media were paid for.⁴⁶⁵

Since the dependency of the mass media on powerful actors results in it being broken into groups, another form of the symbolic method is more prevalent in Russia. As far as a large-scale symbolic competition is concerned, powerful Russian political syndicates are involved in so-called *information wars*. Information wars have become increasingly popular in Russia since the end of the 1990s. It is believed that the first information war between Lukoil and Oneksimbank, two powerful Russian syndicates, began in 1997. The first episode of the war was the competition for the shares of the newspaper *Izvestia*. Oneksimbank succeeded by taking more than fifty per cent, while Lukoil managed to buy 49 per cent. Finally, the sides reached an agreement that Lukoil’s loss would be compensated by taking control over other large firms.

The second episode of the war took place in 1997 and regarded the privatisation of Sibneft, a major Russian oil company, which was later entirely controlled by Roman Abramovich. Oneksimbank decided to bid although this was seen by many as a break of an informal agreement between these powerful groups.

Another episode of the war between the two international consortiums happened in the summer of the same year. They competed for a 25 per cent stake in Sviazinvest, the biggest Russian telecommunication company, which included 76 regional telephone

⁴⁶³ For example, Zassoursky, I. (1999) *Mass media vtoroy respubliki* [The mass media of the second republic]. Moscow State University.

⁴⁶⁴ Hoffman, “Powerful Few Rule Russian Mass Media”, p. A01.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with Litvinenko.

firms. The first attempt of selling this company had taken place in 1995. However, the talks with STET, an Italian company that was interested in this acquisition, were finally cancelled without any acceptable agreement.

The second bid took place in 1997. One consortium consisted of Soros's Fund Quantum, Deutsche Bank and Oneksimbank. Another group included Gusinsky's Most-Bank and Alfa-Bank, controlled by Berezovsky. Finally, Sviazinvest was bought by Oneksimbank. As compensation for this defeat, Alfa-Bank obtained a controlling stake in TNK, one of the biggest Russian oil companies. Because the result of the auction was disappointing for some parties, they started an information war. The scenario of this war has been described by Ivan Zassoursky in his book *The Mass Media of the Second Republic*⁴⁶⁶ and is outlined below.

The day after the auction, Dorenko,⁴⁶⁷ a reporter for news programme *Vremia*, claimed that Oneksimbank had stolen several million dollars from the plant Azot in Cherepovets, an industrial city in the North Western region of Russia. The daily *Segodnia* published an article that doubted the legitimacy of the auction because the shares had been very cheap, and the procedure of the competition had not been transparent enough.⁴⁶⁸ On 27 July 1997, *Moscow News* published a few articles that repeated the accusations of Oneksimbank in dirty transactions and showed the scheme how the money of the plant Azot had been transferred abroad.⁴⁶⁹

On 28 July 1998, the newspaper *Segodnia* published an article that claimed that Oneksimbank was involved in the trial on illegal transactions with the money from the state budget. In addition, the article drew attention to suspicious friendly ties between Potanin, the President of Oneksimbank and Alfred Kokh, a member of the Russian government. The author argued that Oneksimbank had problems with the law and, consequently, the result of the auction was illegal.⁴⁷⁰

Another article of this newspaper claimed that some powerful groups in the Russian government were linked to Oneksimbank, and they intended to shut down

⁴⁶⁶ Zassoursky, *Mass media vtoroy respubliki*.

⁴⁶⁷ A Berezovsky's supporter.

⁴⁶⁸ Soldatov, A. (1997) "Konverti vskrivali tseliy chas" [It took almost an hour to open envelopes], *Segodnia*, 26.07.1997.

⁴⁶⁹ Denisov, A. (1997) "Plokhie Dengi?" [Dirty money?], *Moskovskie Novosti*, 27.07.1997.

⁴⁷⁰ Zviagilsky (1997) "Dengi Zapakhli" [Money starts smelling], *Segodnia*, 28.07.1997.

oppositional mass media companies, such as TV channel ORT. This was allegedly done in order to make the media forget the involvement of Oneksimbank in illegal transactions.⁴⁷¹

On 29 July 1997, *Kommersant Daily*, the newspaper controlled by Berezovsky, published a Dorenko's interview in which he argued that the vice-premier Nemtsov tried to put pressures on the mass media. *Novaia Gazeta*, another newspaper linked to Berezovsky, assumed that Oneksimbank had compromising materials regarding Nemtsov, and this explained why Nemtsov tried to defend Oneksimbank.⁴⁷²

Another article in this newspaper assumed that Potanin planned to become the President of Russia. The article claimed that Potanin intended to use his media companies and to close all other mass media organisations.⁴⁷³ The editors of the newspaper were aware of the fact that Yeltsin did not like to hear about possible opponents in the election campaign and attempted to encourage him to take action against Potanin.

The information war continued the following day with a few publications in *Novaia Gazeta*, which claimed that a few Western companies owned a part of Oneksimbank and, consequently, this could undermine the national security of Russia.⁴⁷⁴ Zvigilsky's articles in *Segodnia* repeated this argument and claimed that Oneksimbank used the mass media in order to manipulate public opinion. In addition, Zvigilsky argued that Chubais and Nemtsov should take the main responsibility for establishing *bandit* capitalism in Russia.⁴⁷⁵

The news programme *Vremia* announced that Oneksimbank might have been involved in the killings of two senior managers of the St. Petersburg port. Also, it revealed that the flat of Patarkathishvili, the deputy to Director General of ORT at that time, had been burgled and a number of very important documents had been stolen.

⁴⁷¹ Trofimova, E. (1997) "Viydet li zavtra v efir ORT? Perviy kanal riskuet razdelit uchast Izvestiy" [Is ORT to broadcast tomorrow? Channel 1 risks to repeat the fate of *Izvestiya*], *Segodnia*, 28.07.1997.

⁴⁷² Mulin, S. (1997) "Programa 'Vremia' otrkrito atakovala Vladimira Potanina" [Programme *Vremia* openly attacked Vladimir Potanin], *Novaia Gazeta*, 29.07.1997.

⁴⁷³ Koshkareva, T. and Narzikulov, R. (1997) "Stanet li Potanin presidentom Rossii?" [Is Potanin to become Russian president?], *Novaia Gazeta*, 29.07.1997.

⁴⁷⁴ Babich, D. (1997) "Dengi Sorosa pomogli Oneksimbanku" [Soros's money helped *Oneksimbank*], *Novaia Gazeta*, 30.07.1997.

⁴⁷⁵ Zvigilsky, A. (1997) "Boris Nemtsov progovorilsia. Zhertvam 'banditskogo' capitalsima posvishaetsia", *Segodnia*, 30.07.1997.

The next day, the newspapers of the group Most continued to accuse Soros of involvement in dirty business transactions. Potanin was accused of not saying the truth, and Yeltsin was blamed of not being able to defeat the growing political ambitions of some politicians led by Nemtsov.⁴⁷⁶ The newspapers controlled by Berezovsky also published a few articles that disputed the legitimacy of the acquisition of Sviazinvest,⁴⁷⁷ and assumed that Oneksimbank was cheating during the privatisation of Norilsky Nickel, the major nickel plant of Russia.⁴⁷⁸

On 1 August 1997, Oneksimbank was accused of using different money laundering schemes for paying its winning bid for Sviazinvest. In particular, *Segodnia* argued that Oneksimbank illegally transferred huge sums of money to Cyprus.⁴⁷⁹ Also, the newspaper accused Nemtsov of corruption.⁴⁸⁰

The next day, news programme *Vremia* repeatedly accused Oneksimbank of illegal transactions with Norilsky Nickel and revealed that the flat of the journalist who was investigating some details of Oneksimbank had been searched.

On 4 August 1997, *Novaia Gazeta* published the text of talks between Nemtsov and Lisovsky, an influential man of the Russian advertisement market. This article assumed that Nemtsov had deliberately tried to suspend the law on tax declaration by state officials.⁴⁸¹ The same newspaper published Dorenko's interview in which he argued that Oneksimbank was rather a *bandit* "roof" than a normal bank. The newspaper *Segodnia* supported this idea and claimed that the Prosecutor's Office should probe Oneksimbank because of the presence of numerous examples of evidence that this bank had been involved in illegal economic activities.⁴⁸²

Segodnia continued publishing negative stories about Oneksimbank the next day. It published a diagram that showed how Oneksimbank made profit from its illegal

⁴⁷⁶ Lobachev, T. (1997) "Pechalnie posledstvia malaziyskoko Sviazinvesta" [Sad consequences of Malaysian Sviazinvest], *Segodnia*, 31.07.1997.

⁴⁷⁷ Babich, D. (1997) "Chubais vse raziasnil presidentu" [Chubais has explained everything to the president], *Novaia Gazeta*, 31.07.1997.

⁴⁷⁸ Ivanov, N. (1997) "Seryznie pretenzii nakanune auktiona" [Serious allegations on the eve of auction], *Novaia Gazeta*, 31.07.1997.

⁴⁷⁹ Zviagilsky, A. (1997) "Otkuda dengi? Iz tumbochki" [Where the money from?], *Segodnia*, 1.08.1997.

⁴⁸⁰ Voropaev, V. (1997) "Gusinsky nameren podat v sud na Potanina" [Gusinsky intends to sue Potanin], *Novaia Gazeta*, 1.08.1997.

⁴⁸¹ Minkin (1997) "Ya lublu kogda tarelki ochen bolshie" [I like large plates], *Novaia Gazeta*, 4.08.1997.

⁴⁸² Trofimov, E. (1997) "Desiat dney, kotorye nas potriasli" [Ten days that hit us], *Segodnia*, 4.08.1997.

activities.⁴⁸³ Also, the newspaper worried about the increasing embeddedness of Oneksimbank in Russia's political, executive and financial networks, and it expressed its concerns regarding the growing monopoly of Oneksimbank.⁴⁸⁴

However, the campaign against Oneksimbank did not succeed. Oneksimbank won the second bid on Norilsky nickel on 5 August 1997. The next day, the newspapers of the group Most and media organisations controlled by Berezovsky published several very critical articles which argued that the government was not able to stop Oneksimbank from its illegal expansion. They claimed that all Oneksimbank's dealings should be cancelled.

The informational campaign continued the next day. *Segodnia* published a few stories that repeatedly accused Oneksimbank of illegal consumption of public money for its profit.⁴⁸⁵ *Moskovsky Komsomolets* published data that said that the Russian state kept 10 per cent of its money in Oneksimbank, and claimed that the Russian population suffered from the illegal dealings of Oneksimbank due to a delay in payments of salaries and pensions caused by the fact that Oneksimbank used the money in order to increase its own profit.⁴⁸⁶

The information war was so visible that Yeltsin tried to stop it. On 15 September 1997, he invited Khodorovsky, Gusinsky, Fridman, Vinogradov, Smolensky and Potanin in the Kremlin in an attempt to reach an agreement between conflicting powerful groups. However, this attempt failed.⁴⁸⁷

The fact that Russian political parties and economic actors increasingly often use various forms of the symbolic method in conflicts with each other can be illustrated by the symbolic confrontation between Baltiysky Zavod and Severnaya Verf, two large St. Petersburg enterprises, during the competition for the construction of two destroyers that had been ordered by the government of China.

⁴⁸³ Yabova, E. and Kislyarsky, A. (1997) "Konkurs po Norilskomy nickelu priostanovlen" [Bid on Norilsky nickel is suspended], *Segodnia*, 5.08.1997.

⁴⁸⁴ Radzikhovsky, L. (1997) "Cherny peredel" [Black redistribution], *Segodnia*, 5.08.1997.

⁴⁸⁵ Rogachev, N. (1997) "Samiy upolnomochenniy iz upolnomochennikh bankov. Za proshliy god cherez Oneksimbank proshlo 45 trillionov rubley tamozhennikh deneg", *Segodnia*, 7.08.1997.

⁴⁸⁶ Vasilev, K. (1997) "Piat trillionov dlia Potanina. Pochemu gosudarstvo derzhit v kommercheskom banke desiatuu chast svoego dolga pered naseleniem?" [Five trillions for Potanin. Why does the state keep one tenth of its debt to the population in a commercial bank?], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 7.08.1997.

⁴⁸⁷ Mukhin, *Bizness-Elita i Gosudarstvennaia Vlast: Kto Vladeet Rossiey na Rubezhe Vekov*, p. 12.

Severnaya Verf has already built two destroyers for the Chinese Army. The Chinese government was very satisfied by the previous destroyers and wanted another two destroyers to be built by the same firm. However, Baltiysky Zavod was supported by some very influential politicians such as Ilia Klebanov, a vice-premier, and Vladimir Potekhin, the leader of Edinstvo (a group in the State Duma). Their support was so powerful that it had almost been decided to give this profitable contract (US\$ 1,4 billion) to Baltiysky Zavod. Nevertheless, the support from Kasyanov, the Prime Minister of Russia at that time, finally resulted in transferring the contract to Severnaya Verf.

According to the contract, all parts of equipment of the destroyers should be new. Unfortunately, it became evident that Severnaya Verf was not able find the necessary new equipment for destroyers because its subcontractors did not manage to supply all essential parts. Baltiysky Zavod was one of the subcontractors and it cancelled its supply of an essential piece of equipment. It was irreplaceable since Baltiysky Zavod was the only producer of this ship equipment in Russia.

As executives of Severnaya Verf were unable to find the essential new equipment for the destroyers, they decided to use second hand equipment from other ships. In order to cover the replacement, the workers of Severnaya Verf secretly changed numbers on the parts of equipment so that they could be presented as new. Baltiysky Zavod told journalists about this fraud during a press conference. In return Severnaya Verf revealed many commercial secrets of Baltiysky Zavod.⁴⁸⁸

Berezovsky and his team also realise the importance of the symbolic method in their confrontation with the Russian president. In any case, Berezovsky gives numerous interviews to the Russian and Western mass media, in which he uses any opportunity to damage Putin's political reputation. Moreover, he spends enormous sums of money on publishing reports that target the political image of the Russian president. For example, in September 2003, Berezovsky paid almost one million American dollars to a number of influential world newspapers for publishing a request of his political team to the President of the United States. This letter asked Bush to reconsider his opinion regarding Putin and his policy because this policy undermines the main principles of democracy.

⁴⁸⁸ Kalinin, V. (2002) "Tak ne dostavaysia zhe ti nikomu" [Okay. Nobody is to own it], *Grani.ru*, 25.07.2003.

It should be noted that information wars are rather large media campaigns arranged and controlled by powerful parties behind the media. It is evident that only very powerful networks are rich enough to be able to use this form of exercising symbolic power. That is why less expensive forms of the symbolic method are used in Russia more frequently. Certainly, the above-mentioned examples do not cover all forms and techniques of the symbolic method, but it is not aim of this research to describe all of them in detail.⁴⁸⁹ Instead, the next section analyses the place of organised crime reporting among other forms and techniques used in the space of politics.

6.3. Reports on Organised Crime and Corruption: an Important Part of the Symbolic Method.

There are many techniques used by the mass media for political coverage. Personalization of events, dominance of political advertising and simplified reports, targeted mailing, and the focus on images rather than on events are main features of media reporting in many countries, in particular in the U.K. and the U.S.⁴⁹⁰ (For example, the format of personalization was used by the British media during political campaigns of Margaret Thatcher, Neil Kinnocks and John Major).⁴⁹¹

Some techniques are of special importance for this study. Those are negativism and relying on leaking of damaging information. For example, in Britain, negative advertising was especially effective in the Tories political campaign in 1992 and helped them win the election.⁴⁹² Negativism in media coverage is even more widespread and efficient in Russia. There are many elections in Russia and it is rather difficult for common people to distinguish between candidates on any particular post because of significant similarity of their political programmes. However, the choice may be easier if the voters are informed about negative features of some candidates.

⁴⁸⁹ More information on these techniques can be found in Cherepanova, I. (2003) *"Angelskiy Ogon": Krasnie PR Rossii* ["Angel's Fire": Russia's red PR]. Moskva: KSP Plus.

⁴⁹⁰ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, p. 324.

⁴⁹¹ Berry, S. (1992) "Party strategy and the media: the failure of Labour's 1991 election campaign", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45, (4), pp. 565-81.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

Negativism can have many forms,⁴⁹³ and this thesis emphasises that stories on organised crime and corruption are one of the forms of negativism, which is used by the mass media controlled by power elites in their competition with opponents. For example, it is easy to see that many stories in the information war described in the previous section referred to illegal economic activities, corruption, and ties with organised crime.

Another interesting example is given by Andrey Konstantinov, a leading investigative journalist from St. Petersburg,⁴⁹⁴ regarding Gongadze's murder. It is well known that Gongadze published several articles which accused Kuchma, the President of Ukraine, of corruption. After Gongadze was murdered, many politicians, journalists and people believed that Kuchma was involved in this killing.

After an analysis of evidence, Konstantinov and his investigative team concluded that it was unlikely that Gongadze had been killed by Kuchma's people. Konstantinov came to conclusion that Gongadze had been murdered because of his negative stories against some political opponents of his boss. Konstantinov drew attention to the fact that the leading Ukrainian party Sobornost aimed to take as many seats on the Parliament of Ukraine as possible. For this purpose, the leaders of the party decided to use the symbolic method and employed several journalists, who published numerous negative stories regarding political opponents, including the leading governmental officials. Gongadze was the editor of one of the newspapers that published these reports.⁴⁹⁵

The special place of organised crime reporting (which is normally associated with investigative journalism) in political communications in contemporary Russia is confirmed by many sources. It is possible to give an example that indirectly illustrates this. The Mass Media Centre at St. Petersburg State University regularly organises summer schools on various aspects of the news media in Russia. It is interesting to notice that two last summer schools were on investigative journalism and on the role of the media in political elections. Although these two themes are rather different from the viewpoint of Western democracies, the programmes of the two last summer schools of

⁴⁹³ Some detail can be found in Lukashov, A. and Ponidelko, A. (2002) *Cherniy PR Kak Sposob Ovladeniya Vlastiu* [Black PR as a method to capture power]. St. Petersburg: Business Press.

⁴⁹⁴ To be reviewed in the next chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁹⁵ URL http://www.comprice.ru/set/2001-27_2.shtml, consulted in July 2003.

the Mass Media Centre did not differ significantly. The same lecturers gave similar presentations and seminars.

Another example which illustrates the use of reports on organised crime is the media campaign against Alexander Litvinenko, the former lieutenant-colonel of the FSB. Litvinenko used to work for the Unit of Tackling Organised Crime and was well informed about ties between law enforcement and criminal organisations. In 1999, Litvinenko and a few of his partners organised a press conference. They told the journalists that the leadership of the FSB ordered them to kill Berezovsky and a few other businessmen. They argued that the FSB used illegal methods and resembled an organised crime group itself.

This case was clearly related to the confrontation between Russian powerful actors. It is interesting to note what happened after the press conference. Litvinenko claimed that some newspapers accused him of numerous killings and portrayed him as a criminal, despite the lack of evidence of his involvement in any crime. For example, the newspaper *Segodnia* published an article which claimed that Litvinenko was involved in fifteen murders and ten other criminal offences. Another article was published in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. In this article, the director of the FSB revealed that Litvinenko was suspected of taking bribes and this caused the FSB to secretly record his telephone talks.⁴⁹⁶

Litvinenko has always denied his involvement in any murder and insisted that everything in these articles was false.⁴⁹⁷ He said that he asked general Zdanovich, his commander, why he had not corrected these false reports publicly. Zdanovich replied that he did not intend to do so. Then, Litvinenko himself decided to publicly deny these false accusations and organised another TV presentation. In this TV presentation he repeatedly accused the FSB of having committed many crimes, including political murders.

Litvinenko claimed that the FSB arrested him after the presentation. He was charged with several criminal offences and sentenced. He pleaded not guilty and insisted that his case was politically motivated.⁴⁹⁸ The court verdict regarding Litvinenko was

⁴⁹⁶ Litvinenko, A. (2002) *Lubianskaya Prestupnaia Gruppirovka* [Lubianka organised crime group], New York: Grani, *Grani.ru*, and from Litvinenko's interview, London, July, 2003.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Interview with Litvinenko, London, 2003.

later changed and he was released on bail. He managed to leave Russia and was granted asylum in Britain. He is co-author of the book and co-editor of the film *Vzorvannaya Rossia*, which attempted to prove the involvement of the FSB in the explosion of two apartment buildings in Moscow that killed nearly three hundred Russian citizens and led to a new war with Chechen rebels.

In an interview, Litvinenko revealed that law enforcement agencies recruit journalists in order to be able to publish in the media the information which can help them put pressure on their opponents. For example, he argued that Alexander Khinshtein, a leading Russian investigative journalist who worked for the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, had been recruited by a department within the FSB.⁴⁹⁹

It should be noted that journalists writing stories on corruption and organised crime as a part of political competition might be negatively portrayed and accused of similar crimes by other media companies. For example, the newspaper *Vozrozhdenie Urala*, a Chelyabinsk newspaper, published some negative reports about Galkin after he had been sued for libel because of his articles accusing Peter Sumin, the Governor of Chelyabinsk Oblast, of corruption.

In turn, Galkin sued the newspaper *Vozrozhdenie Urala* for libel against him. Galkin argued that the articles damaged his reputation by portraying him as a man who hates people and is Putin's uncompromising opponent. The response of *Vozrozhdenie Urala* was to publish a new negative story about Galkin.⁵⁰⁰ The article criticised Galkin's arguments and reminded its readers that Galkin was not only linked to people who might be connected with the lords of organised crime but also was charged with a number of criminal offences.

Berezovsky also uses crime and corruption stories in his political battle against the Russian President. In August 2003, two months before the scheduled launch of Berezovsky's extradition trial, Berezovsky published an open letter in the newspaper *Kommersant*.⁵⁰¹ Berezovsky asked all people and parties that disagree with Putin's policy to form a strong political opposition and elect another president. Berezovsky referred to

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁰ Gurevich, A. (2003) "Dela Deputatskie...Ugolovnie" [Issues of the MP ... Criminal Issues] (the title implies that some MPs are involved in committing crimes), *Vozrozhdenie Urala*, No. 22 (252) August, p. 1.

⁵⁰¹ The editors of the newspaper noted that it was an advertising article and it was published because of the personal request of the owner of their newspaper.

the events relating to one of the biggest Russian oil companies *Yukos* and claimed that this proved that Putin intended to redistribute ownership in Russia. Berezovsky warned Putin that such a policy would cause a civil war in Russia.

Berezovsky named several elites that could and should resist Putin's policy. The first of them was represented by regional leaders (governors), who lost a great deal of their power after Putin strengthened the Russian state. Berezovsky argued that oligarchs are another elite, which dislikes Putin because he threatens to undermine their wealth. The army should also be dissatisfied with Putin's policy because he did allow the army to win a single military battle and it lost its influence in the CIS, Middle East, Vietnam and Cuba. According to Berezovsky, the mass media is one of the elites. The power of the mass media has also significantly decreased during Putin's presidency.

Berezovsky pointed out that Putin is supported only by two elites: state bureaucracy and law enforcement agencies. He argued that bureaucrats want to regain control over ownership of Russia. However, law enforcement agencies, which are successors of the KGB, may be disappointed by Putin because he has been too soft. Berezovsky underlined that Putin's background is not law enforcement (CheKa) but bureaucracy.

It is interesting to notice that Berezovsky referred to Putin's links to organised crime in order to show the real danger of Putin's policy. Berezovsky reminded a number of cases that might have indicated ties between Putin and the Russian Mafia. Some of them are outlined below.

On 13 May 2000, the police arrested Ritter, the brother of the Minister of Lichtenstein. He was accused of links to drug dealers in Columbia and Russia. In 1992-96, when Putin was responsible for external contacts of the St. Petersburg administration, Ritter's company SPAG (St. Petersburg Immobilien und Beteiligungs AG) invested the laundered money from drug trade in its St. Petersburg business, and it was reported that Putin provided political protection for this firm. According to some documents, Putin was a consultant of this company until 23 May 2000.

In the middle of the 1990s, a group of members of Lensovet (Council of Leningrad), headed by Maria Salye and Yury Gladkov, launched an investigation into trade licences and accused Putin of corruption. The group recommended that Sobchak

sack Putin from his post.

Berezovsky noted that Putin was involved in the privatisation of the plant Samtrest, together with Mikhail Mirilashvili, who is thought to be linked to organised crime. In addition, Putin was involved in the privatisation of Baltiysky Sea Terminal (BMP). Berezovsky claimed that the control of BMP allowed some businessmen to illegally trade Russian ships abroad. All transactions were mediated by Treber, an influential criminal *avthoritet*.

Berezovsky drew attention to the fact that when Putin was a vice-governor of St. Petersburg, he coordinated the illegal trade of military submarines abroad through Leningrad Admiralteyskoe Obedinenie. A deputy to the Director General of this enterprise was killed in 1994, reportedly because he tried to stop this illegal trade.

Also, Berezovsky pointed out that the corporation XX Trest, which had been created by Putin together with Nizheshin and Goldman (members of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly), transferred some public money given for the construction of several buildings in St. Petersburg (the business centre *Peter Great* is one of them) to Spain. Putin reportedly used this money in order to buy a villa in Benidorm and a hotel in another Spanish town.⁵⁰²

Finally, it should be noted that the use of negative stories, including information regarding links to organised crime, in political campaigns has been recognized by all political actors in Russia. Confirmation of this can be taken the announcement by Alexander Vishniakov, the Chairman of the Election Committee of the Russian Federation, that all leading Russian political parties have formed a committee which is supposed to control the use of the mass media coverage (in other words, control the use of the symbolic method) in the election to the State Duma in 2003. This committee was created because political parties were disappointed by the way the mass media was used in the previous elections.

The role of the new committee was to analyse any particular conflict (for example, publishing *compromat*, or negative stories about candidates). This committee consisted of the representatives of all leading political parties, it assessed how serious the

⁵⁰² Berezovsky, B. (2003) "Noviy peredel, Chto delat?" [New redistribution, what is to be done?] A letter to the newspaper *Kommersant*, *Kommersant*, No. 129 (2732), 24.07.03, (URL <http://www.kommersant.ru/archive/archive-material.html?docId=398799>, consulted on 25.07.2003).

conflict was and determined who was in the right. If necessary, the Committee was given the power to inform the Central Election Committee of the Russian Federation (TsIK) and law enforcement agencies about the conflict, and to ask them to get involved in resolving the situation.⁵⁰³

Time is needed in order to estimate how this means of control would impact organised crime reporting. In the meantime, it should be noted that while this chapter was written, the leading oppositional website *Grani.ru* informed its visitors about the alleged links of the Russian President to the Mafia.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has suggested an explanation of why, in spite of numerous difficulties and obstacles, the Russian mass media reports on organised crime and corruption. This explanation is based on social and political changes that have happened in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This chapter has elaborated the argument that the widespread use of democratic values in Russia has resulted in making democratic elections an essential part of the Russian political system. Almost all governmental posts in Russia from local government to the presidency are now being filled through democratic elections.

This chapter has pointed out that the news media has become an important weapon in the political confrontation between power elites in Russia. Negative media coverage of political opponents can provide a very significant competitive advantage by effectively undermining the reputation of rivals. This makes the symbolic method a very efficient political weapon.

It has been argued that reports on organised crime and corruption are one of the forms of the symbolic method. Reports by the mass media about ties between some politicians and gangsters normally diminish chances of those in report being elected to important positions. This encourages the inclusion of organised crime and corruption

⁵⁰³ News Programme *Vremia*, 23.07.2003.

stories in political campaigns of powerful actors, and explains why reporting on organised crime flourishes in Russia.

Chapter 7

Investigative Journalism in Soviet/Post-Soviet Russia

The previous chapter has explored the role of the mass media in political communications. It has been shown that Russian media companies frequently use hidden techniques of public relations in order to provide a symbolic support for politicians. It should be noted, though, that the recurrent use of the symbolic method erodes the borders of the public sphere in Russia. This chapter, therefore, reviews the definition of the public sphere and examines its relationship with investigative journalism. I shall argue that investigative journalism is supposed to be a watchdog of the public sphere since the main task of investigative journalists is to alert the public when the boundaries between legal and illegal action are overstepped by some businessmen or politicians.

This chapter, furthermore, will review the history of Russian investigative journalism and assess its guarding role in post-Soviet Russia. It should be noted that the nature and major features of investigative journalism in many other countries have been essentially studied by researchers. For example, Clark Mollenhoff reviewed investigative reporting in the United States,⁵⁰⁴ Burgh focused on the United Kingdom⁵⁰⁵ and Sophie Gerbaud summarised the main developments of investigative journalism in France.⁵⁰⁶ Even though investigative reporting plays a very important role in contemporary Russia, Russian investigative journalism has not been sufficiently explored in academic literature. This chapter is a pioneering study in this respect.

The purpose of this chapter is not only to present the major trends of investigative journalism in post-Russia but also to introduce its major actors. It describes some leading investigative media organisations and journalists and reviews their biographies, methods and achievements. Although it is difficult to distinguish the major media affiliation of

⁵⁰⁴ Mollenhoff, C.R. (1981) *Investigative Reporting, From Courthouse to White House*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.

⁵⁰⁵ Burgh, *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*.

⁵⁰⁶ Gerbaud, S. (1993) *Le Journalisme D'investigation en France de 1945 a Nos Jours*. Universitete de Paris X, Nanterre.

investigative journalists due to their contributions to all types of the media from the press to the Internet, section 2 of this chapter in a greater extent focuses on Russian investigative journalism in the press, section 3 refers to the developments on television, while the final section reviews the achievements of Russian investigative websites.

7.1. Investigative Journalism and the Public Sphere

It is difficult to over-estimate the significance of the public sphere in democratic societies. People have the right to know about controversial issues and events of public interest in order to make competent decisions about further social development.⁵⁰⁷ In other words, citizens need to have information about certain social, political and economic events and be able to express their critical evaluation. The purpose of the public sphere is to provide room for this important dialog. Thus, the public sphere can be viewed as an arena in which the democratic exchange of information takes place.⁵⁰⁸

The concept of the public sphere is important for social theory. For example, Jurgen Habermas has conducted his comprehensive analysis of the public sphere in an attempt to identify conditions for a rational debate among various social groups.⁵⁰⁹ He has argued in favour of balanced communication among equal people and pointed out that public communication can only benefit from the absence of pressures from the government or powerful business groups.

Nevertheless, Habermas admits that the golden age of the public sphere in Western societies ended in the eighteenth century. The ideal model of balanced communication was lost as a result of the rising intervention of commercial interests.⁵¹⁰ Capitalistic monopolisation increasingly transformed the media into profit-oriented commercial enterprises, and constrained public access to critical debate. This resulted in the erosion and decline of the public sphere.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ Hamelink, C. (1999) "International communications: global market and morality", in A. Mohammadi (ed.) *International Communications and Globalisation*. London: Sage, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁰⁸ Chambers, D. (2000) "Globalising Media Agendas: The Production of Journalism," in Burgh, H. (ed.) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*, London: Routledge, p. 109

⁵⁰⁹ Habermas, J. (1999) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁵¹⁰ Chambers, "Globalising Media Agendas: The Production of Journalism," p. 110

⁵¹¹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 4

The Russian public sphere experienced a similar scenario of development, but passed through all stages very quickly. At the end of the 1990s, the Russian public sphere was considerably eroded via the promotion of business interests in the media. The recent effort of the new Russian government to limit business intervention has not yet completely restored the essential balance. Investigative journalism could have an important role in the revival of the public sphere protected from state or commercial interference.

Investigative journalism is a branch of journalism that requires especially many investigative skills. A good definition is given by Hugo De Burgh:

An investigative journalist is a man or woman whose profession it is to discover the truth and to identify lapses from it in whatever media may be available. The act of doing this generally is called investigative journalism and is distinct from apparently similar work done by police, lawyers, auditors and regulatory bodies in that it is not limited as to target, not legally founded and closely connected to publicity.⁵¹²

Thus, publicity is an essential component of investigative journalism, and this makes it an important actor in the public sphere. Since the government and business frequently attempt to hide part of their activities, the professional investigative skills of this branch of journalism should secure its role as a watchdog of the public sphere.

Investigative journalists believe that there are some standards in business and politics that cannot be violated. These standards are held by most people and their violation should trigger public disapproval. The main task of investigative journalists is to alert the public, when the boundaries between legal and illegal action are overstepped by some business people or politicians. As many aspects of organised crime and corruption are on the boundary between legality and illegality, organised crime and corruption are a major concern for investigative journalism in Russia. This explains why this chapter reviews Russian investigative journalism and assess its role as a watchdog of the public sphere.

⁵¹² Burgh, H. (ed.) (2000) *Investigative Journalism: Context and Practice*. London: Routledge, p. 9.

7.2. Investigative Journalism in the Press

The press is the major host of the Russian investigative journalism. It is caused not only by the fact that printed press emerged significantly earlier than television but also by the features of the Soviet political system. The Soviet leadership controlled television to a far greater extent than the press, allowing only the most refined stories to be aired and only the most loyal people to be employed in television.

The Soviet newspapers were relatively more independent. Although Soviet newspapers also were under censorship, their editors were allowed to criticise selected aspects of Soviet life. It was always a risky business but, as far it was supported by some authorities, the newspapers could draw public attention to some of the deficiencies in the social and economic organisation of the Soviet Union.

There was the specific genre that was useful to expose negative phenomena, beginning in 1970s. This genre was called *satire*. Most of the earlier investigative stories in the Russian press were written in this form. Some newspapers published more satirical reports than others. Such newspapers as *Krokodil* [Crocodile] and *Literaturnaya Gazeta* [The Newspaper about Literature] were most known for their investigative stories.

7.2.1. Vitaly Vitaliev (1980-1990)

Some methods, themes and features of investigative journalism in Russia between 1980 and 1990 can be presented by reviewing the journalistic career of Vitaly Vitaliev. He was born in Kharkov (Ukraine) but later moved to Moscow. Due to his proficiency in English, he worked as an interpreter for the Ministry of Culture until 1979, when the war in Afghanistan started.

He started his journalistic career by publishing some satirical stories in the section Twelve Chairs of the *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. His debut was successful and he was awarded the Golden Calf literary prize, which was the most coveted award for a satirist in the Soviet Union. After that Vitaliev was offered a job of literature consultant in this newspaper. Some of his stories were also published in the magazine *Krokodil*, and the newspapers *Gudok* and *Trud*.

The letters from the readers of the newspaper were Vitaliev's best source of new stories. According to him, he received a huge amount of letters. He could choose the most interesting out of them and check the facts. If the editors of the newspaper thought that the new story was within allowed boundaries, they permitted it to be published in the newspaper.

It is an interesting point to note how the range of permitted topics changed during that period. At the beginning, only small misdoings of some senior officers of local enterprises were exposed in critical stories. For example, Vitaliev wrote stories about the terrible situation in a student dormitory at Blagoveshchensk agricultural institute and about inappropriate treatment of animals in a zoo.

Then, Vitaliev moved to the taboo topics of bribery and corruption. Bribe and bribe taking were very common crimes in Brezhnev's era. Sometimes, corrupt practices exceeded what was considered appropriate for that period and it drew attention of satirists. For example, Vitaliev wrote a story about the case when one of the Soviet deputy ministers demanded a tractor to cultivate his own piece of land from the director of a subordinate plant.⁵¹³ Although this action hardly can be considered as corruption from the point of view of many in the West or would be not be noteworthy from the viewpoint of the editors of current Russian newspapers, it was a serious offence during the Soviet period.

The range of permitted topics expanded significantly after Gorbachev was appointed the Secretary General of the Communist Party. It became possible to explore and publish stories about serious social phenomena. In 1986, Vitaliev wrote a story about prostitution in Russia. It was a difficult topic because in theory prostitution did not exist in the Soviet Union. In practice, prostitution in the major Russian cities, especially in the cities which were frequently visited by foreign tourists, was widespread.

Vitaliev's first intention was to focus on Moscow and Leningrad, two Russian capital cities. However, his bosses were not certain whether it was allowed so Vitaliev started with Sochi and Tuapse, two resort towns near Black Sea. What he discovered far exceeded his expectations. Vitaliev noted that the second secretary of the Sochi party committee, the major authority of the city, told him: "We cannot go on living like this.

⁵¹³ Vitaliev, V. (1990) *Special Correspondent: Investigating in the Soviet Union*. London: Hutchinson.

The town is being swamped by prostitutes from all over country.”⁵¹⁴ His words were confirmed by the local police chief who said, “the foreigners come to us asking to be protected from the prostitutes. But what can we do?” In fact, the police were practically helpless, because there were no laws against prostitution due to its ideological non-existence in the Soviet Union.

Vitaliev conducted some interviews with prostitutes and published the story “The Plague of Love”, which triggered thousands of letters and opened this formerly forbidden topic for further research. Many journalists started to write about prostitution. For example, the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* published an article on famous Moscow prostitutes Blokha (the Flea) and Yaponka (the Japanese girl).

However, Vitaliev admitted that it caused two unexpected results. First, this topic became tiresome to readers because of numerous publications. Secondly, many of the published stories described advantages of the life of prostitutes – restaurants, good cars and earnings far beyond of the reach of the common Soviet people. As a result, some women wrote to editorial offices of newspapers and asked to tell them more how to become prostitutes. A group of girls asked the *Literaturnaya Gazeta* to publish their call to the public authorities in order to allow their group to open a prostitutes’ cooperative. (Cooperatives were a form of legal private economic activity in Gorbachev’s Russia). These unexpected consequences forced Vitaliev to publish a story in *The Journalist* (the major magazine of Soviet journalists) in which he asked journalists to focus on negative aspects of the life of prostitutes.

7.2.2. Alexander Khinshtein

Alexander Evseevich Khinshtein is another prominent Russian investigative journalist. Khinshtein started his career in 1993 as a free licence journalist for the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* when he was seventeen years old. Although he did not have a degree in journalism at that time, he was included in the staff of the newspaper and became the editor of the section *Incidents*. Eventually, Khinshtein graduated from Moscow State University with a degree in journalism. At present, Khinshtein is an advisor to the editor-

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

in-chief of this newspaper⁵¹⁵ and the anchorman of the popular television show *Secret Materials*, the joint project of the TVTS (Moscow television channel) and the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.⁵¹⁶

Khinshtein focuses on corruption in the Russian officialdom and criminal activities of Russian oligarchs. Khinshtein is well known because many of his stories triggered political scandals and resulted in launching criminal investigations. Some officials such as General A. Starovoytov (Director General of FAPSI) and V. Serov, a vice-premier of the Russian government, were dismissed after his publications.

Khinshtein's most well-known story included some pieces of the recorded telephone conversation between Chubais and Ilushin concerning the situation when the security men guarding the White House (the House of the Russian Government) held several officers of the presidential team after they attempted to smuggle out a box holding US\$ 500,000. It was the first publication of talks between high-ranking members of Russian officialdom and it had a huge impact on the following widespread use of compromising stories for obtaining political dividends.⁵¹⁷

Another noteworthy Khinshtein investigation was on corruption in the Federal Department of Governmental Telecommunication (FAPSI). This department was responsible for all telecommunication in the Russian government, including recording, coding and decoding incoming messages. Khinshtein discovered a lot of evidence pointing to corruption in this department and published an article about it in his newspaper.⁵¹⁸ As a result of this publication, General Starovoytov, one of the heads of FAPSI, was dismissed.

Khinshtein revealed illegal methods of the protection company Atoll and described how some high-ranking officials got richer from the illegal dealings with State Short-Loan Deposits, which ended with the rouble collapse on 17 August 1998. Also,

⁵¹⁵ Brezhnev, A. (1997) "Alexander Khinshtein Politicheskie Rassledovania Vsegda Strashniy Risk" [Political Investigation are always risky], *Pressa*, No. 3.

⁵¹⁶ This show is about political scandals and criminal investigations. Also, it has demonstrated some achievements of law enforcement agencies in Russia and Belarus.

Programs of television company TV Centre, (URL <http://www.tvc.ru/programs/secret.html>, (consulted on 10.07.2003).

⁵¹⁷ Khinshtein, A. (1996) "Golosuy ili... Anatoly Chubais: 'No mi zhe ikh tuda poslali eti korobki nosit s millionami'" [Vote or... Anatoly Chyabais: "After all, we ordered them to carry these boxes with money"], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 15.11.1996.

⁵¹⁸ Brezhnev, "Alexander Khinshtein: Politicheskie rassledovania vsegda strashniy risk".

Khinshtein wrote about Berezovsky's illegal business transactions which involved the firms Aeroflot and Andava, as well as about Berezovsky's alleged links to Chechen criminal syndicates.

One of Khinshtein's stories "A bomb for the governor" was about the alleged plot of the enemies of Boris Gromov, the governor of Moscow Oblast, to replace him. In this story he published several audio recordings made by a Russian special unit. According to these records, Nasima Stolyarova, a member of the Commission for Electoral Practices Studies (one of the commissions of the State Duma), apparently have agreed to modify the results of the governor's election for some districts of the Moscow oblast in favour of the Gromov's adversary, who seemed to have promised to pay this dirty business.⁵¹⁹

When Khinshtein was asked about his journalistic job, he said that moral values are important to him and that he is proud of his work, not because of the money, but because he is contributing to the betterness of society. Otherwise he would be "digging up rubbish bins." Khinshtein revealed that he starts a new investigation by finding out who might benefit from the results of this research. He checks out whether other people are involved in a similar investigation and estimates whether he will remain independent from any powerful actors. According to Khinshtein, he does not take money for publishing his stories because it is against his moral values and he is afraid of losing independence.

Khinshtein pointed out that he prefers to carry out his investigations independently during all its stages. For example, he started his investigation on corruption in the Russian White House (the House of the Russian government)⁵²⁰ when he discovered a memo written by the security department of the Presidential administration about an involvement of a high-ranking official of the White House with the business of a German firm. Although this memo alone would have been sufficient for many journalists to write a story, Khinshtein decided to explore the facts. He found the man in Germany who negotiated with this Russian official, met with him, and obtained written evidence that the Russian official had taken a huge sum of money for his service.

⁵¹⁹ Lustritsky, D. (2002) "Sensatsia po moskovsky" [Sensation a la Moscow], *Vostochno-Sibirskaya Pravda*, 20 (24154), 31.01.2002.

⁵²⁰ Khinshtein, A. (1999) "Skelet iz Belogo Doma" [A skeleton from the White House], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.

In addition, Khinshtein obtained other evidence, including some records of the official's telephone conversations. This allowed Khinshtein to write and publish in the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* a huge scandalous story "A Skeleton from the White House."⁵²¹

In July 2005, Khinshtein published the story "An ascetic with a look at the Kremlin" accusing Kasyanov, the former Russian Prime-Minister, of corruption.⁵²² The investigative journalist claimed that Kasyanov purchased a luxury accommodation in Troitsa-Likovo, an elite Moscow district, almost for nothing. Khinshtein insisted that Kasyanov paid 11 million rubles (£230,000) for the property occupying 11,5 hectares while only one hectare of the district had market value of £1,67 million. He published two documents and identified the scheme showing how the former Prime Minister had become the owner of the valuable piece of land. On the basis of the story, the Russian Prosecutor Office started a probe into the privatisation of the property.⁵²³

It is evident that such an activity might cause serious problems for a journalist. Khinshtein noted that FAPSI tried to prove that he had been working for the Russian FSB (the Federal Security Service) and attempted to gather any information regarding Khinshtein's bank accounts in Western banks, but they did not succeed in their search. Also, Khinshtein was sued over his stories. For example, after his article "General Kuptsov's Brotherhood" was published in the newspaper *Versia* [A Look], Kuptsov sued Khinshtein for US\$ 20,000.

The Investigative Committee of MVD (The Ministry of the Interior) launched an inquiry into Khinshtein's illegal possession and use of fabricated documents. On 18 May 1999, Khinshtein was stopped by traffic police officers for a routine check. According to the officers' report, Khinshtein showed them a document N 03726, which was issued for Alexander Matveyev, an officer of the Administration of Criminal Department of GUV, with Khinshtein's photo. In addition, they discovered that he had an ID of the Press Secretary of Moscow Custom Department (with a licence which allows him to carry guns), an ID of a consultant of the Secretariat of the State Duma (the Russian Parliament) and an ID of an advisor to the deputy to the Chairman of Moscow Oblast Duma (the

⁵²¹ Brezhnev, "Alexander Khinshtein: Politicheskie rassledovaniya vseгда strashniy risk".

⁵²² Khinshtein, A. (2005) "Asket s vidom na Kreml'" [An ascetic with a look at the Kremlin], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, No. 28, 6-13.07.2005, pp. 4, 5.

⁵²³ Khinshtein, A. (2005) "Premyerniy fars" [Prime-Minister' farse], *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 20-27.07.2005, No. 29, pp. 4, 5.

Legislative Assembly of Moscow Borough). If Khinshtein was found guilty, he could have been jailed for 2 years.⁵²⁴

Some Russian mass media organisations published compromising stories regarding Khinshtein. For example, Khinshtein had some problems after he had published the story about the plot against the Governor of Moscow oblast. In this article he implied that the results of the governor's election were modified by the committee which made final decisions on all aspects of election in Russia. Khinshtein's findings were criticised by journalists from *Vostochnaya Pravda*, who interviewed Viktor Ignatenko, the Chairmen of the Electoral Commission in Irkutsk (which was mentioned in the records published by Khinshtein). In the interview, Ignatenko denied that there were any misdoings during the election in Irkutsk and said that although some of the members of the above-mentioned commission visited Irkutsk during the governor's election, they did not intervene in the election. Consequently, *Vostochnaya Pravda* argued that the results of the election were accurate and Khinshtein's allegation was founded on faulty information.⁵²⁵

Another example is concerned with the documents regarding Khinshtein which were delivered to Mikhail Lesin, the head of the Russian Press Ministry, and the Agency of the Press and News (APN) on 25 November 1999. According to these documents, Khinshtein was a mental patient. Lesin forwarded these documents to the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Health. The *Agency of the Press and News* decided not to reveal these documents because they thought that even if the documents were accurate, they were irrelevant.⁵²⁶

Khinshtein understands that his profession is very dangerous. However, he said that he forgets about the fear when he realises that the people who threaten him preclude the development of Russia. He said: "These people do not deserve to be feared." Although he did not need any support and had neither gun nor protection suit, he had a lot of friends who could protect him.⁵²⁷

⁵²⁴ "Khinshtein skrivaetsia ot sledstviya" [Khinshtein is hiding from prosecution], *Lenta.ru*, 31.12.1999, (URL <http://www.lenta.ru/russia/1999/12/31/hinshtein/>, consulted on 10 July, 2002).

⁵²⁵ Lustritsky, "Sensatsia po moskovsky".

⁵²⁶ (1999) "Moskovsky journalist Alexander Khinshtein – shizofrennik" [Moscow's journalist Alexander Khinshtein is a mental patient], *Agency of Press and News*, 25.11.1999.

⁵²⁷ Brezhnev, "Alexander Khinshtein: Politicheskie rassledovania vseгда strashniy risk".

There are rumours that Khinshtein has strong links to the special units of Russian law enforcement agencies (MUR, RUBOP and the FSB), and that his stories are based on materials gathered by them.⁵²⁸ Some people believe that it might be true. For example, during a discussion on the question whether an official has to resign after being charged with corruption,⁵²⁹ Khinshtein replied that Russian corrupt officials do not resign. On the contrary, they organise what special law enforcement agencies call “an active involvement.” This reply made Evgenia Alabats, an active opponent of the KGB and the FSB, conclude that Khinshtein himself belonged to this camp (otherwise, how did he know this specific term?) There is no evidence whether it is true or not, but it is a fact that many Khinshtein’s stories are based on materials possessed by special law enforcement units.

On the contrary, Khinshtein insists on his independency and argues that journalists should not be the tool of politicians or criminal businessmen, who have managed to capture the power in Russia. He considers his newspaper, the daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, to be the most independent because it does not belong to any of the Russian financial or industrial groups.⁵³⁰ Khinshtein is certain that a common taxpayer should know how state officials spend his money and the mass media should inform him about this. And Khinshtein believes that this will help Russia to become a democratic state with a strong economy and efficient law enforcement agencies.

It should be noted after reviewing biographies and investigative practices of the two of the Russian investigative journalists that investigative journalism can be more plausible when investigations are carried out by a team of journalists. The next section of this chapter reviews one of the teams of investigative journalists which is called the Agency of Investigative Reporters.

⁵²⁸ Lustritsky, “Sensatsia po moskovsky”.

⁵²⁹ This show was aired next day after Khinshtein had published his story about US\$ 500,000 taken from the White House.

⁵³⁰ Brezhnev, “Alexander Khinshtein: Politicheskie rassledovania vseгда strashniy risk”.

7.2.3. The AIR - Agency of Investigative Reporters and Andrey Konstantinov

The Agency of Investigative Reporters (AIR) was created in May 1996 by St. Petersburg journalist and writer Andrey Konstantinov. It was a new type of media organisation specifically focused on finding and reporting news on crime, political scandals, organised crime and corruption. Nowadays almost fifty journalists work for this agency.

The structure of the agency reflects its mission: it consists of several departments. The investigative department analyses political and socio economic events in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad oblast. This department has produced a number of studies on the regional economy, as well as on big financial and industrial groups, including criminal syndicates. The complicated criminal cases and corruption scandals are of special interest to the department. Its staff consists of former law enforcement officers who are able to investigate very sophisticated crimes.

The efficient work of the investigative department could have been hardly possible without support from the information department. The information department maintains a data base with information regarding leading St. Petersburg politicians and businessmen. The responsibility of the information department is to gather important data and to input it into the data base.

This data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. While the information department relays on stories published or aired by the other Russian mass media organisations, all efforts are made to verify the data reported in these stories. For this purpose the Agency has recruited a crew of reporters.

The reporters are the vital force for gathering information from primary sources as well. They have links to both influential people and common citizens of St. Petersburg. In addition, AIR uses the latest communicational and technological innovations. For example, its personnel used pagers and mobile phones significantly earlier than it became common in St. Petersburg. This allows the AIR to have first hand information about the key events in St. Petersburg and the leading Russian mass media increasingly often rebroadcast the news from St. Petersburg reported by the Agency.

The agency provides legal, political and socio-economic consulting for its clients and for the mass media. It has consulted many foreign media organisations such as

Focus, Newsweek, Vanity Fair, Figaro, Stern, Hokaydo Simbun, Kiado Tzucin. The assistance of the US State Department helped the AIR to open the Consulting Centre for Foreign Journalists in St. Petersburg.

The AIR is also involved in many academic activities. Its staff has given presentations about Russian organised crime at international conferences in the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. Also, the agency participated in special workshops in Istanbul, Yerevan, Tallinn, Kiev and Stockholm.

The AIR assists to educate investigative journalists in many Russian regions. Its personnel is often invited to deliver lectures and seminars for students and journalists nationwide. There are especially strong links between the AIR and the school of journalism at St. Petersburg State University. AIR's personnel gave its first course on investigative journalism for the students of this school in 1999 and this course is still an essential part of its academic programme.

In 2000 the agency was awarded a grant by the Soros Fund to coordinate 4 workshops for journalists on the methods of journalistic investigations. This grant included internships and the publication of the first Russian textbook on the techniques of journalistic investigation. That helped the AIR to provide training for investigative journalists from other Russia's regions. Another grant was given to conduct workshops on investigative journalism in St. Petersburg, Rostov and Nizniy Novgorod.

The AIR has a good reputation in the informational and publishing market of St. Petersburg and the North-Western region of Russia. It daily produces and sends to its clients a summary of major St. Petersburg events with focus on accidents and crimes committed in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad oblast. Every week its Department of Reporters sends its subscribers nearly 100 new reports.

The Agency of Investigative Reporters has been publishing the monthly criminal review *Your Secret Adviser* since October 1999. This newspaper is based on the stories provided by departments of the agency and includes reports on assassinations committed in St. Petersburg, analytical reviews of St. Petersburg criminal syndicates, and chapters from books *Gangsters' Petersburg*, *Corrupt Petersburg*, and *Knavish Petersburg*.

The agency has published several books. Most of them are written by Andrey Konstantinov, the head of the agency. Konstantinov and Swedish journalist Malcolm

Dixelius wrote the book *Russia's Gangland*, which was published twice in Sweden. Also, he is the author of *Gangsters' Petersburg*, *Advocate*, *Advocate-2*, *Journalist*, *Journalist-2*, *Inventor* and *Inventor-2*.

Konstantinov together with Alexander Novikov published novels *Specialist*, *Ultimatum to Petersburg's Governor*, *Prisoner* and *Cop*. The estimated edition of Konstantinov's books is more than 10 million copies. The other personnel of the agency have also contributed to the publications of some books such as *Corrupt Petersburg and Gangsters' Russia*, *Corrupt Petersburg-2* and *Knavish Petersburg*. They are based on the evidence collected by the AIR. In 2000, the agency published the book *Agency "A Golden bullet."* This book consists of detective stories written by investigative journalists of an imaginary agency - the prototype of the AIR.

The Agency of Investigative Reporters tries to follow the latest developments in communication technologies in order to publish its stories. For example, in 2001 the agency created its own news website which represents the viewpoint of the agency on noteworthy events taking place in St. Petersburg and other regions of Russia. The content of this website includes crime stories and reports about political, economic and cultural events. Diversity and the quality of the stories published on this website have made this news server popular among St. Petersburg residents.

The agency has gained access to Russian television. The leading Russian television channels have become interested in some stories published by the AIR. NTV offered Konstantinov the chance to write the script for the serial *Gangster's Petersburg*. This serial, which was based on Konstantinov's books, was broadcast by NTV in 2001. The serial was popular and many of its episodes were video-taped and sold throughout Russia and abroad.⁵³¹ The book *The Agency of "Golden Bullet"* was also screened and broadcast by Russian national channels and NTV International in 2002.

The Agency has received a number of rewards. In 1999, its news service was awarded with the *Golden pen – 98*, the major annual St. Petersburg's journalistic competition. The weekly *Your Secret Adviser* gained the first prize in the same category in April 2000. Three AIR's officers, including its director, were given awards by the Russian government for finding Alexander Malish, who was allegedly involved in the

⁵³¹ Interview with Pavel, a Latvian entrepreneur, London, October, 2000.

assassination of Viktor Novoselov, a member of the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly.⁵³²

Let us review this investigation in depth. This story is worth mentioning due to two reasons. First, it refers to the killing of one of the most influential and high-ranking St. Petersburg politicians. The second reason is the fact that journalists of the agency found the suspect who committed this murder while law enforcement agencies (and gangsters) did not manage to do so.

Viktor Novoselov was killed on 20 October 2000 at about 9 am. After the news became known, three AIR's officers arrived at the scene of the murder by 11 am. They immediately found out from the people who stayed there that Novoselov, a member of St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly, left his house on Moskovsky Prospect [Moscow Road] and was placed on the front seat of his Volvo-940 (Novoselov was not able to walk and had to use a trolley for disabled people). This trolley was placed into the luggage compartment of the car. Novoselov's bodyguard and servant also boarded the car. The car slowly moved along Frunze Street and stopped in front of traffic lights next to Moskovsky Prospect.

At that moment, a young man appeared nearby, threw a package onto the top of the car, and ran away. The package proved to be an explosive. It blew apart the car, killing Novoselov and severely injuring his driver. The bodyguard managed to get out of the car and shoot the man in the neck. The injured man was quickly caught. Witnesses of this incident reported that the arrested youngster seemed to signal another man. The police checked the second man, discovered a strange wire devise, and arrested him.

The Press Unit of GUV D (the St. Petersburg Headquarters of the Russian Interior Ministry) and St. Petersburg radio stations reported that the injured arrested man died soon afterwards. However, the officers of the AIR doubted that it was the case. They knew the description of the wound and suspected that the information reported by the Press Unit of GUV D was false. AIR's journalists decided to verify whether it was true or not and moved towards the closest infirmary.

⁵³² This section is based on interviews, AIR's analytical documents, and publications in *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik* [(2002) "Mi iskali Malisha dva mesiatsa i nashli" [We hunted Malish for two months and found him], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik* [Your secret adviser], No. 2, 3, 4].

Although the personnel of the infirmary rejected to confirm the hospitalisation of any shot man, the AIR's officers decided to continue their search. They managed to enter the infirmary and heard a story told in a smoking room regarding a man who had been delivered to the hospital by law enforcement officers. It was evident from the talk that the man either had been transported to another place or would quite soon be. However his future destination was unclear.

AIR's investigators assumed that if the man was still alive he would be delivered to the special military hospital and they immediately headed for it. They stopped next to the military hospital's entrance and saw that a man was being taken inside the hospital by law enforcement officers a short time afterwards.

The next day, the further verification that the man delivered to the hospital was a criminal suspect was obtained, when some AIR officers visited a special hospital for prisoners. After talking with personnel, AIR officers managed to find out that the man had been transported from a military hospital to the prison hospital the previous evening. This allowed them to assume that the man who had killed Novoselov was alive in spite of reports about his death.⁵³³

On 20 October 2000 at 4 pm, another AIR team started gathering data about the second arrested man. It took about two hours to find out the name of this suspect – Nikolay Petrov. This information allowed the investigators to quickly find his address in St. Petersburg. They immediately went to his place.

Before going to Petrov's flat, the investigators decided to talk to his neighbours. They did not reveal the real purpose of their visit and told an old woman who lived nearby that they were journalists interested in finding out some details about a fraudulent firm controlled by a Nikolay Petrov. They said they wanted to find him and consequently needed to check whether this Nikolay Petrov was the person they were looking for. The woman confirmed that a person with the surname Petrov and his mother were registered at this address but only the mother was living there.

The investigators rang the bell. A robust man opened the door and asked them who they wanted to talk to. Investigative reporters said that they would like to talk to

⁵³³ (2002) "Mi iskali Malisha dva mesiatsa i nashli" [We hunted Malish for two months and found him], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik* [Your secret adviser], No. 2.

Nikolay Petrov and the man invited them inside and asked their identities. In turn, the journalists asked the man who he was. He replied: “The FSB” (the Russian FBI). There were a lot of people inside the flat – four FSB agents, a detective, and some other persons. They did not tell anything to the journalists, did not allow them to interview Petrov’s mother, and politely ushered them out.

On 20 October 2000 at 9 pm, the investigative reporters made an attempt to identify the first (hospitalised) man. They gained some reports that his surname might be Gusinsky. Then they were informed that his name was Artur and his surname was either Buzkov or Guzkov. According to official data, nobody with this surname was living in St. Petersburg. However, because the name Artur is not common in Russia, the reporters decided to continue their search for name by trying similar surnames – Kuzkov, Guskov... and succeeded to find Artur Gudkov, who was born in Belarus in 1966, and registered living in a dormitory in Sosnovy Bor, a St. Petersburg suburb.

On 21 October at 10 am, the investigative journalists discovered a new piece of information about Gudkov. Gudkov had been working as a security man for the protection company Yesaul since 1995. He had been involved in a criminal inquiry for grievous bodily harm but was cleared in 1997. In 1998, Gudkov was placed on the federal wanted list over the extortion and murder of the director of the plant Severnaia Zvezda [The Northern Star]. The journalists managed to find some details of the incident and learnt that it happened after the traffic accident involving Gudkov’s and the director’s cars. At the end of the dispute regarding this accident, Gudkov took his gun and shot dead the director.⁵³⁴

On 21 October at 2 pm, the agency discovered that Petrov had been charged with robbery, and its reporters immediately moved to the court to learn the details of the case before it would be taken by the FSB. The agency printed official request and the judge allowed the reporters to read the details of this case. It followed from the document that it was not an especially serious crime: Petrov, along with his friend, extorted a cheap watch from an old man in 1995 and was sentenced to 4 years but later allowed to leave the prison in 1997. Some youngsters from Petrov’s class in school were witnesses in the trial.

⁵³⁴ Konstantinov, A. (2004) *Zhurnalistkoe Rrassledovanie: Istoriya Methoda i Sovremennaya Praktika* [Investigative journalism: the history of the method and current practice]. St. Petersburg: Olma-Press, p. 396.

While the reporters were reading this document there was a call from FSB agents who said that they were going to pick up Petrov's file.

On 21 October at 6 pm, the team of investigators found the witnesses involved in Petrov's trial and interviewed them. In addition the experts of the agency checked all available information from special data bases regarding Petrov's biography and law infringements. There was nothing of special interest – once he had been held by the underground security because of smoking in the Metro and another day he had been stopped by traffic police because of erratic driving. Since 1999, Petrov had been working for the car repair firm All-Motors, which was situated very close to the place of the murder.

On 22 October at 10 am, the journalists visited the firm All-Motors and talked to its managers. The managers described Petrov as an expert and claimed that it was very unlikely that he was able to use the equipment of the firm to produce an explosive device. Petrov always worked together with other people and it seemed that he did not keep any secrets from them. In addition, none of the managers and workers of the firm saw Petrov with people looking like *bandits*.

The managers were aware of what Petrov did the day before and in the morning of Novoselov's murder. On 19 October Petrov finished his work very late and then moved to the home of his parents. In the morning he went to the work as usual at 9.30. He carried a package with a telephone which he had promised somebody to repair. Petrov's partners believed that he might have been at the place of the murder by chance and was rather a witness than a killer. They assumed that when he had heard shooting, he would only instinctively have increased his pace and it was enough for the police to arrest him.

On 22 October at 5 pm, AIR investigators talked to Petrov's girlfriend. She insisted that Petrov could not be involved in this killing. She told them that he was satisfied with his life and loved his job. Although Petrov was not very rich, he always had enough money to live. His only real fear was being sentenced again.

The journalists reviewed all of this evidence and concluded Petrov could not be charged with the murder and might be free in ten days when his preliminary term in custody expired. This conclusion was correct and Petrov was soon a free man.

Investigative reporters gathered data about the second man involved in the Novoselov killing. They discovered that he had registered two vehicles – a lorry *Ural* – 375 (1982) and a car *Mazda* – 323 (1994). The journalists asked an inspector of the GIBBD (State Inspection of Safety of the Highways) to check the history of the *Mazda* and found that this car had been involved in a series of accidents between 1996 and 1998. The most interesting point of these accidents was that they happened when this car was driven by Tumentsev Vasily. The investigators had already come across this name, as they had data of law enforcement agencies that he was the leader of *Tumentsevsky* criminal syndicate in Sosnovy Bor, a suburb of St. Petersburg.

On 22 October at 6 pm, the journalists found a friend of Novoselov. This friend, an influential St. Petersburg businessman, was connected to some lords of organised crime. The journalists arranged a meeting with him and asked him whether he was aware of the fact that Tumentsev drove the car of the man who had thrown the bomb at Novoselov's car. He was extremely surprised and phoned to Tumentsev. In addition, he agreed to give Tumentsev's telephone number to the journalists.

On 22 October at 7 pm, the journalists phoned to Tumentsev and arranged a meeting in Sosnovy Bor. The journalists were in a hurry to interview Tumentsev, because they knew that law enforcement agencies could find and arrest him quite soon.

On 22 October at 9 pm, the investigative reporters met Tumentsev, a short robust man wearing a sport jacket.⁵³⁵ They told Tumentsev that they knew that he had used Gudkov's car. He confirmed that he and his wife used this car. Tumentsev also said that he had been asked about this a year before, when Gudkov had killed another man. However, he insisted that he had a license to use the car and that he did not have any links to Gudkov.

The journalists were very surprised and told him so. He replied that he was acquainted with Gudkov because Gudkov worked there as a karate and boxing coach, training young people in Sosnovy Bor almost for free. He said that they provided him with sport facilities and were very satisfied with what Gudkov did for youngsters of Sosnovy Bor. In addition, Gudkov helped to organise the aviation festivals for the local people.

⁵³⁵ Tumentsev used to be a boxer.

To his knowledge, Gudkov worked as a bodyguard for the company Yesayl, the major protection provider of Sosnovy Bor, and tried to avoid conflicts with anybody. Nevertheless, the involvement of Gudkov in the murders caused many problems for Tumentsev and he did not want anyone linking him to Gudkov again. If the journalists wanted to find out more information regarding Gudkov, Tumentsev recommend them to talk to Marina, Gudkov's wife.

On 22 October at 10 pm, the investigative reporters moved into the dormitory where Gudkov and his wife were registered and found out that it had already been searched and sealed by law enforcement agencies. The journalists learnt that the officers of law enforcement agencies had discovered a few radio transmitters. However, it was evident that Gudkov had not lived in the dormitory for a long time.

The journalists decided to talk to Gudkov's neighbours. The neighbours liked Gudkov because he was entertaining at parties, playing guitar and accordion. He left the dormitory after his first murder one year ago and nobody had seen him since. The journalists asked for Gudkov's wife telephone number, phoned to her, and arranged a meeting.

Marina told journalists that she had not seen Artur Gudkov for a long time, but she did not think that he could have killed anyone. The journalists asked for Gudkov's photos and she agreed to bring them to the St. Petersburg office of the AIR.

The reporters found a videotape that showed Gudkov jumping with a parachute. Gudkov's voice on the sound track of the videotape revealed that he had been interested in skydiving since he was fifteen, and he dreamt to be enlisted in the paratroops army (the Russian elite army). Instead, he had been sent to the military headquarters in Sosnovy Bor. Later, he obtained access to his file and discovered a medical record which stated that he had been eligible to join any other branch except the paratroopers.

Gudkov, on the sound track, assumed that somebody in the medical military commission had deliberately decided to destroy his life. However, Gudkov decided to keep skydiving. In 1997, Gudkov was the runner up in the competition *Slabo* [Can You Do This?] of the show *Sam SebeRezhisser* [An Editor for Himself].

On 25 October, the investigative reporters went to the *voenkomat* (the military recruitment centre) and checked whether the medical military commission could

officially assess anybody to be eligible to join any other army except the paratroopers. They were told that it was a normal practice of military doctors. If a man was not strong enough (for example, if he was short and weighed less than 50 kg) he would not be allowed to join the paratroopers. Consequently, Gudkov's complaint was not entirely justified.

On 26 October, the journalists learnt that Marina Gudkova had changed her mind and decided not to give Gudkov's photos due to her uncertainty about whether or not the reporters were not criminals.

On 28 October, the investigative reporters decided to ask Gudkov's photos from Gudkov's neighbours. The neighbours had many of them. The most interesting point of these photos was that Gudkov was pictured among different cars in some of them. There were about ten different cars. The journalists wrote down the number plates of those cars. However, the neighbours said that Gudkov drove only two of the cars – grey *VAZ 2109* and red *VAZ 2108*.

On 29 October, the reporters decided to check histories of Gudkov's cars. The records of the grey *VAZ 2109* did not lead anywhere. However, the red *VAZ 2108* was a very remarkable car. It was driven by Malish [The Little Man], a man who often accompanied Gudkov. Malish was not the owner of the car but drove it on the basis of an agreement, which allowed him to do so. Another interesting detail was that Malish had sold the red *VAZ 2108* just a few days before Novoselov's murder. The new owner of the car (Malish's acquaintance) immediately moved to Ukraine.

On 31 October, the investigative reporters found out that Alexander Malish was born in 1963 and registered in Sosnovy Bor. Apparently he used to be a paratrooper and worked as a skydiving instructor in Sosnovy Bor. Then Malish worked for the firm Kaskad in Petergoff. In 1994, Malish and companions established NAB-TID Ltd, a trade and transport firm.

The most interesting finding was that Malish had been on the wanted list due to his involvement in the murder of Lev Toper, the general director of Ltd Europe. Toper was an owner of TOO Topmix, Ltd Toper Firma, and Regional Advertising Agency, which placed outdoor advertising in St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast. Regional Advertising Agency signed a large contract for the advertising campaign of the beer Vena

in St. Petersburg. Toper's corpse was discovered next to his home in Griboedov's Embankment on 26 May 1999. The detectives determined that he was killed. In other words, the same red *VAZ 2108* was used by two men who both were on the wanted list due to their involvement in different killings.

On 1 November, law enforcement agencies admitted that Nikolay Petrov was not guilty and released him. On the other hand, Gudkov was charged with Novoselov's murder. In other words, the law enforcement agents confirmed that Gudkov was still alive. However, they did not confirm the possible involvement of Malish in Novoselov's murder.

On 5 November, the sources in Moscow helped the investigative reporters solve the existing dilemma of how the criminals had managed to run the red traffic light when Novoselov crossed the intersection. In fact, Malish and Gudkov waited at that intersection for several days. During this time, there was always a green light when Novoselov's car approached the intersection, and the car crossed without any problems. On 20 October, however, there was a red light and Novoselov's car was forced to stop, whereby Gudkov placed the bomb on the top of the car.

On 8 November, the journalists found out what Gudkov told the investigators of law enforcement agencies. He admitted his involvement in this murder as well as in a number of other killings. However, Gudkov did not know whom he had killed and was not able to identify his victims. He claimed that he had been driven to the intersection and was told to murder a man in the *Volvo*.

On 9 November at 3 pm, the investigative reporters realised that Malish was a very important person and increased their efforts to find him. They contacted Malish's acquaintances, requesting to talk to Malish regarding a very important matter, and arranged a meeting with the acquaintances.

On 9 November at 7 pm, the journalists arrived to the flat and discovered that during their phone call Malish had been staying there but left immediately after this call because he was afraid of being arrested by the police. The acquaintances did not know about Malish's involvement in Novoselov's murder. They said that Malish arrived at the end of October (after the murder) and asked them to accommodate him.

On 10 November, the investigative reporters discovered that law enforcement agencies were also searching for Malish. In addition, they found data that Malish was linked to organised crime syndicates. He was a soldier of *Lomonosovskay* organised crime group, which was headed by German Misailov. Misailov was an influential man in the St. Petersburg underworld, not least because he married a relative of Alexander Malishev, the lord of one of the most powerful crime syndicates.

However, Malish encountered serious problems when Andrey Borovikov, his *brigadir* (commanding officer), was gunned down on 21 October 1994. He was not accepted by the major criminal clans and was not able to earn enough money to live. Malish's acquaintance said that Malish had no more than US \$ 3,000, half of which was the money which he gained from selling his car.⁵³⁶

The journalists started to investigate contacts between Gudkov and Malish and discovered that they had frequently communicated since the autumn of 1998. The journalists found the number of Gudkov's pager and examined incoming messages. It was a digital pager and many messages consisted of a set of numbers. For example, there were the following messages

On 30 July at 16.22 - 514-58- [...]

On 3 August at 9.32 - 111-13-30

On 10 September at 14.51 - 03-12

On 7 October at 11.01 - 01-25

20 October – the day of Novoselov's murder

On 21 October at 17.40 and at 17.55 - 15-117

On 27 October from 13.59 to 15.39 - 15-117-510 (5 times)

The journalists discovered the meaning of these messages by decoding them with the common pager code. For example, 117 means "call me", 510 - "urgent", 111 - "not available at the moment", and so on. The message 15-117-510 – could mean "number fifteen is asking to call him urgently" and 111-13-30 – could mean "I am busy until 13.30."

⁵³⁶ In fact, the history of the murder seemed to prove that the contract killers did not earn much in Russia. Malish and Gudkov were rather common people who could not go to expensive restaurants. According to the information of the Agency, the killers of Novoselov earned no more than \$500 each.

However, this code did not allow the journalists to understand some messages because they apparently needed a different code. The journalists understood that 01 referred to Gudkov, and 03 - to the third man, who could have been involved in the murder. The journalists forwarded the message 320-66-88-117-510-604 to Malish's pager. It meant "call me urgently because you need help." However, Malish did not reply to the message.⁵³⁷

What to do next? The journalists knew that Malish changed his car, the SIM card of his mobile phone and house. They knew that Malish's new car was officially registered under Viktor Kalashnikov, a friend of Malish. However, it was not enough to find him. The investigative reporters started to analyse possible variants. They assumed that if Malish belonged to a criminal syndicate, the criminal lords would either help him to change his ID and address, or kill him. However, it was evident that Malish did not earn much money. This allowed the journalists to assume that Malish did not belong to any organised crime group (they usually support their members when they are in trouble). So Malish apparently tried to avoid even his possible accomplices or the people who ordered him to kill Novoselov.

The journalists were aware of rumours which circulated in Sosnovy Bor. There were some talks that Kumarin (the leader of *Tambovskaiia* organised crime group) found out that Malish belonged to the criminal syndicate of Kostia Mogila and had a hard talk with Mogila about this. Mogila is said to have promised to find Malish and to give him over to Kumarin. In other words, Malish became the target of many forces – the FSB, GUVd, the *Tambovskaiia* organised crime group, and Kostia Mogila, the alleged lord of Malish's criminal syndicate.

The investigative reporters assumed that Malish had a few options in this terrible situation. He could talk to the people who ordered him to kill Novoselov, or he could reveal himself to law enforcement agencies. However, the journalists thought that he was afraid of these options. That is why the journalists recommended him to meet them. They published such a request in the magazine *Your Secret Advisor*. However, Malish did not respond to it.

⁵³⁷ Konstantinov, *Zhurnalistskoe Rassledovanie: Istoriya Methoda i Sovremennaya Praktika*, p. 408.

The journalists decided to speak to Malish's friends who were not linked to organised crime groups at all. They talked to people from the parachute club in Sosnovy Bor and found out that Malish not only had a wife but also a girlfriend in St. Petersburg.

The investigators found the man (Viktor Kalashnikov) who registered the new car bought by Malish – *VAZ 2109*, and went to him in the dormitory where he lived. Kalashnikov confirmed that Malish had visited him two weeks ago and asked to use Kalashnikov's shower because his accommodation had no shower. After the talk with Kalashnikov, the journalists asked the receptionist about the identity of the man who had visited Kalashnikov two weeks ago. The receptionist checked his record and remembered that this man had shown him the passport of Dmitry Sokolov. The journalists checked data regarding Dmitry Sokolov and discovered that Sokolov lived in the village Nizino, and that he had lost his passport a long time ago. The investigative reporters realised that Malish was using Sokolov's passport.

Then the journalists checked St. Petersburg train stations and one of their acquaintances who worked there agreed to research whether a Sokolov had bought a train ticket. They found that one Sokolov had bought a ticket to Tambov (a regional city far away from St. Petersburg). The journalists asked the names of the people who bought tickets next to Sokolov in the train and checked their history. They found that one of them, Galina Yagodkina, was born in Tambov and worked some time together with Malish. Moreover, she had been registered to live in the same dormitory where Malish hid during first two weeks after Novoselov's murder.

The investigative reporters assumed that Malish lived at her place and decided to follow Yagodkina. She worked for a shop *24 Hours* and the journalists arrived at this shop when she finished her job. Yagodkina went out and asked for a taxi. The journalists offered their help, but she declined and took a taxi. The two cars of the Agency of Investigative Reporters followed her, but the first car was stopped by the traffic police and the second car missed the taxi.

The journalists repeated their hunt the next night, but they were told that Yagodkina had taken a holiday to visit her relatives. Fortunately, the journalists had written down the number-plate of the taxi that drove Yagodkina the previous night and they found the driver. He told them the place where she had left his taxi; it was next to

the tube station Ladozhskaia, a district of St. Petersburg which is situated a fair distance from the city centre.

The journalists arrived at Ladozhskaia and found out that there were only seven houses at this place which did not have water facilities (they remembered that Malish had asked Kalashnikov to allow him to use the shower in Kalashnikov's room). The journalists decided to walk around the houses and to talk to their residents. They told them that they are sociologists carrying out a public opinion survey regarding the coming election to the Legislative Assembly. However, only few people agreed to talk and did not know anything about their neighbours. The journalists decided to wait in their car in the middle of the yard, where they could see everyone who came in and out.

On 16 December 2000 at 6 pm, they saw a man wearing glasses. At first they did not pay much attention to him because he did not look like Malish at all. However, Yagodkina went out from the same exit a few minutes later and came to the man. They moved towards the market place and the journalists followed them. The investigative reporters cautiously approached the couple and recognised that the man was Malish. Yagodkina and Malish bought some food with a bottle of vodka and returned home. The journalists observed where the light was turned on in the building thereby locating Malish's hiding place.

The investigative reporters decided to check whether somebody else contacted Malish at this place and continued their observation for three days until 19 December. They saw that Malish left the house several times in order to buy bottles of vodka. In total he had bought five bottles of vodka over that period. Apparently, nobody visited him. In the evening of 19 December, Malish and Yagodkina left the house and went to the tube station. Then Yagodkina took the train while Malish bought another bottle of vodka and went back home.

The journalists decided to talk to him. They knew that it was very unlikely that Malish had a gun at the moment but approached him quite closely so as to be able to prevent any possible resistance. They stopped him at his door and told him that they were neither bandits nor law enforcement officers, but they were journalists who wanted to help him.

“How can be I sure who you are? “ Malish asked.

“If it was not the case, do you think that we would stay patiently and talk to you? “

“What do you want?” He replied.

“We want to talk to you. We can go to your flat, but it would be better to go to our office...”

“And if I decline?”

The journalists did not reply. He repeated the question.

“Listen, Alexander, you have nothing to do. You will be caught sooner or later. You know yourself that *Tambovskie* are looking for you. But we can offer you help”

“OK. All the same, I cannot continue to live as I do. I do not know who you really are, but I waited for you.”⁵³⁸

Malish got into the journalist’s car and they drove to the office of the Agency of Investigative Reporters. He looked very tired and did not ask any questions on the way. At 8 pm the journalists arrived at the office. They interviewed Malish and videotaped this interview with Malish’s permission. This interview was about Malish’s contacts with Gudkov and the people who ordered Novoselov’s murder. It was also about the reasons why Malish was involved in the contract killings. Three hours later, on 20 December 2000, the investigative reporters invited law enforcement officers and they arrested Malish.⁵³⁹

7.3. Investigative Journalism on Television

Most of the investigative stories are covered by the press. However, sometimes crime coverage was broadcast on television. This section introduces major investigative reporters who work for TV channels: Alexander Nevzorov, Andrey Karaulov and Artem Borovik. The section presents their biographies and outlines their views on investigative journalism and the political situation in Russia.

⁵³⁸ (2002) “Mi iskali Malisha dva mesiatsa i nashli” [We hunted Malish for two months and found him], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 4.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., No. 2, 3, 4.

7.3.1. Alexander Nevzorov

Nevzorov was the first St. Petersburg reporter who created the television news show about crime and corruption in St. Petersburg. This show *600 Seconds* was very popular in St. Petersburg and even in Moscow at the beginning of the 1990s. It is not entirely clear how and where Nevzorov found data and sources for his daily show. Certainly the budget of *600 Seconds* was not enough to pay the sources. However, it is evident that he managed to find necessary money or resources.

Nevzorov's comments on the show were simple and even rude. Perhaps, sometimes he used data without sufficient verification; the daily format of the show and the personnel of a few men simply did not allow him to check everything. As a result, some people found themselves offended by some of his stories. Nevzorov was involved in a number of conflicts and was injured in one of them. Nevertheless, he quickly recovered and continued his show.

The content of Nevzorov's show was increasingly concerned with politics. He was clearly very critical of Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg at the time and supported Yury Shutov in his campaign against Sobchak at the beginning of 1990s. As Nevzorov's show had a huge audience, it was easy for him to mobilise his supporters. However, even this support eventually failed and the news programme *600 Seconds* was finally shut down.

In his attempt to save his programme, Nevzorov asked his supporters to gather and form the civil movement Nashi [Ours People].⁵⁴⁰ The first meeting of this civil movement took place in a St. Petersburg yard. This gathering was illegal, or at least, it was not officially permitted by St. Petersburg authorities. Despite the late hours and almost total darkness due to lack of lighting in the yard, many people waited for Nevzorov. Nevzorov, along with his crew, drove into the centre of the yard. To illuminate the place of the meeting, a torch was lit. Nevzorov pledged that the next meeting would take place in the one of the best palaces. Nevzorov held his promise. The next meeting

⁵⁴⁰ In 2004, the same name was used for the organisation of young people who support the Kremlin policy. However, it was a completely different organisation.

took place next to the Mikhailovsky's castle, which used to be the home of the Russia's tsar Pavel.⁵⁴¹

The civil movement Nashi became a part of the political block that eventually led the Russian politics, when Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) gained the majority in the State Duma. Nevzorov was also elected to the Duma. He moved to Moscow and started a number of new TV shows. However, they were not successful and ORT finally rejected airing Nevzorov's shows.⁵⁴² At present, Nevzorov continues to make comments on Russian politics. Although he is not an anchorman of any television programme and seems not to work for any of the Russian media organisations, his words continue to attract the attention of the mass media in St. Petersburg.

It is an interesting to note Nevzorov's views on Russian politicians. Although Nevzorov was against Yeltsin ten years ago, he started to realise that Yeltsin had been a very talented politician. This happened after Yeltsin's resignation. It does not mean that Nevzorov thinks that Yeltsin did much good for Russia. "Yeltsin's only benefit to Russia was freedom, but anybody else could have given it to us as well."⁵⁴³ He believes that Yeltsin was just in the right place at the right time.

Nevzorov thinks that a genius cannot be defined in terms such as goodness or badness. He illustrated this by the example of well-known Russian writer Nikolay Gogol. Nevzorov argues that despite Gogol's enormous impact on the Russian culture, he advertised fraud making.⁵⁴⁴ Nevzorov estimates his own achievements using the same scale. He admitted that his impact could not be considered entirely positive. He said, "I did a terrible thing by editing the show *600 Seconds*. I depicted the criminal life as

⁵⁴¹ Observation.

⁵⁴² (2000) "Berezovskogo ne vozmут v svetloe budushee", *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 13.04.2000.

⁵⁴³ (2002) "Trekhsotletie – merzkaya data" [The 300-year Jubilee is a naughty date], *Moskovsky Komsomolets-SPB*, 28.08.2002.

⁵⁴⁴ It needs to be explained in depth. Gogol wrote *The Died Souls*, the book which is well known in Russia. The major personage of this book, Chichikov, was going to commit a fraud. The scheme of his fraud was very simple. The Bank of Russia was ready to give bank credits to the people who intended to use them for revival of agriculture in Russian regions. The person who applied for the credits needed to prove that he had sufficient number of agricultural workers (*krestians*) in his disposal. Chichikov did not have them at all. However, he understood that the *krestiane* who died recently but had been alive at the time of the previous census could be documented as alive and if he had them he would be granted the bank credit. Chichikov went around Russia and bought those died people (in fact, their documents) in discount prices from their real owners.

normal, natural. By the way, this programme increased crime. Believe me, please, that the horror which was shown in my news show was copied by many.”

Nevzorov does not consider Putin to be a talented man. A talented man would be a disaster for politics, at least at the present moment in Russia. Nevzorov hopes that “we will manage to avoid another such a terrible thing as a ruling of Russia by a talented man.” He argues:

Everywhere where we have a poor but systematic approach we have wonderful politics, or a representation of politics, which resembles the current situation in Russia. The country is not being governed. However, some events are always happening and we like this because Putin has explicitly pointed out to everybody the piece of freedom which he is entitled to. [...] That is why any discussion about politics is boring to me and any other intellectual man.⁵⁴⁵

Nevzorov is convinced that Putin has taken the whole power in Russia, and any speech about possible reforms or changes by other politicians is a waste of time and he does not want to participate in them.

Nevzorov did not graduate from a school of journalism and was not a member of the Union of Journalists. He thinks he was a pioneer of the information space and he used his television advantages to fight against incumbents. He said that he never thought about ethical issues.

St. Petersburg celebrated its 300-year Jubilee in 2003. As Nevzorov’s television news show *600 Seconds* had been a symbol of St. Petersburg in the 1990s, there was an assumption that *600 Seconds* might be restored on St. Petersburg television. Nevzorov was asked whether he had been approached with such an offer. He replied that nobody in the St. Petersburg administration was stupid (or sick) enough to make such a proposal.

He thinks that the entire St. Petersburg administration was controlled by Yakovlev⁵⁴⁶ and nobody was ready to challenge him. Yakovlev was a dictator, an administrative dictator. Nevzorov compares Yakovlev with a spider, which is able to manage the flies in his net according to his preferences. Nevzorov insists that he knew the situation in the administration well because he was a former advisor to Yakovlev.

⁵⁴⁵ (2002) “Trekhsotletie – merzkaya data” [The 300-year Jubilee is a naughty date], *Moskovsky Komsomolets-SPB*, 28.08.2002.

⁵⁴⁶ The mayor of St. Petersburg from 1996 to 2003 (Yakovlev resigned in July, 2003).

Although Nevzorov said that he is fond of Yakovlev, he assesses him on the basis of his achievements as the mayor, and not on the basis as to whether he is a good or bad man. In addition, Yakovlev helped Nevzorov twice and he thinks that to some extent he is indebted to Yakovlev.

Nevzorov does not agree that St. Petersburg is a beautiful city. On the contrary, he thinks that St. Petersburg is a decoration: “The facades are good, but the rest is a mix of poor people, iron dust, leaking water pipes, falling ceiling...the units of special forces run somewhere among these things and order everybody to lie down on the floor.” That is why he does not consider St. Petersburg 300-year Jubilee to be a remarkable event. He thinks that due to the preparation to the jubilee, St. Petersburg was forced to change its speed of thefts, corruption and demolishing. Although St. Petersburg gained the money from the state budget, Nevzorov doubted that common people would notice any improvement.

Nevzorov argues that there are no bright people in either the Administration nor in the Office of the Representative of President in St. Petersburg. As a result of this, even the alleged conflict between them has not produced any interesting stories. It does not surprise Nevzorov, because he believes that no bright man can be an official while Putin is the president of the country. He claims,

We had a bright official Yakubovsky, we can see him as a thief, who stole the books,⁵⁴⁷ he is too fat, but he is a *personage*! We had Boris Abramovich Berezovsky, who looked wild among Russian officials-bureaucrats. Now we have average officials and politicians, Yakovlev and Cherkesov⁵⁴⁸ are some of them. To say it better, all of them became average after Putin become president.⁵⁴⁹

Nevzorov has a better opinion about Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, than about Yakovlev. He thinks that despite his arrogance, Luzhkov is talented. It is widely known that investigations have been launched for nearly everybody in the government of Moscow. However, Luzhkov is able to protect his people, in contrast to Yakovlev who

⁵⁴⁷ Yakubovsky was sentenced for stealing several very valuable books from the St. Petersburg Public Library.

⁵⁴⁸ The Representative of President in St. Petersburg.

⁵⁴⁹ (2002) “Trekhsotletie – merzkaya data” [The 300-year Jubilee is a naughty date], *Moskovsky Komsomolets-SPB*, 28.08.2002.

simply did not know how to do so: “He left them on the battleground and ran away. It does not mean that he betrays them because everybody in Yakovlev’s place would have done the same for the mayor.” In other words, Yakovlev’s action is correct. “I am approving of his behaviour, because I decided to approve everything he is doing. After all, I feel myself in debt to him.”⁵⁵⁰ However, Nevzorov realises that although he was seen as part of the governor’s team, he has not been accepted by many of them as an equal partner. He suspects that they consider him to be an idiot because he is different from them.

Nevertheless, Nevzorov thinks that Irina Yakovleva, the mayor’s wife, is a good and bright woman. She was not quite correct to involve herself in cases with TRK Petersburg and with Ivan Korneev, the director of the St. Petersburg zoo. Yakovleva forced Korneev, who likes his animals and has done a lot for the zoo, to leave. Nevzorov does not believe that Korneev tried to fight to the death to remain in the zoo because he had allegedly been indebted to some of the St. Petersburg *bandits*. Instead, Nevzorov argues,

It is not true, the point is not whether somebody is indebted to the *bandits*, the point is who the *bandits* are. There are no *bandits* who have demands that are unrealistic, unsuitable or non adoptable for the reality of St. Petersburg. The heroes of the 1990s have gone and have been replaced by pragmatic, well-educated and good-looking people who are linked to the St. Petersburg administration.⁵⁵¹

Nevzorov thinks that Korneev was not indebted to anybody and the fact that some people allegedly linked to *Tambovskaia* organised crime group tried to protect him just shows that Korneev is sincerely liked by many, including Nevzorov himself.⁵⁵²

7.3.2. Andrey Karaulov

Andrey Karaulov is well known in Russia because of his television show *Moment Istini* [The moment of Truth]. *Moment Istini* is one of the best Russian talk-shows. This

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

programme is similar to *Hard Talk* on BBC. Karaulov talks to politicians, political observers, and governors of Russia's regions. Karaulov's show addresses very difficult themes for discussion: corruption, political scandals, and frauds by prominent Russian businessmen are highlighted by this show as well as some issues related to organised crime and drugs. Karaulov also talks to the cultural elite of Russia and tries to touch on the issues that are important for all Russian people such as declining birth rate, and the authorities' disregard to the fate of the Russian soldiers involved in military conflicts.⁵⁵³

Karaulov describes the current situation in Russia's politics as questions without answers and answers without questions. The focus of *Moment Istini* on problematic issues is exemplified by the music at the beginning of the show - Tariverdiev's Requiem. Karaulov thinks that this tragic music best suits anything he could possibly report in this show about the Russian government and Russia.

The government and authorities are the main subjects of Karaulov's show. Karaulov is certain that Russian authorities do want to be critically assessed by the media. The governmental officials want the press to forget about them. "However, our government makes too many mistakes. Some time ago our Church was separated from the state, today – our government is separated from it. It is very uncomfortable to ask Kasyanov,⁵⁵⁴ who has done rather well for himself, about the problems of the Russian economy."

Karaulov thinks that the Russian government is not capable of enacting reforms:

I think that Gref does not understand that he discredits Putin. Let us take fish auctions – 150,000 fishermen in the Far East, whole villages will be demolished. According to the new state budget, Moscow will lose 40 billions rubles, St. Petersburg – 6 billions, Leningrad oblast – 500 millions. There are no regular pension payments, which were promised together with children's donations... It was possible to expect that the personnel of state enterprises and organisations could be paid regularly due to the colossal income from the increased oil sales. However, the average delay of salary payments is one and a half month. Regions transfer tax money to the Kremlin and the money disappears there.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Programme of the television company TV Centre, (URL <http://www.tvc.ru/programs/moment.html>, consulted in July, 2003).

⁵⁵⁴ The former Prime Minister of Russia.

⁵⁵⁵ Karaulov's interview to the newspaper *Tribuna*, Kuzina, N. (2002) "Poisk istini u nas v krovi" [The truth is essential for us], *Tribuna*, 16.05.2002.

Karaulov estimates that the real standard of life has decreased 15-20 per cent. However, the media does not tell about this. Instead the Russian mass media is always reporting that Putin's rating is high. Karaulov claims, "The rating of the president is the price of the petrol in petrol stations and in shops. The real rating of the president is the prices in these shops."⁵⁵⁶

Karaulov has written the book *The Russian Sun*. This book refers to the agreement to split the Soviet Union, signed by Yeltsin, Ukraine's and Belarus's presidents. Also, it is about Yeltsin and Gorbachev, the politicians who made Russian politics ten years ago. They are not popular in Russia nowadays. However, Karaulov thinks that the story was worthy of writing. Another his book is *Yeltsin's Era*. Karaulov and some other authors of this book tried to prove that the real value of Yeltsin's presidency was higher than his political and economic mistakes.

Karaulov thinks that many people who worked together with Yeltsin such as Yumashev, Krasnov, Livshits, Baturin, Shakray, Savostyanov, Chubais, Voloshin, Sisuev, Shabdurasulov and Dyachenko still do not tell the whole truth about the events. They wrote some memoirs about Yeltsin's presidency and their jobs in the Presidential administration. Karaulov noted the Livshits's reply to his question as to how honestly Livshits described the past was: "Twenty per cent." This answer did not surprised Karaulov because some aspects of Yeltsin's policies can hardly be reported:

For example, once Yeltsin, after drinking too much vodka, ordered his press secretary to be thrown into the river Enisey from the presidential ship. And the press secretary was thrown into the water with a temperature of 6 C. Fortunately, Borodin, who then was the mayor of Yakutsk, jumped into the river and rescued Kostikov. These people saw or participated in many other unpleasant events but decided not to talk about them. Or maybe they were ordered not to talk about them.⁵⁵⁷

Fortunately, Karaulov does not think that he promised something to someone in the Kremlin. "Yes, I went to the Kremlin's banquets some years ago," he admitted. However, he stopped doing that after the tanks faired into the White House (Russian

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

Parliament) and after law enforcement agencies arrested Yakubovsky. Karaulov thinks that nothing will get him to go there again.

Karaulov pointed out that there were very different people in the Yeltsin's team. Along with honest intellectuals there were people who were bribed in order to gain Yeltsin's signature on some documents. These people knew how to handle this assignment. They were aware that Yeltsin drank a lot and brought him the paid documents at moments when he understood little of what he was signing but still was able to hold the pen.

Karaulov believes that many of the Russian enterprises were not properly privatised because the privatisation of big enterprises was regulated by Yeltsin's orders instead of the decrees of the State Duma. He claims,

They sold out the best Russian enterprises almost for free. Who took them? We can now see. We are seeing how they are hiding the money in offshore zones and fighting one another in newspapers and television. This is the result of Yeltsin's orders. Yeltsin signed some of these orders when he was drunk. However, there is nothing that can be done to change the situation. Our present history has been written in this style.⁵⁵⁸

An interesting episode happened while Karaulov was interviewing Mikhail Cherny, who is allegedly linked to organised crime. Karaulov decided to play a joke and asked him: "Mikhail, are you a thief?" Cherny thought for a minute, then he untied his tie and said: "That's all, let's go to the restaurant." Although the same question can be referred to many of the participators in the Karaulov's show, he does not think that it would be a good idea to repeat it because he fears that these people will not forgive him for asking it so easily as Cherny did.

Karaulov thinks that the Russian officialdom does not want and is not able to change itself. He assumed that Putin would replace the people he was not interested in indirectly, through other authorities, his allies. For example, Karaulov argues that the budget money for the development of Goskino (the main Russian state film production company) was allocated in the budget of the Ministry of Culture deliberately so that the Ministry of Culture could decide which company should use the money for film

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

production. Karaulov says that he would not be surprised to learn that the Ministry was going to choose Video International Ltd, which was allegedly linked to Lesin, the Minister of the Press.

Karaulov was the anchorman of the show *The Russian Age*. He interviewed many people who contributed a lot to maintaining and developing the Russian culture, such as Pokrovsky, Dudinsky and Bekhtereva. However, he has not seen people of the new generation who can replace them. In fact, he does not understand the young people. They focus only on money making. Karaulov points out:

There are surprisingly many mentally ill people among youngsters. They do not care who the Russian president is, and what kind of life we are constructing. They are not entirely indifferent to popular music. However, they do not care who sings in the Big Theatre, who dances Odetta, and whether Russian films are produced or not. The most important point is that they do not care in which country to live and to work, if their salary is good. Emigration has already increased during Putin's presidency. Yet, a bigger emigration is still to come. People in the Soviet Union were above the money. I have just started to understand how important it is.⁵⁵⁹

Karaulov fears that only less educated people are to remain in Russia, if the government does not start to listen to the words of many of the Russian governors, such as Rossel (Ekaterinburg), Evdokimov (Murmansk) and Shaimiev (Tatarstan).

Karaulov claims that although some representatives of the Russian government reported many figures about their achievements, Russia is transforming into a country where everything is getting worse. In order to illustrate this point, Karaulov has given a number of examples. For example, he refers to his interview with Daniel Granin, a well-known Russian writer. When Karaulov asked him, whether he might decide to leave Russia, Granin thought a great deal and said that he could but would not do so. And Karaulov understands the reasons why Granin contemplated for such a long time the answer, because he travelled around Russia a lot and visited some villages where life has already perished.

Another Karaulov's example concerns with his story about the shooting of the soldiers of a unit of Russian special forces (Sergiev Posad OMON) by the soldiers of

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

another unit (Podolsky OMON).⁵⁶⁰ Ustinov, then the Minister of Defence, admitted that it was true only 12 months after this incident had happened. Finally, Karaulov reminds a story about Sergey Dorenko's false reports about the alleged involvement of Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow, into the killing of P. Teytum. He emphasises, "Did anybody doubt that Dorenko had lied? However, all of us allowed him to lie and he did." Because of this, Karaulov ought to conclude: "There is no public opinion in Russia."⁵⁶¹

7.3.3. *Artem Borovik and the Media Syndicate Sovershenno Sekretno*

The major source of investigative stories in post-Soviet Russia is big organisations of investigative journalists. These investigative organizations distribute their stories by several ways, including the press, television and the Internet. One of such organisations has been examined in section 7.2.3. There is another very big investigative media empire, which is called *Sovershenno Sekretno* [Absolutely in Secret]. This section reviews its investigative practices and the biography of its former President Artem Borovik.

A. Borovik was a remarkable person in Russian investigative journalism. His father, Genrikh Borovik, was a prominent Soviet journalist in the 1960s. G. Borovik was a special correspondent of the magazine *Ogonyok*. He, along with his family, lived for some time in New York. Artem Borovik spent his childhood among the American children and some representatives of the Soviet cultural elite who were allowed to visit the United States during this time.

A few years later G. Borovik returned to Moscow. However, he was the part of the Soviet cultural elite and this status allowed him to live a much better life than the majority of the Soviet people did. Artem attended a special school for elite people and later was able to continue his education in MGIMO, Moscow State Institute for International Relation, one of the elite Russian universities. During his study he was placed in the consulates of the Soviet Union in some countries. After graduation A.

⁵⁶⁰ This journalistic investigation was conducted by Vyacheslav Izmailov.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

Borovik was offered the job in the Ministry of International Affairs. However, he rejected the offer by saying that he wanted to be a journalist like his father.

A. Borovik started his journalistic career in the magazine *Ogonyok*, a very popular Russian magazine. It is interesting to note that he worked together with Vladimir Yakovlev, who later became one of the founders of the media holding *Kommersant*, and Dmitry Birukov, who was later appointed to the post of the president of the publishing house *7 Days* (Media-Most).⁵⁶²

A. Borovik focused on investigative stories. The most covert theme of that time was the war in Afghanistan. He used his ties with the generals of the Red Army in order to gain permission to move to the front line. This allowed him to see the events of this war first hand, and he wrote very sharp reports that were remarkably different from the official coverage of this unfortunate event in the history of Russia. These stories made A. Borovik very famous in Russia. On the basis of his reports he later published the book *Vstretimsia u Trekh Zhuravley* [We shall meet next to Three Cranes].

A. Borovik's next endeavour was a Soviet-American media project. According to this project, one American man was enlisted in the Red Army for a couple of months, and one man from the Soviet Union was allowed to become a soldier of the American army. Artem Borovik, who suggested the project, was the Soviet participator. He served several months in the American army and wrote stories about his life there.

After that A. Borovik started to work for the newspaper *Sovershenno Sekretno* [Absolutely in Secret]. In 1989, Julian Semenov, the founder and editor-in-chief of the major investigative newspaper, appointed A. Borovik his first deputy. Semenov was very famous in Russia. He was a screenwriter and wrote several books about the Soviet Intelligence Service. His book and screen script for the film *Semnadtsat Mgnoveniy Vesni* [Seventeen fractions of an autumn] made him known to almost everyone in Russia. This film was about Shtirlits, the agent of one of the German special units, who in fact was the agent of Soviet Intelligence Maksim Isaiev, and used his position to end up the negotiations between some German generals and the commanders of the American army.

Links to the CheKa and the KGB helped Semenov create the newspaper *Sovershenno Sekretno*. However, it was difficult for him to continue his publishing

⁵⁶² Borovik, G. (2000) *Artem*. Moskva: Sovershenno Sekretno.

business because he did not have enough business skills. In addition, his health was not good enough. The newspaper accumulated a great deal of debt and seemed to have no means of overpaying them. Semenov died soon after, but before this he transferred his publishing rights and the management of the newspaper to Artem Borovik.

Borovik did a great deal for *Sovershenno Sekretno*. He solved many financial problems and reorganised its structure. Borovik created the weekly *Versia* [A Version], the television programme, and magazine *Litsa* [Faces]. Also, Borovik changed its policy and published many risky stories which were severely criticised by the members of Gorbachev's team. The popularity of the magazine *Sovershenno Sekretno* increased tremendously and made it one of the leading investigative media organizations in Russia.

An interesting point is Borovik's managerial style. One of the members of the editorial committee remembered that Borovik was always late for editorial meetings. He walked in the room, immediately started to talk about the most important matters, whilst looking at his watch. All times there were many phone calls from all over the world.⁵⁶³ Although people of different backgrounds came to investigative journalism such as mathematicians, historians, former law enforcement officers, Borovik continued to rely on field investigations. The reporters of *Sovershenno Sekretno* worked in many regions of Russia to gain data first hand.⁵⁶⁴

Special attention was paid to the trustworthiness of the stories published by *Sovershenno Sekretno*. The data of the stories was verified repeatedly and preferably from different sources. Finding sources was one of the most important dimensions in the work of *Sovershenno Sekretno*. A. Borovik had a huge number of friends in Russian social, business, and political elites, and he spent a lot of time establishing new contacts. He had one meeting after another with generals, bankers, writers, editors, ministers, politicians and readers.⁵⁶⁵

The concern about the safety of the sources and encouraging them for future cooperation was an important aspect too. For example, after *Sovershenno Sekretno* had

⁵⁶³ Lubimov's interview, (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of any obstacles]. Moskva, Kollektcia "Sovershenno Sekretno", p. 176.

⁵⁶⁴ Rustam Arifdzhanov's interview, (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of any obstacles]. Moskva, Kollektcia "Sovershenno Sekretno", p. 126.

⁵⁶⁵ Lubimov's interview, (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of any obstacles]. Moskva, Kollektcia "Sovershenno Sekretno", p. 176.

published audio records of some talks in the Russian officialdom regarding the coup which took place in 1991, Borovik was asked to explain how he had managed to find them, and he declined to comment. He said that he had promised not to talk about this and if he would betray the trust of one of his sources, nobody would give him materials for other investigative stories.

However, A. Borovik confirmed that *Sovershenno Sekretno* paid its sources. For example, in the case with the above-mentioned records, the source received a lot of money. Borovik admitted that they paid less than they could in this case because the source was confident that *Sovershenno Sekretno* would protect him. When the records were transferred to *Spigel* in 1991, according to some reports, their seller earned US\$ 500,000. Borovik said that they paid less for these records less, although not much less.⁵⁶⁶

Borovik revealed that *Sovershenno Sekretno* needed a lot of money in order to operate properly. “We are increasing our personnel who work with archives, documents and information. It requires a lot of money. For example, a report in the American show *60 Minutes* may cost up to US\$ 100,000.”⁵⁶⁷ Who financially supports *Sovershenno Sekretno* is not entirely clear. It is known that one of its branches, the newspaper *Versia*, was partly owned by an American partner. Another source is advertising revenue. However, this source of income decreased when the advertising on RTV was centralised. *Sovershenno Sekretno* had to sell its shows and programmes to RTV although it was less profitable than direct advertising revenues.

Journalistic investigations in Russia are very expensive and risky. A. Borovik himself underlined this by saying:

If you touched an organisation a few years ago, you could have been dismissed. Nowadays, you are very likely to be killed. And the police will never find who has done this because they fear themselves [...] When was it less risky to conduct journalistic investigations – during dictatorship or democracy? It has become evident that it was less risky during the dictatorship. To some extent all investigations are concerned with money transactions and financial groups, which cannot avoid being linked to criminal syndicates. In the United States, a journalistic trip to a war is significantly

⁵⁶⁶ Borovik's interview to Petrovskaya, “Rassledovanie - delo doroogo i opasnoe” [Investigation is expensive and risky business] in (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of any obstacles]. Moskva, Kollektcia “Sovershenno Sekretno”, pp. 176, 415.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 418.

better paid than a trip to Miami. Nowadays, a journalistic investigation is a trip to a war. In the American show *60 Minutes*, a reporter earns US\$ 5,000,000 per annum, and if he decided to take risks, he does it intentionally. Our reporters are not paid well although they work in a significantly more dangerous social environment than the American reporters.”⁵⁶⁸

Some members of the editorial office of *Sovershenno Sekretno* confirmed that there were cases of intervention of armed people who felt themselves offended by some of their published stories. *Sovershenno Sekretno* had to strengthen its security in order to protect the safety of its personnel.⁵⁶⁹

Borovik had his own political views, which were neither capitalistic nor communistic. He thought that capitalism without any ethical rules was unacceptable. And “Russian capital has again discredited itself by its inability to hold the power in Russia. If it is still keeping it, this is being done by absolutely criminal methods.” Borovik thought that there was corruption in the Kremlin and the oligarchs would keep trying to hide many facts of their life. Nevertheless, he was sure that “everything will be disclosed on court hearings like the tribunal after the World War II. It will happen after the current political regime changes.”⁵⁷⁰

Borovik was aware that his views might cause him trouble. He realised that the current elite “will fight to the death because everything depends on it, not only their capitals but their lives. And God save journalists to have their own opinions! They will immediately conclude that we fight against the state. On the contrary, we do not fight against the state, we tackle corruption, the corruption in the government. I was told that they would not forgive me this.”⁵⁷¹

A. Borovik was asked repeatedly to modify his approach. However, he seemed to choose to follow his way. Although security around *Sovershenno Sekretno* and its editor-in-chief was continuously being improved, it failed to save his life. On 9 March 2000, Borovik, along with a businessman and crew, boarded a private aircraft in a Moscow airport. For some unclear reasons, the aircraft crashed after a few seconds after taking off. All its passengers, including Borovik, died instantly. According to official reports, the

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 418.

⁵⁶⁹ Lubimov’s interview, (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of any obstacles]. Moskva, Kollektcia “Sovershenno Sekretno”, p. 176.

⁵⁷⁰ Borovik’s interview to Tamara Matrtinova, *Vesti*, 11.03.2000.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

crash was caused by the freezing of the plane. However, this conclusion did not satisfy many, who continue to believe that it was a contract murder and that Borovik was killed because of his job.

7.4. Investigative Journalism in the Internet

The Internet can attenuate some problems of investigative journalism. This fact has encouraged the rapid development of news websites that publish stories on organised crime and corruption. These websites are called investigative websites in this thesis. Investigative websites are officially registered and have emails of the sites' owners. However, it is extremely complicated to trace the owners of these websites, especially for people who are not professionally involved into criminal investigations. Therefore, although less people use the Web in Russia than in developed countries, much more reports on organised crime can be published openly and in a greater volume on the Internet than on television or in the press.

The investigative websites emerged not a long time ago. Perhaps, the first investigative website was the site *Hearing Window*.⁵⁷² It was launched on 11 December 1998 and published stories about controversial ties of Yury Luzhkov (the mayor of Moscow), Lebed (General and politician), Bikov (allegedly the godfather of the Krasnoyarsk Mafia), and the Cherny brothers (who also were under suspicion of being linked to organised crime). The access to the website was very irregular. It was repeatedly blocked and finally disappeared.

The next investigative websites were *Cogot-1* and *Cogot-2*. They published a lot of data about corruption in the Russian officialdom and the links of well-known Russian politicians to the criminal underworld. It is interesting to note that apparently none of the owners of the above-mentioned sites were traced and arrested despite publishing stories on people with links to high-ranking officials of Russian law enforcement agencies.

There is a special Internet resource which aims to summarise information regarding Russian intelligence and special forces – *Agentura.ru*. It was founded by

⁵⁷² URL www.rumours.ru, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

Relpress-Info on 5 September 2000 and involved journalists from many known dailies, such as *Izvestia*, *Kommersant*, *Ukraina Kriminalnaia* [Criminal Ukraine] among others. The editor-in-chief is Alexander Soldatov.

The aim of the website is twofold. On the one hand, it intends to provide verified information about the Russian intelligence and special forces and thus eliminate unchecked rumors. For this purpose, the website summarises data on the structure and activity of the FSB in Moscow and Russian regions. It provides an insight into their history, introduces interesting people, and describes remarkable cases. On the other hand, its authors hope that it helps them establish a sort of civic control over the activity of the most powerful law enforcement units in Russia.

There are two look-alike investigative websites *Kompromat.ru*⁵⁷³ and *Compromat.ru*.⁵⁷⁴ *Kompromat.ru* is professionally designed and called “The Database of Russian Politics and Business.” Its deficiency is that it does not publish sufficient evidence to verify its stories. The similar website *Compromat.ru* has a good collection of investigative stories published in the Russian mass media. These stories are about Russian prominent businessmen, gangsters and politicians. Even experts consider this website to be a valuable resource.⁵⁷⁵ However, this website focuses on publishing scandalous stories rather than serious studies on Russian powerful actors.

It is possible to find investigative sites that provide a serious socio-economic and political analysis, though. For example, the *Oligarchs' Page*⁵⁷⁶ publishes analytical materials regarding Russian major parties and business groups. Another similar investigative website is the website of the Analytical Centre *Eurasia*.⁵⁷⁷ Although it is a news website, it publishes investigative stories about misdoings of prominent officials and politicians from Asian countries of the former Soviet Union. These stories are written by the journalists of the website or taken from the mass media.

Another remarkable investigative resource is located on <http://www.vokruginfo.ru>. It is the website *Vokrug Novostey* [Around the News]. It differs from the others by focusing on the publication of the news. However, the choice

⁵⁷³ URL www.kompromat.ru, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

⁵⁷⁴ URL www.compromat.ru, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with Litvinenko, London, 2003.

⁵⁷⁶ URL www.cityline.ru/politika/raznoe/oligarhi.html, consulted on 12 July, 2003.

⁵⁷⁷ URL www.eurasia.org.ru, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

of the news is to a great extent influenced by the worthiness of the stories for political scandals. These stories reveal relatively little-known scandalous facts from the lives of Russian politicians, businessmen and oligarchs, including Berezovsky, Abramovich and Putin.

It should be noted that the editorial team of the website is highly involved in political campaigns and the editors know the Russian media market first hand. They were first among those people who admitted that the new Putin's initiative to appoint regional governors would make a great negative impact on budgets of regional mass media. The website published an editorial that claimed that regional mass media companies were likely to lose enormous sums of money which used to be spent on election campaigns and were associated with the dissemination of compromising stories.⁵⁷⁸

Another investigative website is the website of the *FreeLance Bureau*.⁵⁷⁹ It was created by the former employees of the media syndicate *Sovershenno Sekretno*. The stories of the website are backed by evidence. However, some observers believe that many of the stories published on the website have been paid by people interested in discrediting their opponents.⁵⁸⁰

The *Agency Stringer (SA)*⁵⁸¹ is very similar to the *FreeLance Bureau*. The only difference is that it more focuses on business than on politics. *Stringer SA* was founded by OOO Bakkard–M. Vladimir Stoletov and Elena Tokareva were its editors-in-chief. The agency monthly publishes and distributes the magazine, which copies the content of the website.⁵⁸²

The investigative resource *Investigate.ru* was created in 2003.⁵⁸³ Although little is known about its founders, stories published there indicate that several investigative agencies from Moscow and St. Petersburg might have been involved. The website

⁵⁷⁸ "Politteknologi v panike: Putin uvodit s rinka kolossalnie budgeti" [Political experts are in shock: Putin sweeps away huge sums of money from the market], (URL <http://www.vokruginfo.ru/news/news7877.html>, consulted on 14.09.2004).

⁵⁷⁹ URL www.flb.ru, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

⁵⁸⁰ Konstantinov, *Zhurnalistkoe Rrassledovanie: Istoriya Methoda i Sovremennaya Praktika* [Investigative journalism: the history of the method and current practice], p. 362.

⁵⁸¹ URL www.stringer-agency.ru, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

⁵⁸² To find more detail about *Stringer*, see notes of its editor-in-chief in Tokareva, E. (2005) *Zapiski Riadovogo Informatsionnoy Voyni* [Notes of a Soldier of an Information War], Moscow: Yauza.

⁵⁸³ URL <http://www.investigate.ru/>, consulted in March 2005.

focuses on contract murders and summarised data on almost all killings of Russian politicians, businessmen, crime lords and journalists.

The website monitors the crimes committed not only in Russia but also across the world. For example, it reported about the murder of one of the richest businessmen of the Netherlands in May 2004. Also it published a translated version of an article by an investigative reporter for *Financial Times*, presenting details of his journalistic investigation on the mysterious death of Stephen Curtis, newly appointed head of Yukos, the leading Russian oil company, in a helicopter crash in March 2004.

Cry.ru is one of the most interesting Russian investigative websites. This remarkable resource was established in 2000. It summarises data for all serious crimes committed in Russia, including criminal offences related to organised crime. For unclear reasons it did not work from August 2003 until July 2004. However, it resumes its work in August 2004 and is being updated regularly since then.

Russian law enforcement agencies seem to technically and financially support the website. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that it represents a great variety of high quality data,⁵⁸⁴ which are grouped in several categories. They encompass statistics and news regarding all sorts of crime committed in the Russian Federation, including serial killings, corruption, prostitution, slave trade, drug offences, terrorism, kidnapping and contract killings. Serious crime committed abroad is also reported and updated with the speed of leading news agencies.

In addition to the investigative websites that publish stories on various politicians and officials, there are some investigative websites which focus on particular political or business groups. For example, the website *All Truth about the Russian Nation Union (RNE)*⁵⁸⁵ publishes only stories about misdoings of the leaders of the *RNE*.

There were some cases when an investigative story published on the investigative website caused the death of its editors. For example, the murder of Georgy Gongadze might have been caused by his editorial work for the investigative website *Ukraine's Pravda*.⁵⁸⁶ This investigative site was very critical of Ukraine's President Kuchma and oligarch Volkov. The story of Gongadze's killings has already been reviewed in this

⁵⁸⁴ The editorial office of the MVD (Russian Home Office) is a business partner of this website.

⁵⁸⁵ URL www.az.ru/karamazov, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

⁵⁸⁶ URL www.pravda.com.ua, consulted on 11 July, 2003.

thesis. After Gongadze was killed, many employees of the website changed their addresses or hired bodyguards.

To sum up, this section has shown that Russian investigative journalism is well presented on the Internet. There are several Russian professional investigative websites that publish stories about politicians, businessmen and lords of organised crime.

7.5. Ties between Investigative Journalists and Organised Crime

This section shows that that investigative journalists have ties with power elites and organised crime. Investigative journalists themselves, despite underlining their own independence, agree that many other journalists wrote and published articles which were ordered and paid by powerful actors. For example, Khinshtein has admitted that investigative journalism in Russia is embedded in powerful networks.

He has pointed out that stories about Norilsky nickel and Sviazinvest (reviewed in section 6.2.2.) were published because some powerful actors used the mass media in their symbolic confrontation with their rivals. Khinshtein has suspected the media companies and journalists of being paid for publishing these reports.⁵⁸⁷

It is known that Konstantinov's Agency also has ties with lords of organised crime. For example, Konstantinov revealed that he had participated in the meeting between Konstantin Yakovlev and Barsukov (Kumarin), the lords of the *Tambovskaja* gang (one of the most powerful crime groups in St. Petersburg), when they agreed to stop their conflict.⁵⁸⁸

Also, according to Barsukov (Kumarin), Nevzorov, another investigative reporter, is a good friend of his. Barsukov even agreed to play Ludovik XIV in the film that was directed by Nevzorov.⁵⁸⁹ In fact, some of early Nevzorov's reports (when he was the anchorman of *600 Seconds* at the end of the 1980s) seemed to have helped the *Tambovskaja* crime group to become one of the most powerful criminal syndicates in St. Petersburg. Barsukov himself admitted this by saying that "Nevzorov began producing

⁵⁸⁷ Khinshtein, *Politicheskie rassledovania – eto vseгда strashniy risk*.

⁵⁸⁸ Konstantinov's interview, St. Petersburg, August, 2002.

⁵⁸⁹ Barsukov, V. (2003) "Perestante assotsiirovat Tambov s volkami" [Do not associate Tambov with wolves], *Vash Tayniy Sovetnik*, No. 21, 3.11.2003, p. 11.

one TV report after another about horrible *Tambovtsy* - this was like advertising for us. After that many people came to us.”⁵⁹⁰

There is no data that Khinshtein is connected with the criminal underworld. However, according to several sources, he has ties with some departments within the FSB.⁵⁹¹

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the investigative journalism in Russia since the 1980s. It has described the major Russian investigative mass media organisations and journalists. It has shown that first investigative stories were published in the Soviet newspapers and they were for the most part written in the genre of satire. The range of stories published and broadcast by investigative journalists has significantly changed since that time.

The first publications primarily criticised small misdoings of rather low-ranking managers and buroucrats. Step by step, the zone of criticism has considerably expanded. Investigative journalists tried to draw public attention to serious social phenomena such as corruption and prostitution. Finally, the involvement of the Communist Party in dirty businees transactions and the corruption in the Russian government also have become the object of journalistic investigations.

Investigative journalism is becoming more multidimensional. This chapter has shown that people of different backgrounds have become prominent Russian investigative journalists. Khinshtein, Nevzorov and Konstantinov did not have a degree in journalism and belonged to the Russian middle class. Artem Borovik belonged to the Soviet and Russian elite.

It has been shown that investigative journalism is very risky. In order to overcome existing problems, investigative journalists have formed teams of investigators. Providing safety for the personnel remains one of the main concerns of the investigative mass

⁵⁹⁰ Volkov, V. (2002) *Violent Enterpreneurus: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, p. 109; Konstantinov, *Corrumpirovanniy Peterburg*, p. 351.

⁵⁹¹ Interview with Litvinenko and several reports published by *Flb.ru*.

media in Russia. The staff of the most successful teams of investigative journalists consists of security officers, lawyers, investigators and journalists.

Nowadays, there are a few big investigative media organisations in Russia, such as the Agency of Investigative Reporters and the media holding *Sovershenno Sekretno*. These organisations tend to diversify their activities by printing newspapers, producing television shows, and launching websites. However, the press remains to be the dominant channel of distribution. Although Russian television is actively trying to be involved into the process, the necessity of in-depth research undermines the eligibility of investigative stories for television formats.

Connections with and the reliance on law enforcement agencies is one of the features of the investigative journalism in Russia. It does not mean that law enforcement agencies use the mass media for their purpose. This relationship is significantly more complex. However, people, knowledge and information of law enforcement agencies are main resources essential for efficient investigative journalism.

Methods of investigations are very much similar to practices of law enforcement agencies. In fact, many former or current officers of law enforcement agencies cooperate or work for investigative media organisations. Nevertheless, sometimes investigative journalists have managed to find what has not been found by law enforcement agencies. This can be explained by a stronger motivation: whilst law enforcement agencies are state organisations, the income of investigative media organisations depends on their performance.

One of the major trends of investigative journalism in Russia is its increasing involvement in political communication. Although managers of Russian investigative media organisations insist that their organisations are not politically motivated or financed, the reality of Russia does not allow them to stay away from power elites. This undermines the ability of Russian investigative journalism to provide unbiased coverage of important events and to serve as a watchdog of the public sphere.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹² To illustrate this, I would like to quote the editor-in-chief of the investigative newspaper *Stringer*. She claims, "It is very difficult nowadays to publish something worthy. There are 'blocks' everywhere, editors-in-chief are bound by money-supported promises not to touch one or another corporation" (Tokareva, *Zapiski Riadovogo Informatsionnoy Voyni*, p. 47).

8. Conclusion

In the 1990s political changes in the Russian Federation triggered two processes: the rise of organised crime and the emergence of an independent media. These two forces started to play an enormous role in post-Soviet Russia, making an impact on its economic, political and social institutions. Although important developments of Russian organised crime and the mass media have been examined in academic literature, the relationship between them has not been explored in detail. This research is a pioneering study in this respect.

I believe that an analysis of the relationship between organised crime and the media is likely to be superficial if it does not rest on the socio-political context of this relationship. Therefore, I have drawn a larger picture of Russian society in the 1990s and shown the deep embeddedness of the Russian news media in socio-economic and political networks, including organised crime. It has been pointed out that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian influential networks penetrated the entire society and started a battle for the economic resources and for political power. All available methods and numerous allies were used in this struggle for prosperity and influence. My thesis is that Russian organised crime and the media have been involved in this clash of Titans and this is greatly reflected in the features of their relationship.

This research gives many examples of connection between Russian organised crime and economic and political elites, and it presents a wealth of evidence that the Russian media have not avoided the grasp of the Mafia. I have suggested that this happened because the news media were relatively defenceless against the numerous methods of influence wielded by the power elites and that they were not able to effectively resist the pressure of the powerful players. At the same time, the Russian power elites became interested in the media due to the growing importance of the “symbolic method” in the confrontation between them.

I define the symbolic method as a means of exercising symbolic power that aims to downgrade the symbolic capital of the opponents. Symbolic capital and symbolic power are important notions for politicians in democratic societies, and they were of enormous significance during the numerous elections which became a part of the Russian political landscape. This research has demonstrated that organised crime reporting

comprises significant part of the symbolic method and is an effective instrument of political confrontation. This makes the media attractive to organised crime groups, which are deeply embedded in Russian power networks, and the result is the establishment of numerous ties between the mass media and the Mafia.

The use of the symbolic method and the dominance of covert techniques in public relations eroded the public sphere in Russia. The public sphere is an arena in which the democratic communication of information takes place. One of its watchdogs is investigative journalism since the main task of investigative journalists is to alert the public when the boundaries between legal and illegal action are overstepped by businessmen or politicians. Consequently, this research addresses the history of investigative journalism in post-Soviet Russia and assesses its impact.

This study outlines the major trends of Russian investigative journalism and introduces its major actors. It describes some of the main investigative media organisations and looks at biographies and achievements of leading journalists. It demonstrates that they have not avoided being involved in political communication. It also shows that they have connections with criminal lords and rely heavily on law enforcement agencies. Although managers of the investigative media companies insist that their organisations are not politically motivated or financed, the reality of Russia does not allow them to remain separate from political forces and power networks. This undermines the role of investigative journalism as an unbiased public informer and contributes to the erosion of the Russian public sphere.

In conclusion, I would like to make some suggestions and recommendations to improve the situation. First, there is no doubt that Russian media policy should be changed so that media organisations become more independent and protected from the pressures of power elites. A number of methods could be employed, including the further development of media legislation, the establishment of clearly defined limits for the intervention of controlling authorities and the provision of secure personal protection for leading journalists.

However, these activities alone are unlikely to radically improve news content. The media system itself should be reformed. It is not a secret that the Russian mass media have many of the drawbacks of the global media industry. For example, several recent

studies have questioned the ability of Western media to provide an adequate representation of views of various political and social groups, the main media responsibility according to the First Amendment.⁵⁹³ In particular, these studies have pointed that an increasing concentration of media under the control of a few multinational syndicates undermines the diversity of the media content.⁵⁹⁴ Researchers have also noted that the commercialised news media are increasingly tied up to the entertainment business, leading to simplification and reduction of news coverage due to cost-cutting measures.⁵⁹⁵

I would like to add a few comments to these important observations. First, I shall argue that although the news media is a key component of democratic society, the media can hardly be regarded as an entirely democratic institution since journalists and reporters are not elected by the public, but are employed by personnel managers or executives of media companies. If politicians have to worry about the possible impact of their words or policies on voters, the media staff should be anxious only about their bosses' opinions. Thus, they have no particular incentive for serving public interests.

Furthermore, let us suppose that this not entirely democratic institution becomes completely independent and protected from all external influences. A favorite media saying is that every government is corrupt. But how corrupt should be a power that is not under any control from the public or other institutions? The media is the establishment that is frequently regarded as the fourth estate. How can this influential power which is under no public control be entirely honest, let alone be the main avenue of communication of democratic societies?⁵⁹⁶ As Lord Acton has said: "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely."⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹³ Leanza, C. and Feld, H. (2005) "How Can Government Constitutionally Compel Mass Media to Provide News, and How Can Citizens Make It Happen", in E. Cohen (ed.) *News Incorporated: Corporate Media Ownership and its Threat to Democracy*. New York: Prometheus Books, p. 188

⁵⁹⁴ Bagdikian, B. (2004) *The New Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press, p. 260

⁵⁹⁵ McChesney, R. (1999) *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, and Phillips, P. (2005) "Beyond the New American Censorship", in E. Cohen (ed.) *News Incorporated: Corporate Media Ownership and its Threat to Democracy*. New York: Prometheus Books, p. 36

⁵⁹⁶ Of course, journalists have professional codes of ethics (see, for example, Belsey, A. and Chadwick, R. (eds.) (1992) *Ethical Issues in Journalism and the Media*, London: Routledge.), but politicians also have their codes of ethics and it is difficult to prove that media ethics is superior to the ethics of politicians.

⁵⁹⁷ Cited from Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*, p. 1

In addition, the fact that journalists are skilled writers does not necessarily mean that they want or are able to contextualise all their material from the broadest perspective and accurately present all events and facts. In other words, when the mass media are completely independent (that is to say, free from any form of public control), there is a high risk that this non-democratic institution would seek personal gain through the extort of considerable sums of money from other power elites for its silence or for a required presentation in the media agenda.

Consequently, I shall argue that a solution of current media problems can be sought in transferring the media to the larger control of the public. Ben Bagdikian and many others have expressed similar ideas.⁵⁹⁸ Following this, I would like to propose a diagram which illustrates the position of the media among major social institutions and supports the necessity of such a transformation. This diagram (Figure 8.1) represents main powers of contemporary societies and also suggests a recommended pattern of their relations with each other.

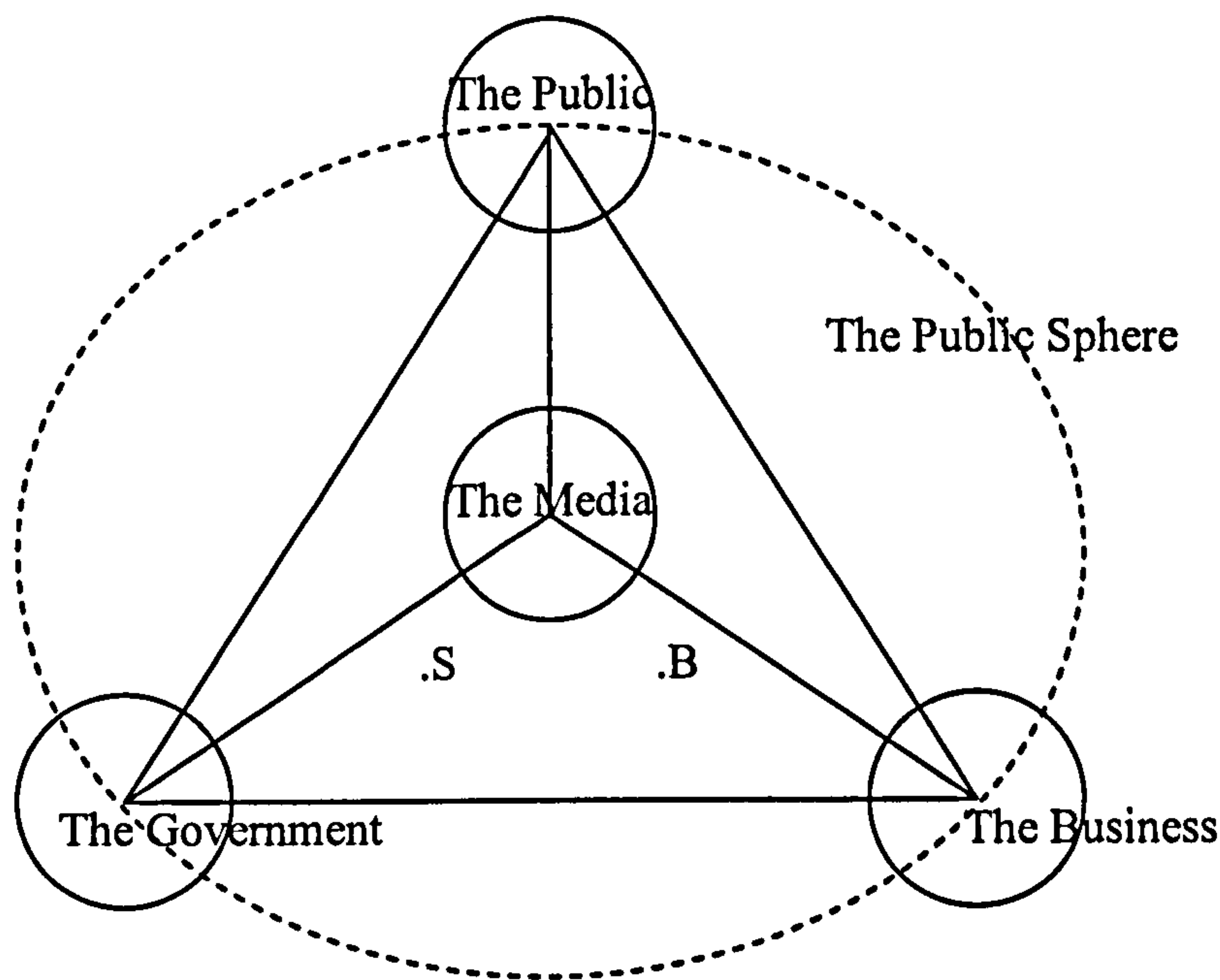


Figure 8.1 Public Sphere and Major Powers of Contemporary Societies.

⁵⁹⁸ Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*, p. 263

In this diagram, the Media is located at the point that is equally distant from the other three powers. This position allows the media to be an efficient co-ordinator of the public sphere and to provide essential unbiased information exchange between the main components of society. It should be noted that the Media in this diagram is located at the point that is closer to the Public than points S and B. These two points represent the current position of the media in some authoritarian and democratic societies, reflecting that media organisations in these countries are partially controlled by state departments or business corporations.

This scheme challenges the role of the media as the fourth estate. In my view, the modern media organisations are not as interested in providing a critical dialog between the parties as they are interested in a diminishment of contradictions and conflicts between the major players. However, I argue that the main goal of the media is to inform the public on the matters of public concern and to provide a platform for the exchange of diverse views and opinions. This approach could fuel a renaissance of the public sphere.

The media should reflect the public will rather than form public opinion through a system of specifically developed techniques. There is no doubt that the media should be able to criticise the government. However, it does not mean that it should criticise all governmental activities, regardless of their merit. Such an approach would be more likely to discredit the media rather than the government, especially when some state policies have popular support.

It should be noted that the position of Russian mass media differs from the “ideal” model, which is shown in Figure 8.1. The Russian media was close to it at the very beginning of the 1990s, but it progressively moved under the control of large business groups (point B in Figure 8.1). Putin’s policy towards the media initiated a slide of the majority of the media companies towards point S. Although Putin’s approach has found many supporters among Russian people, the media are still more distanced from the public than is necessary in order to secure a healthy flow of communication and in order to encourage a critical dialog among all the parties involved. Consequently, more efforts from the government, the media and the public are needed in order to restore the public sphere in Russia.

Russian investigative journalism should play a very important role in this process. Obviously, political and business elites would prefer to minimise public knowledge about their activities, but it is the mission of investigative journalism to ensure public access to issues of public concern or to those that transgress the boundaries of legality. Rather than seek personal gain, this should be the main goal of investigative journalists. Certainly, this goal cannot be achieved without additional public funding and solid protection for investigative journalists.

This is the suggested direction of the media reform in Russia. When the media companies are sufficiently protected from external pressures of powerful networks but still open to public control, and when the role of the media is not to teach people what they should think and how to vote, but rather to inform them about matters of public concern, the media is likely to become the centre of the public sphere. By this means it could provide the truly valuable dialog needed among major powers for the sustainable development of society. Otherwise, the media is at serious risk of becoming a corrupt power itself. One which dominates the political landscape, extracts rent in exchange for previously agreed media content, and trades its status of the fourth estate for the doubtful advantages of being the fifth network of Russian organised crime.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Main Actors of this Thesis

Alexander Cheluskin - a friend of V. Yakovlev, he is suspected of links to the organised crime group controlled by the brothers Vasilevi

Alexander Khinshtein - an investigative journalist (*Moskovsky Komsomolets*)

Alexander Kniazev - the director of TV company Samara

Alexander Korzhakov - the head of presidential bodyguards

Alexander Litvinenko - lieutenant-colonel of the FSB

Alexander Malishev - the lord of one of the most powerful crime syndicates in St. Petersburg

Alexander Nevzorov - an investigative journalist (the anchorman *600 Seconds*)

Alexander Solonik - a gangster, regarded as the killer № 1 in Russia

Anatoly Bikov – a lord of organised crime in Krasnoyarsk

Anatoly Sobchak - the Mayor of St. Petersburg until 1996

Andrey Karaulov - an investigative journalist (the anchorman of the show *Moment Istini*)

Andrey Konstantinov - an investigative journalist, the director of the Agency of Investigative Reporters

Badri Patarkatsishvili - a former manager of ORT and TV-6, a friend of Berezovsky

Bella Kurkova – a head of the St. Petersburg television Channel 5 at the beginning of the 1990s

Boris Berezovsky - a media mogul

Evgeny Kiselyov - the Director General of NTV, and than TV-6

Irina Prudnikova - the former Director General of TRK Peterburg

Irina Yakovleva – the wife of *Vladimir Yakovlev*

Konstantin Yakovlev (Kostia Mogila) - a lord of organised crime in St. Petersburg (killed in May 2003)

Paul Klebnikov – an author of a book about Berezovsky, the editor-in-chief of *Forbes* in Russia, killed on 10 July 2004

Ludmila Narusova - the wife of *Anatoly Sobchak*

Sergey Shevchenko - member of St. Petersburg Assembly (accused of extortion and links to organised crime)

Sergey Dorenko - a popular reporter, Berezovsky's supporter

Sergey Lisovsky - a media mogul, the President of a big Russian advertising company

Sergey Mikhailov (Mikhas) - a lord of organised crime in Moscow

Sergey Trofimov (Selvester) – a lord of organised crime in Moscow

Vadim Tareev – the husband of *Bella Kurkova*

Vladimir Barsukov (Kumarin) - a lord of the *Tambovskaia* organised crime group in St. Petersburg

Vladimir Gusinsky - a media mogul

Vladimir Kirpichev (Kirpich) - an influential *thief in law*

Vladimir Yakovlev - the mayor of St. Petersburg from 1996 until July 2003

Vyacheslav Shevchenko - member of St. Petersburg Assembly, (accused of extortion and links to organised crime)

Yan Gurevsky - a gangster of one of the most powerful crime groups in St. Petersburg

Yulian Dubov - Director General of Logovaz, Berezovsky's supporter

Yury Luzhkov - the Mayor of Moscow

Yury Shutov - a Sobchak's adversary, who is accused of ties with organised crime and sentenced

Appendix 2

Chronology: Selected Events Mentioned in this Thesis

November 1982	Death of Brezhnev; Yury Andropov becomes leader
February 1984	Death of Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko becomes leader
March 1985	Death of Chernenko, Michael Gorbachev becomes leader
December 1985	Boris Yeltsin becomes 1 st secretary of Moscow Office of the CPSU
March 1990	Mikhail Gorbachev is elected by new legislature to new presidency of USSR
July 1990	Law on the Mass Information Media (Law on the press) is adopted
June 1991	Yeltsin wins Russian presidential election
19-21 August 1991	GKChP, Putsch in Moscow
December 1991	Dissolution of the Soviet Union
27 December 1991	The Law on Mass Media is adopted
21 December 1991	First issue of <i>Nezavisimaia Gazeta</i> appears
October 1992	Russia's privatisation programme begins
21 September 1993	Yeltsin suspends the Congress of People's Deputies
24 July 1993	The Law on State Secrets is adopted
October 1993	Tanks fire on the White House in Moscow
October 1993	Censorship decreed temporarily for media
17 October 1994	Dmitry Kholodov, a journalist for <i>Moskovsky Komsomolets</i> is assassinated
August 1994	Last Russian troops withdrawn from the Baltic states
1 March 1995	Vlad Listev, Director General of ORT, is killed
14 June 1995	The Federal Law on Advertising is adopted
June 1995	Bella Kurkova, accused of corruption, is sacked from the post of the head of St. Petersburg television
12 September 1995	Berezovsky helps Tretyakov to hold control over <i>Nezavisimaia Gazeta</i>
18 October 1995	The Federal Law on The State Support of the Mass Media and Book Publishing is adopted by the Duma

25 January 1996	Oleg Slabyenko, who used to be the Director of television at Ostankino, is assassinated
May 1996	Andrey Konstantinov creates the Agency of Investigative Reporters
June 1996	Gazprom purchases a 30 percent stake in NTV
June 1996	Anatoly Sobchak defeated in re-election bid for mayor of St. Petersburg
June 1996	Yeltsin appoints General Alexander Lebed to top security post
3 July 1996	Yeltsin is re-elected as Russian President
17 October 1996	Yeltsin fires Alexander Lebed
17 November 1997	Litvinenko's press conference regarding criminal methods of the FSB
10 September 1998	Dmitry Rozhdestvensky, a founder of <i>Russian Video</i> , is accused of the involvement in illegal business activities and arrested
December 1998	Y. Shutov is elected to the St. Petersburg Legislative Assembly
February 1999	Y. Shutov is arrested
25 March 1999	A. Litvinenko is arrested
October 1999	Oleg Chervonuk, a chairman of the firm <i>the Baltic Press</i> , along with his brother, is assassinated
7 August 1999	The incursion into Dagestan by Chechen fighters
9 August 1999	V. Putin is appointed Prime Minister
8 September 1999	A building on Guryanova Street in Moscow is bombed
31 December 1999	Yeltsin resigns
9 March 2000	Borovik's aircraft crashes after taking off
May 2000	Russian tax police, officers from the prosecutor's office and the FSB storm the Moscow headquarters of NTV and Media-Most and search the premises for 12 hours
13 June 2000	Gusinsky is arrested
16 June 2000	Gusinsky is released on bail
11 August 2000	Incident with the submarine <i>Kursk</i>
16 September 2000	Gongadze, publisher of the Internet journal <i>Ukrainska Pravda</i> , disappears. His corpse is found headless in a suburb of Kiev
3 October 2000,	Sergey Ivanov, the Director General of the channel Lada-TV, is assassinated
November 2000	Litvinenko applies for asylum in the UK
December 2000	Gusinsky is arrested by Spanish police

January 2001	M. Mirilashvili is arrested
January 2001	Gazprom has taken a controlling stake of 46 percent in NTV
March 2001	Berezovsky becomes the major shareholder of TV-6
29 March 2001	Badri Patarkatsishvili is appointed general director of TV-6
April 2001	Gazprom replaces the management of NTV
14 April 2001	Badri Patarkatsishvili appoints E. Kiselyov interim general director of TV-6. Some reporters left NTV and start to work for TV-6
14 December 2001	Sergey Kalinovsky, the editor-in-chief of the daily <i>Moskovsky Komsomolets</i> and the radio MK- Smolensk, disappears in Smolensk
January 2002	TV-6, in which Berezovsky has 75 per cent stake, is shut down
28 April 2002	General Lebed, the Governor of the Krasnoyarsky Kray is killed in a helicopter crash
30 April 2002	Valery Ivanov, the chief editor of <i>Toliatinskoe Obozreniye</i> , is murdered
7 May 2002	Valeriy Malishev, vice-governor of St. Petersburg, accused of corruption, dies
25 June 2002	Oleg Sedinko, an owner of the TV company Novaia Volna (A New Wave), is assassinated in Vladivostok
May 2003	Konstantin Yakovlev (Kostia Mogila) is assassinated in Moscow
July 2003	Vladimir Yakovlev, the Mayor of St. Petersburg, resigns
September 2003	Berezovsky is granted asylum in the UK
October 2003	Mikhail Khodorovsky is charged with tax evasion and arrested
August 2003	Ruslan Kolian, a lord of organised crime, is assassinated
October 2003	Yury Shutov is transferred from “Kresti”, a St. Petersburg prison, to the Moscow special prison “Matrosskaya Tishina”
24 February 2004	Putin sacked Ministers
2 March 2004	Mariasov, vice-mayor of Novosibirsk is assassinated
5 March 2004	Mikhail Fradkov is appointed the Prime Minister
14 March 2004	Putin is re-elected as President of Russia
25 March 2004	Corpses of Vyacheslav Shevchenko and Zorin are found in Cyprus
12 April 2004	Boris Goldman, who won nomination <i>Media Manager-2003</i> and was Head of the advertising agency New Found Quality (NFQ) is assassinated

9 May 2004	Kadirov, President of Chechnya, is assassinated in Grozny, Adam Khasanov, a Reuters cameraman, was among 14 people killed in the accident
20 May 2004	European Court rules out that Russia abused Gusinsky's rights during conflict between Gazprom and Media-Most
9 July 2004	Paul Klebnikov, the editor-in-chief of Forbes, is assassinated in Moscow
17 September 2004	Vladimir Pritchkin, the editor-in-chief of Severobaikalsk Television Company, is murdered on the course of a raid on poachers
17 December 2004	Badri Patarkatsishvili is elected President of the National Olympic Committee of Georgia
January 2005	Badri Patarkatsishvili is appointed President of the World Jewish Television
February 2005	Berezovsky says he intends to leave London and move to Ukraine
March 2005	A conflict between the editor-in-chief and a group of leading journalists for <i>Moscow News</i>
9 June 2005	Three police officers allegedly involved in the murder of Maxim Maximov are arrested in St. Petersburg
28 June 2005	Following the conflict, the Audit Committee of Moscow News resigns. Nevzolin, the owner of the newspaper, terminates funding and claims that he is ready to sale <i>Moscow News</i> for a dollar to everybody who will defend the freedom of speech in Russia
4 July 2005	Moscow News is bought by Vadim Rabinovich, the Head of Media International Group in Ukraine, for less than £600,000. Kiselyov, editor-in-chief of Moscow News, resigns
4 July 2005	RAO UES (70%) and Irena and Dmitry Lesnevskiy (30%) have sold Ren TV, the fifth largest Russian TV channel, to Severstal, a major industrial group controlled by Mordashev, for £60 million.
17 July 2005	Khinshtein reveals some documents indicating that Kasianov, the former Russian Prime Minister, privatised and became the owner of a very well located property by paying considerably less its real cost. The Russian Prosecutor Office launches an inquest into the acquisition of the property
18 July 2005	Prosecutors fail to prove V. Ivankov's (Yaponchik) guilt in the court and he is freed. Ivankov reveals his intention to write a book and accuses the news media of fictitious reports about him

Appendix 3

List of Interviews

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Profession/Position</i>	<i>City</i>
Vasiliy	Entrepreneur	St. Petersburg
Stanislav	Expert on organised crime	St. Petersburg
Alexander	Former FSB officer	London
Nikolay	Former Representative of the Russian Human Rights Committee	Moscow
Sergey	Public relation assistant	St. Petersburg
Shishkina	Administrator of the School of Journalism at St. Petersburg State University	St. Petersburg
V. Radaev	Rector of Higher School of Economics	Moscow
Petr	Investigative journalist	St. Petersburg
Evgeniy	Senior manager of an agency of investigative reporters	St. Petersburg
Igor	A TV reporter for a Russian news agency	London
Svetlana	Journalist for <i>St. Petersburg Vedomosti</i>	St. Petersburg
Nikolay	Executive of an agency of investigative reporters	St. Petersburg
Elena	Russian journalist	London
Ivan	Head of a summer school on Russian investigative journalism	St. Petersburg
H. Tumber	Head of the School of Social Science at the City University	London
G. Karponosenko	Professor of the School of Journalism at St. Petersburg State University	St. Petersburg
Otetc Sergey	Russian priest	London
Vladimir	Expert on the Russian mass media at a School of Journalism	St. Petersburg
Natalia	Expert on the Russian mass media/Journalist	St. Petersburg
Nick	British investigative journalist	London
Anatoliy	Entrepreneur	St. Petersburg
D. Gavra	Professor on Mass Communications at a School of Journalism	St. Petersburg
Pavel	Latvian Entrepreneur	London
Andrey	Investigative journalist	St. Petersburg
Denis	Entrepreneur with close ties with organised crime groups	St. Petersburg

Also, I have used:

Borovik's interview to Tamara Matrtinova, *Vesti*, 11.03.2000.

Borovik's interview to Petrovskaya, "Rassledovanie - delo doroogo i opasnoe" [Investigation is an expensive and risky business] in (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of obstacles]. Kollektcia "Sovershenno Sekretno", Moskva.

Karaulov's interview to the newspaper *Tribuna*, Kuzina, N. (2002) "Poisk istini u nas v krovi" [The search for truth is essential for us), *Tribuna*, 16.05.2002.

Lubimov's interview in (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond obstacles]. Moskva: Kollektcia "Sovershenno Sekretno".

Rustam Arifdzhanov's interview in (2001) *Uzhe ne Vedaia Pregrad* [Already beyond of obstacles]. Moskva: Kollektcia "Sovershenno Sekretno".

Nevzorov's interview to the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets-SPb*, (2002) "Trekhstotletie – merzkaya data" [The 300-year Jubilee is a naughty date], *Moskovsky Komsomolets-SPB*, 28.08.2002.

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