

3.12. Russia

The media are facing difficult times in today's Russia. After the messy beginnings of post-Cold-War Russia in the Yeltsin years, the Putin administration has been consolidating power at the centre of the federation through a variety of measures. This has had important repercussions on both the quality and the independence of the media. Traditionally, the media hubs have been in urban Russia, where they have an interested audience. However, media coverage has never truly included the far-flung subjects of the federation, a tendency that has grown stronger over the last few years. Even today, only the state-owned media are able to reach the whole country, effectively giving the government an information monopoly beyond the big cities.

I. General Conditions

The literacy rate in Russia stands at 99.6 per cent.¹ This number includes people aged 15 and above who can, with understanding, both read and write. Information on literacy, while not a perfect measure of educational results, is probably the most easily available and valid means for making international comparisons.

Illiteracy
and education

In 2004 there were more than 2,500 TV and radio companies in Russia.² According to the Russian Ministry of Print and Broadcast Media – MPTR³ – as of April 2002, the following numbers of active broadcast licences were registered in Russia: terrestrial TV – 1,276; terrestrial radio – 1,002; cable TV – 258; satellite TV – 18; and terrestrial cable TV – 20. At the beginning of the 1990s there were only 170 TV and radio networks. In 2004, there were 44,920 print media houses registered in the Russian Federation: 25,404 newspapers (regional: 18,960) and 16,160 magazines (regional: 4,787). The total number of print media increased from 1998, when that figure stood at 16,426. This growth of the print media, however, was not accompanied by a significant increase in aggregate circulation.

Local media

Radio, TV

Print

¹ UNDP: *Human Development Report 2004*, New York 2004.

² Seslavinsky, Mikhail: *Interview to VIPonline.Ru*, 30 September 2004. Mr. Seslavinski is Head of the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications.

³ Russian Ministry of Print and Broadcast Media – MPTR (now the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications) in its online database, April 2002.

Media ownership	Many political parties operate, either directly or indirectly, their own national and regional newspapers as well as their own websites. This practice, however, does not extend to radio and television stations, as both are too expensive for the parties. During political campaigns, the total circulation of newspapers naturally increases. The website of the Edinaya Rossiya Party and their newspaper of the same name is located at: www.edinros.ru . The Communist Party of the Russian Federation ⁴ runs the official newspaper <i>Pravda</i> ⁵ and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, publishes the newspaper <i>LDPR</i> . ⁶
Internet media	In Russia, independent national and regional Internet newspapers do exist. According to M. Seslavinsky, there are 1,259 registered electronic periodicals on the Internet. ⁷ There is no official law to register Internet sites or portals as mass media outlets. Like any other industry, though, the Internet media industry is subject to two forms of regulation – state regulation and self-regulation. State authorities try to censor Internet newspapers indirectly, through legislation and outside pressure. Still, it is very difficult to regulate the Internet as an international medium and new information technology, much less to exert pressure on such newspapers on the World Wide Web. The Internet has improved free coverage of events. According to recent studies in summer 2004, 15 per cent of the Russian population regularly visit Russian sites on the Internet, above all RuNet. ⁸
Media access TV, Radio	According to the State Statistics Committee, over 98 per cent of the Russian population has access to at least one TV channel and over 96 per cent has access to at least one radio station. TV is the only sector of the media market which the state continues to dominate. ⁹
Print	The daily circulation of Russian newspapers is 21.5 million copies. ¹⁰ At present, the only accurate circulation data available for analysis are subscription figures compiled by the Russian postal service, which delivers almost all newspapers to Russian subscribers. In contrast to other countries, Russia does not have a developed system for

⁴ www.kprf.ru .

⁵ www.gazeta-pravda.ru .

⁶ www.ldpr.ru/gazeta.html .

⁷ Seslavinsky 2004.

⁸ Public Opinion Foundation (FOM): *The Internet in Russia*, 8th release, Moscow 2004.

⁹ Russian-American Media Entrepreneurship Dialogue (RAMED): *Russian Media Industry Report*, Moscow 2002.

¹⁰ Seslavinsky, Mikhail: *Speech at MPTR Board*, 19 March 2003.

auditing newspaper circulation which would provide comprehensive statistics on the actual number of periodicals published, their circulation and sales figures. There is no serious liability for print media associated with the distortion of circulation figures, while in many other countries this violation is treated as commercial fraud. In Russia, distorted data and insufficient knowledge of the competitive environment and reading audience hold back the flow of new advertisers and investors into the print media. It also obstructs the development of enterprises in the industry overall. Furthermore, the inefficient infrastructure for retail and subscription distribution results in higher prices for and slower delivery to the consumer.¹¹ The defining developmental trend in the print media market over the past ten years has been the continued growth of retail sales accompanied by a drop in subscriptions. This change is associated with the fact that retail print sales developed as commercial businesses from the start, and are thus motivated to offer the consumer a wider range of services in terms of both quantity and quality. In recent years, the aggregate subscription circulation of periodicals in Russia has fluctuated between 30 and 33 million copies.

At the same time, however, an average of 350 new print publications appear on the market each year, meaning that the existing reading audience is simply being redistributed. Over the past nine years, the aggregate subscription circulation of local publications was greater than that of national publications and accounted for 64 per cent of all subscriptions.¹² Yet even in St Petersburg, with a current population of 4.6 million people, the circulation of formerly large daily papers has become very small: for instance, *Sankt-Peterburgskiy Vedomosty*, 45,000; *Nevskoye Vremya*, 17,000; *Smena*, 10,000; and *Vecherniy Peterburg*, 10,000 copies. The most popular national newspapers are those that have regional editions, usually in the form of inserts (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Trud*, *Argumenty i Fakty*, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, etc.). Printing is one of the most important sectors in Russia's information industry. In 2002, there were over 6,000 printing enterprises with various ownership structures.¹³

¹¹ RAMEL 2002.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Internet	According to different studies, in 2004, there were anywhere from 12 to 14.6 million users of RuNet ¹⁴ , with alternative evaluations placing the number as high as 16.9 million ¹⁵ and even 18 million. ¹⁶
Media consumption Radio, Print, TV, Internet	Russian citizens <u>very often</u> receive their information from TV [4]. The radio and press are used <u>often</u> [3] as sources of information, while the Internet and mobile phones are employed only <u>occasionally</u> [2].
Media influence on political opinion	The influence of the media on the formation of political opinion is <u>significant</u> [3]. The social background of the media consumers, however, does determine the level of influence. The print media has more influence on the well-educated sectors of society, while the less educated groups rely on TV. The level of public trust is unevenly divided among the various media. The highest level of trust is in national TV channels, which enjoy the trust of almost every second Russian (49 per cent). Following behind national TV are national periodicals, which are used by an estimated 11 per cent of the population. Only 9 per cent of those polled noted local television as a source of information that they trust, with 7 per cent pointing to central radio and 3 per cent to local radio. Two per cent of the votes went to local periodicals and the Internet. ¹⁷
State-owned media	In Russia, state-owned and quasi state-run newspapers, radio stations and television channels do exist. Laws protect editorial departments from having their coverage influenced by government authorities; however, government officials appoint the leading staff of state-owned newspapers, television and radio channels (general directors, editors-in-chief, etc.).
State-owned media and published opinion	The <u>state-owned media also has a hegemony</u> over the industry. The coverage of state-owned media is naturally <u>very friendly towards the government</u> [+2]. Officially, the state holds only 10 per cent of the Russian broadcasting industry. ¹⁸ In reality, though, there is state control of the main federal TV channels. There are three main federal channels with news coverage and each attracts large audiences: 1 Channel (former ORT), RTR and NTV. There is

¹⁴ Seslavinsky, Mikhail: *Speech at the News Agencies World Congress*, 27 September 2004.

¹⁵ FOM 2004.

¹⁶ CIA: *World Fact Book 2003*, Washington 2003.

¹⁷ RAMEL 2002.

¹⁸ Seslavinsky 2004.

also state pressure on private channels as well as a lack of transparency in their functioning; thus, television is the most pro-government sector of the media.

The government regularly holds press conferences to inform the public about its programmes. Only journalists from the so-called 'Kremlin Pool' with formal accreditation from the authorities have access to all press conferences. Usually press conferences can be broadcast, and there are no well-known examples at the federal level of the right to broadcast press conferences being refused to particular channels.

Government
press
conferences

II. Legal Environment

The Constitution of the Russian Federation establishes freedom of opinion in the following ways (Article 29): 1) everybody has guaranteed freedom of thought and speech; 2) nobody can be forced to express his opinion and convictions or be refused them; 3) everybody has a free right to search, receive, and produce information, etc., by any legal means. However, there is one concrete restriction mentioned in this regard – state secrets. Also, the category 'everybody' seems to be wider than 'citizen', which is the term sometimes used in other countries.

Freedom of
expression

The Constitution also establishes freedom of the press as a guarantee given under the freedom of 'mass information'. This broad definition has proven to be much more liberal than freedom of the 'mass media'. It gives this freedom to professionals, editorial staff and owners, but not to the population or every individual. The idea of a free press is supported and developed by special media laws, above all the Mass Media Act. Yet, the Constitution also includes some strong prohibitions against propaganda and agitation which invokes social, national, religious and other sorts of hate. There are also special acts which restrict the freedom of the press in particular areas, including appeals to criminal actions, war propaganda, etc., all of which are dealt with according to international legal standards.

Media
coverage

Among other limitations on the free flow of information is the protection of the private individual and overall privacy. There are special anti-libel articles in the Criminal Code (129, 130). Beyond that, the Civil Code (Article 152) protects persons and organisations from defamation. An individual has a right to restore his honour, self-respect (dignity), and business reputation in the form of a public request to the media or in court. In such a procedure, the plaintiff could be

Regulation
of media
coverage

awarded financial damages; similar rights are given to companies. The Civil Code also contains regulations protecting commercial secrets. In summer 2004 a special Commercial Secrets Act was passed. Invasion of one's private life and dissemination of personal data are restricted by the Constitution as well as by other acts which are cornerstones of the protection of privacy.¹⁹

Other legal restrictions on media coverage are not so strong. For instance, censorship is prohibited by the Constitution. According to the Mass Media Act it is not permitted to establish and finance any structures that carry out censorship. Some normal rights and freedoms may be limited only in a state of emergency, as established by special federal acts (Constitution, Article 56). National legislation defines censorship as prior screening of materials that are intended for publication by the state or public officials. Censorship after publication and as a punishment, however, is not forbidden. As a result, groundless prosecutions are sometimes initiated by state authorities against opposition media or simply honest journalists. Perhaps for social and editorial work, it would be better to widen the juridical meaning of censorship.

There are no formal restrictions on the coverage of certain groups, institutions or issues. The activities of some specific organisations and services, however, can only be covered with special permission, for instance, national security, courts and medicine. In most cases, journalists do not receive this permission from their employers, but rather the representatives of these organisations and services. No one is excluded from taking up the profession of journalism. The legislation, however, does limit the individual wishing to work in the media to being a citizen of the Russian Federation, older than 18 years, and having never been imprisoned by court decision, or working for an organisation which is banned by law.

Media reports do not have to be examined before publication. There are exceptions to this rule, though, for instance when a government official writes an article or gives an interview. We, however, will not delve into the realm of professional ethics here. It is enough to say, in a juridical sense (not in reality) there is no government body responsible for regulating media coverage.

¹⁹ Information and Protection of Information Act, President's Decree on confidential information, 6 March 1997.

Over the past five years the legal basis of media coverage has been partly modified. It was mainly changed in areas such as politics and anti-terror activities. Five years ago the Russian press felt itself to be freer, although it is hard to define precisely whether reporting was democratic or anarchistic. The real problem in the political sense was the irresponsibility of the media during election campaigns. The state initiated sensitive amendments to the election legislation intended to prevent the press expressing their opinions on the candidates. After energetic public protest, the Constitutional Court (October 2003) abolished this amendment and substantially softened others. Rules that strengthen the media's responsibility for libel and other violations, however, went untouched. Provoked by both events abroad and internally, new amendments and additions to the media laws have appeared in the areas of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism. Journalists have not welcomed all of the changes. The latest important element of modernisation is the attempt to place journalists under the firm control of media owners. The proposals to 'improve' media legislation in this way are going through the State Duma. The effect of these modifications on freedom of the media is slight aggravation [-1].

Changes in
the past five
years

During the last five years free media coverage in Russia has been visibly modified, especially in the reporting of political events and official politics. The print media and particularly broadcasting appear more cautious and loyal to the administration [slight aggravation: -1]. Yet the changes are not the result of radical modifications in the law; instead, they have political, economic and professional moral roots. During the last five years, there has not been repression of the media in its usual sense; rather, repression has taken the form of on-going policy aimed at the concentration of all media resources in the hands of the state's most powerful individuals.

Apart from censorship under the law, there is also non-official censorship, although this is often of a political or governmental nature. No single group is regularly suppressed by the authorities, irrespective of the political situation; however, it should be noted that the opposition receives less broadcast time and gifted commentators sometimes lose their jobs if they do not agree with the officially approved views.

Censorship
under the
law

Journalists cannot be accused of breaking censorship laws because officially they do not exist in Russia. The

consequences for those courageous reporters who do break censorship laws are now generally administrative rather than imprisonment. Punishments now include anything from fines to liquidation under various pretexts. Nonetheless, Russians do recall instances in their current history when journalists were murdered for doing their civic duty. For example, in 2002, eight journalists were killed, which meant that Russia was named the most dangerous country for journalists in Europe in 2003.²⁰ In 2004, the murder of Paul Khlebnikov, chief editor of the Russian edition of *Forbes* magazine aroused public shock. Khlebnikov had gained popularity because of his publications about the shady side of politicians and of influential businessmen's biographies.

Media
licences

Every media house has to be registered by specialised administrative bodies. The process is fairly easy: the applicant has to submit a simple application and there are few formalities. The acting legislation carries a short list of reasonable reasons for rejecting the application. Some small media networks are not obliged to register. Beyond that, TV and radio companies have to obtain broadcast licences, on the grounds of fair competition. For this purpose, special commissions act under governmental control. Occasionally the community discusses the objectiveness of the commission's decisions. However, this happens rarely.

Journalists'
status

Unlike the media networks, individual journalists are not required to hold either a government licence or educational qualifications to practice their profession.

According to the law, all journalists have equal access to the public meetings held by government agencies and have the right to broadcast these meetings. The same regulations exist for civil organisation offices. In practice, the accreditation mechanism is key. Each organisation creates its own rules of accreditation taking into account the location, requirements, time-limits of meetings and other conditions. Particular norms have been introduced for the coverage of activities of state bodies by the state-run media. Special federal acts contain a highly detailed description of obligations and regulations for both sides.

Although legislation gives journalists the right to protect their interests, one can see both at federal (for example, the decision of the Constitutional Court on the coverage of the

²⁰ International Press Institute (IPI): *2003 World Press Freedom Review*, Vienna 2003.

election campaign) and regional levels that this does not always happen. It is rare indeed for journalists to protect their professional rights in court.

The essential problems of free media coverage can be seen in the growth of so-called press empires. There are no separate regulations concerning media monopolies. General anti-monopoly legislation states that a company should be considered a dominant producer when it owns 35 per cent or more of the market. If this is true, then the state holds the greatest monopoly in the television and advertising markets (nearly 70 per cent of media advertising runs on television). Executive powers control all the biggest networks at the federal level (TV and radio companies: 1 Channel, RTR, Radio Rossii, etc.). Many regional channels function as affiliates of the integral state broadcasting network. The distribution of periodicals looks more pluralist thanks to a myriad of small owners, but several private publishing houses hold strong positions in the capital and provinces. The majority of them tow the government line and are quite loyal to the regime (Gazprom-media, Prof-media of Interros, etc.). The privately owned media have neither the reliable tools nor the experience to alter the situation in their favour. Thus, the government, by increments, took financial and administrative control of the formerly independent NTV Company.

Monopolies
and cartels

III. Political Conditions

All sectors of the population are represented in media coverage, but to varying degrees. First, divisions depend on the type of media doing the reporting. For instance, federal channels' priorities lie in events in Moscow with little attention paid to the provinces. Socially, politicians of various kinds and ranks, so-called stars, and scandalous criminal figures receive the most press coverage. Analysis of Russian media contents shows that between a quarter and one-fifth of all publications are devoted solely to politics and administrative practice, while the economic sphere, way of life, and especially family life, are given less coverage.²¹ Still, a number of publications reflect the living conditions of super-rich businessmen, prisoners, prostitutes, and other relatively small groups, because these lifestyles are claimed to be the subject of mass interest. The disproportionate

Coverage of
marginal
groups

²¹ Korkonosenko, Sergej, Vinogradova Swetlana: Sobytija w SMI i w sozial'noj ral'nosti Rossii, in: *Akzenty* No. 7-8. Woronesch 2002.

coverage could be explained by the defects in the professional self-consciousness of journalists who serve ratings and not the public interest. This is why an ordinary man has few chances of seeing himself in the media mirror. There are, however, a small number of newspapers and broadcast programmes which exist as social projects – covering homelessness, for example.

Not all Russians actively use their right to free speech. According to a sociological survey, freedom of speech (19) and the right of information (12) landed at the bottom of the list of freedoms and rights,²² while the leading positions went to social rights (free education, medical aid, etc. – 70 per cent; a well paid job – 51; the right to own property – 25; and so forth).

The pro-government media manipulate public voices according to the prevailing political situation. One of the most vivid illustrations comes from the propagandist campaign in summer 2004. The government worked out a programme which transformed reduced prices for poor groups into direct money subsidies. The real value of the payments does not compensate for recipients' former privileges, but it does help the administration to save money on the budget. To support the programme the state-oriented channels mainly publicised the opinions of those subsidised people in whose interest the transformation worked.

Self-censorship

Normally a reporter can foresee the negative social, political, and ethical consequences of his or her coverage. The term 'self-censorship' seems to be inexact and incomprehensible in this context. Today's Russian journalists are too often compelled to follow the tough policies of the editor or the elites he is supporting.

Illegal state repression

Extremely popular TV commentator Leonid Parfenov was dismissed from NTV for the publication of an interview with the widow of killed Chechen leader Z. Yandarbiyev (June 2004). On the eve of its broadcast, the channel administration banned the programme for political reasons. That is the most extreme of a number of similar examples. It is not an easy task to strictly say whether this is state repression or the result of a director's pressure. State power is usually behind a director, owner, editor or other decision-

²² All Russia Centre for Public Opinion Research (VCIOM), *Citizens of Russia on the State Threat to Freedom of Speech*, Moscow 2003.

makers in a company. Thus, sanctions against independent journalists look quite legitimate.

It is more important to discuss the often selective implementation of the law. During election campaigns (the last presidential, Duma and gubernatorial elections) the most influential broadcasting channels gave clear preferences to official candidates, in contravention of the legislation. For instance, on TV the Russian President directly supported the official candidate in the St Petersburg gubernatorial race. He made a similar speech on behalf of the pro-government party Edinaya Rossiya (2003). As a state functionary he does not have the right to take part in any debates or officially advocate one candidate over another. These actions inspired a sharp reaction from opposition political circles; however, lawsuits brought against the government did not yield positive results. At best, the guilty broadcasters (not powerful customers) received soft reprimands. International human rights watch organisations noted the same disproportion during the 2004 presidential campaign. According to their conclusions, the state-run media demonstrated a clear bias in favour of the Acting President. In particular, state-operated TV networks covered his activity much more than was necessary.²³

State pressure, however, does not touch the Internet. Access to the Internet is free, without any formal limitations. It is true that initiatives to make the registration of sites stronger are being discussed in the State Duma, but a more immediate problem is the unequal distribution of computer technologies over such a large country. In practice, no more than 15 per cent of citizens have access to it and nearly three-fourths of them live in Moscow or St Petersburg. The government is attempting to improve the situation, though, through national computerisation programmes.

Over the last five years, repression of the media in the usual meaning of the word could not be seen; rather a regular policy emerged aimed at concentrating media resources in the hands of the powerful in the state. This tendency should be understood as a substantial element of the general trend to strengthen central government. That is the subjective political aspect of the blatant cutting down of press freedoms. The objective base (or impulse) of the process shows itself in the sad state of the press. Being independent, it demonstrated little more than bad management, poor

Obstacles to
Internet
access

Changes in
the past five
years

²³ *Media Law Magazine*, Moscow 2004.

economics, and low quality. Therefore, Russia has seen a slight aggravation of media freedom [-1].

Government control over print media Economics pose additional challenges to free media coverage. The production and distribution of newspapers is carried out by monopolies, both state and private. It is not the state-owned media which monitor the distribution of paper and circulation but the producers. The cost of the federal mail service sometimes makes up more than half of all expenditure in the print media industry, especially in the case of the nationwide press rather than regional and local periodicals. Newspapers try to use alternative distribution channels whose services cost only slightly less. According to a survey of professional associations, only 40 per cent of the media exists in real market conditions, while the rest receive subsidies of various kinds.²⁴

IV. Economic Pressures

State subsidies The Russian Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to all enterprises, regardless of their form of ownership. Nevertheless, this fundamental provision of any market economy is constantly violated. State-operated media networks are subsidised by the federal budget while simultaneously conducting commercial activity. In addition, they pay lower prices than privately owned media groups for identical services and are given preferential access to information. As such, private media houses surrender to the temptation of collecting state subsidies in one form or another. In the provinces, journalists admit that the government supports 'its own' media. But 'its own' does not always mean those 'funded by the government'. In addition to the government funding stipulated in official federal and local budgets, media networks dependent on the state also receive other forms of non-budgetary support, including:

- Preferential pricing for electricity, postal services and utilities
- Preferential pricing on apartment rental for managers
- Loans not subject to repayment
- Preferential access to information: so-called 'informational discrimination', 'press conferences for selected journalists', and paid placement of official documents at full advertising rates

²⁴ Interview with Sergej Pulya, 2004.

- Government-directed placement of advertising or financing of loyal media groups by local businesses
- Mandatory subscription by regional government agencies to 'necessary' publications.²⁵

Economic regulation of the media by the state, at least since 1995, when the State Support for Media and Book Publishing Act and the Economic Support for Regional and Municipal Newspapers Act were passed, has been carried out by granting certain tax breaks and other exemptions and subsidies to the media.

In 2002, the media's exemption from profit tax was revoked, as were VAT exemptions for broadcast media. Print media's previous tax privileges were replaced with a lower VAT of 10 per cent, which applied to distribution indefinitely, but only applied to editorial, publishing and advertising services for one year (until 1 January 2003). The system of subsidies is currently designed in a way that encourages not socially significant projects, but rather publications loyal to the federal and regional governments. Thus, the system acts as an instrument for managing information flows and as a non-market factor of governmental (particularly regional) influence on the market.²⁶ According to the Federal Act of 22 August 2004, privileges and subsidies to the media stemming from the acts of 1995 are to be finally cancelled on 1 January 2005 due to the absence of public TV in Russia. In 2000, there were subsidies of 150 million roubles to 1,950 newspapers, in 2001 – 225 million roubles and in 2002, 2003, 2004 – 170 million roubles.²⁷ As of 2005, media outlets can only hope for grants from the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications and regional laws providing privileges and subsidies. It will be a serious blow to the financial standing of the print media, which acquires only minimal profits from advertising. The common advertising market of all Russian TV channels, however, is forecasted to earn US\$ 1,270,000 in 2004.²⁸

There is no need for the government to spend much money on political advertisements in the media because of its direct and indirect control of the main TV channels and other media outlets. The coverage by government-subsidised media groups is very friendly towards government [+2].

²⁵ RAMED 2002.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Institute of Information Law Problems, Moscow 2004.

²⁸ Seslavinsky 2004.

Television coverage is more pro-government than the press and radio coverage. Control of the state on TV is stricter, however, because it is the main source of information for the majority of the population.

Further
aspects

The state has a large influence on the economy, even monopolising the economy, making its dealings less than transparent. 'Non-economic' factors have played a decisive role in the formation of the media sphere in post-Soviet Russia. While the media tried to position themselves as the 'fourth power' during the 'Perestroika' years, today such efforts are no longer in fashion, and the power of the government and rule of law are growing stronger. The new governing elite is gradually persuading the country of the need for state-interference in the information arena, actively encouraging distrust of privately owned media houses. The information environment is controlled either by restricting journalists' access to information (by filtering information through authorised state agencies) or by declaring information confidential in the interests of national security. Another element of this problem is that of preferential access to information given to state-owned or state-loyal media. State agencies have established procedures for temporarily suspending the activity of disloyal media networks and the many shortcomings in legislation even lend legitimacy to these procedures. As is the case in other business sectors, state agencies pay particular attention to those forms of media that find success in the market. Also, attacks on these media sectors are not made only by or under the auspices of the government. Other businesses, which have established themselves as 'partners of the government and the foundation of the nation', play an active role in this process (LUKOIL in the case of TV-6, Gazprom in the case of NTV).

Debt has become an important lever of control over private business. Business is impossible without loans, and yet there have been almost no major lenders on the market over the past ten years apart from the government. The majority of the media received loans from state sources, often mixing their credit lines with their core business income. At just the right moment, the government, conveniently forgetting about its own debts (short-term bonds and promissory notes), demanded that certain businesses pay back their loans, while giving others the opportunity to restructure their debt. Monopolisation of the advertising market, overpriced newsprint and distribution services, excessive

taxes and customs duties and selective application of the law have allowed the problem of state media debt arrears to be solved at the expense of privately owned media.

Politicians' heightened interest in the media has resulted in a surge of lawmaking. In Russia there is far too much contradictory and mutually exclusive legislation that lends itself to 'convenient' interpretation. There is no clearly defined system of sanctions for the media. Print and broadcast media are punished differently for identical violations of the law: TV and radio stations can lose their licences, while print media can only be fined. There is no continuity of legislation from region to region, and the further one gets from the Kremlin, the further one gets from the market economy and the rule of law.²⁹

V. Non-state Repression

Journalists and media companies have reason to fear repression by non-state groups and organisations. They have experienced pressure and sometimes violence, attacks and acts of terror from organised crime, and extreme political, religious and separatist groups and organisations. Non-state repression occurs in the context of a wide range of political, economic and environmental topics during investigations by journalists and media outlets. Non-state repression is often used against journalists, media companies or organisations. The number of press freedom violations in Russia is one of the highest in Europe. In 2003, the Moscow-based Glasnost Defence Foundation reported 1,190 attacks or attempts to put pressure on journalists. State authorities usually prosecute attacks against journalists, but sometimes without positive results. State authorities do not effectively protect journalists in the face of a high level of threat from crime and terrorism.

Repression
by non-state
groups

Intimidation through non-state repression has not changed over the past five years, thus, there is no serious change in quality [0].

Changes in
the past five
years

VI. Conclusions

The free coverage of the media has generally suffered a strong aggravation [-2]. Recent years have seen at times intense pressure on journalists from editors, media owners or even the government to follow the official line.

Evaluation
of media
coverage

²⁹ RAMEL 2002.

KAF support	<p>From 1995 until 2000, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's regional office in St Petersburg focused on workshops and training for German-speaking graduate and PhD students at the Faculty of Journalism at St Petersburg State University. During that time, a network of reform-minded editors-in-chief of St Petersburg newspapers was also established, which was extended in 2000 to cover all of north-western Russia and now includes journalists and editors from the whole range of radio, TV and the press.</p> <p>Aside from awarding fellowships for internships in Germany, KAF has been offering future young journalists opportunities to participate regularly in workshops on current political and social affairs. KAF's partners in this media work are the Faculty of Journalism at St Petersburg State University and the International Journalism Centre in St Petersburg.</p>
Freedom of the media: general situation	<p>The general situation of freedom of the media differs, depending on the type of media. The regional press is more dependent upon local government, but the situation is very different from territory to territory. The federal media feel stronger pressure from the central power. Radio is more pluralist than TV. Therefore, an integrated evaluation has the following approximate character: for TV – <u>freedom with major restrictions</u>, for the print media – <u>freedom with minor restrictions</u>.</p>
Major obstacles	<p>From the point of view of journalists the major obstacles to free media coverage are: government control of the independent media by means of various branches of the state apparatus; the government undermining the independent media; persecution of journalists by security services; attempts by owners to use the media for their own interests; the absence of economic conditions that would enable the financial independence of the mass media; lack of solidarity among the various media networks.³⁰</p> <p>The obstacles to free coverage are formed by a combination of external and internal factors against journalism. Among them are: the centralisation of the power; owners' pressure on editorial staff; poor economic conditions; low levels of professional preparedness among journalists, including the quality of their education; and the weakening of the unity in media corporations.</p>

³⁰ IPI 2003.

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