

PRESS AND POLITICS IN RUSSIA 1992-1995

M.Phil. Dissertation

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "PRESS AND POLITICS IN RUSSIA, 1992-1995" submitted by Vidushi Chaturvedi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY has not been submitted earlier for any other degree to this or to any other University.

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C O N T E N T S

	Page No.
Preface	I - II
Acknowledgement	III - IV
Chapter 1 Introduction	01 - 13
Chapter 2 The Soviet Press	14 - 40
Chapter 3 Press In Russia	41 - 87
Chapter 4 Chechnya Conflict - 'A Case Study'	88 - 128
Chapter 5 Conclusion	129 - 148
Bibliography	I - X

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PREFACE

'The true inquiry is the developed truth, whose scattered parts are assembled in the result.'

- Karl Marx
(then a reporter for Horace Greeley)

We the inhabitants of the 'Information Age,' know, that 'Knowledge - Information,' is what determines 'Power' in the present global paradigm. It is through communication technology, information media, that the media baron, Rupert Murdoch is trying to build inroads into the developing countries, in order to manipulate and toy with their political institutions.

In the present context, the Press has a challenging role of not just mirroring of what the public wants and deserves, but also leading us towards a higher civilization. The Press on the one hand, is a radar, capturing the mood, pulse and mental ideologies of the age, and on the other, it is the beacon light, illuminating the pathways of democracy especially in conflict situations.

It has been interesting to find out the changes, Russian Press has undergone, its nature and extent. Answers to some pertinent questions like, 'Is freedom of Press A Myth,' Is there a dichotomy between news treatment, by Russian and non-Russian media?, and others have been attempted. Above all, an understanding of the role of the press in formulating public policies is sought.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Holding the view that any serious study is an individual endeavour, is mere self-deception. Therefore it would be befitting on my behalf to first of all, express gratitude towards my Institution, which encourages and inspires pupils to go in for inter-disciplinary studies. I owe my gratitude also to all the teaching staff of my Centre for suggesting the right topic (i.e. its verbal format). Most thankful and gratified for regular and painstaking guidance, I feel, without Ma'am Anuradha's indispensable help, this work would not have materialised in the present form.

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INTRODUCTION

The press as an information media is the sentinel of an 'open society'. Known as the 'Fourth Estate', it provides for open discussion of all public issues, and also criticism of official policies which in essence constitute the life and breath of a democracy. Being the chief instrument for instructing the public on the main issues of the day, it is more than just a business in the sense of having public tasks and corresponding public responsibilities.

The democratic form of society demands, of its members an active and intelligent participation in the affairs of their community, whether local or national. An egalitarian set-up therefore needs a clear and truthful account of events, of their background and their causes; a forum for discussion and informed criticism; and a means whereby individuals and groups can

express a point of view or advocate a cause.¹

James Reston, in 'The Communication Revolution in Politics' has written, "The nineteenth century was the era of the novelist; the twentieth century is the era of the journalist".

In the wake of the informational-technology revolution now sweeping the world, it becomes highly interesting to analyse how far communication and media is able to correlate the responses to the challenges and opportunities which appear both globally and domestically on its horizon.

The world can be seen passing from an industrial to the information age. Flow of information in the same way as Glasnost or

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1. McQuail Denis, "Performance Norms in Media Policy Discourse: The Newspaper Press", Media Performance Norms, Sage, London, 1992.

openness in Soviet society triggered political changes which in their turn paved the path for globalisation of economic activity.¹

The printed word has played a revolutionary role in democratising society since the past epochs. Wherever it went, the printing press was involved in matters that exalted, stimulated or trouble man serving not only the parties in power, but also the revolutions of the spirit and body politic. It carried forth the great debate of Reformation, and disseminated the extraordinary, intellectual output of the Renaissance. Without the press there might have been an enlightenment, but it is doubtful if there could have been a French or an American revolution.

1. Unnikrishnan P., "Meeting the Challenges of Information Age".

In medieval times, the metaphorical 'space' for unrestrained communication in public was very limited, hemmed in and overlooked by the power of church, state, ruling class and local community. The virtues of public communication, other than the largely one - way communication from church and state and the public celebrations of power and ritual, were little regarded. The history of communication is in part the story of the steady enlargement of this public space. All forms of public expression and publication were, in principle and practice, answerable to authorities which were backed by physical or spiritual violence.

The first stage of printing, beginning from the invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century, until the mid-seventeenth century saw an extensive challenge to and the fragmentation of the 'communication order'. The religious disputes of the reformation turned initially

on the claims of individual conscience against the monolithic authority of the Roman Church. Aside from the warfare and violence against persons, the Reformation was characterized by propaganda, counter-propaganda and intense dispute over texts and acts of public communications.¹

The second main period in the development of 'public — communication', lasting until the mid-nineteenth century, saw the emergence, in political thought of the concepts of a 'public communication'. Characteristic of this whole period was an increased recognition of the shared interest, between individual citizens and authorities, in having some channels and forums for the public expression and exchange of information and opinion. By the mid nineteenth century, the open expression of opinion had been established as a legitimate

1. Ibid p.5.

and normal feature of political life and even as a right, especially after the wave of revolution in Europe in 1848. These are early versions of what came to constitute the foundation of the 'public interest' in mass communication. They often have a dual character, on the one hand recognising essential right to freedom of expression and political association, while on the other hand setting limits to the publication in the interests of state security, law and order or good morals. Classic statements of press freedom can be found in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the (1791) First Amendment to the US constitution, as well as in many European constitutional documents after 1848.

The early part of the present century had been dominated by the 'print media', the latter by broadcasting and television, ushering in an age of mass media. The early period was also marked by intense political communication activity (the 'age of

ideology') as well as popular products of the new media industries - magazines, journals, newspapers.¹

Until the first world war there seemed little that could hold back the advance of the new 'information' and 'culture' industries. Much of Europe came to experience new forms of autocratic rule, a reminder that mass communication, while historically associated with freedom, also lends itself very well to control. Critics of the new (capitalist) newspaper monopolies drew much the same conclusion. At the very least, events of the early twentieth century, as well as the 'sensationalist' direction often chosen by the mass popular newspaper press, led widely to a loss of (informed public) confidence in the media as the only or best representative and defender of the public interest in communication.

1. Ibid p.12.

The immediate needs of the customers of new communication services and of the state (since the communication were seen as an essential military, strategic and commercial infrastructure) play a key part in the regularity process. There has been continual warfare between the controllers of communication 'gates' in society (especially proprietors, editors, journalists) and all those voices which want control over, or access to, the media channels for their own purposes.

In the matter of conflict between authority and freedom, the historical progression might be summarized in terms of a move from suppression (in the name of state and religion) to prohibition, (selectively applied) to permission, (of a limited kind, in the name of liberty and of business), to prescription (encouraging educational and cultural goals); to libertarianism (a market-based claim to unhindered freedom of

operation).¹ The present state of media institutions offers a mixture of all these elements, even if suppression is no longer a legitimate or viable modern option. In addition the media institution is having to adopt to great changes in communication technology and to changes in the global political economy.

Information today plays a crucial role in maintaining the hegemony of the present world powers. Not only through the creation of concern, but also by the manufacture of concern. Consumers are usually at the receiving end and are not in a position to influence the producers of information and news.² Apart from being a source of information, print media by being a conduit of a society's 'self expression' is an -----

1. Ibid.

2. Harman ES & Chomsky N. 1988: Manufacturing Consent: The political economy of mass media.

essential feature of every civilized society and hence every politically conscious society will have to grant as well as protect 'freedom of expression', irrespective of religious injunction and political limitations.¹

Russia, having realized the importance of a free, fair, and fearless media has come a long way. In the past under the strictly regulated Soviet system, strict media control was the hallmark. In this system, a journalist's role was first to be an agitator for the communist party's policies, the second, to be a source of controlled information. The limited reports of the state or party run media defined what millions of people knew about their country and the outside world. Today Russia is witnessing the birth of an assertive, non-conventional media.

1. Tufail A., Dissent and Freedom of Expression.

Like movie stars prone to changing spouses with alacrity, Soviet news organizations that once owed allegiance to CPSU (Communist Party of Soviet Union) are shedding old identities. Millions of foreign readers have begun taking interest in the Russian Press. Even the chronically cynical west circles realize that the old frame work of Soviet journalism has undergone profound changes.¹

The old "The-king-is-dead, long-live-the-king", approach of significant sections of the media remains a serious problem, harming the whole process, says Vladimir Pozner, winner of the 1987 'communicator of the year' award. There is the continuance of the uncertainties, and unimaginative approach towards inter-national coverage - the best

1. "The Retreat of Moscow", Times London, September 13, 1982.

example being 'Indo-Russian Friendship' itself, which has arrived at a curious definition where truth is subversive, friendship has to be built on images that are often entirely and sometimes consciously false. Lastly, there is the very serious problem of how fragile, how vulnerable and reversible the whole process of democratisation of the media is.¹

Questions of freedom from pressures and constraints, on the one hand, and the positive use of freedom on the other deserve serious consideration. It is comparatively easy to investigate the former the implied process of cause and effect, where the main variables can be identified in a fairly precise way.² However the study of the latter i.e. the positive use of freedom, freedom for some chosen goal is what provides meaning to the whole endeavour.

1. October 15, 1988, Blitz, Bombay.

2. Ibid. p.115.

Freedom can be said to have pursued its purpose, if it helps in steering the community towards effective and salubrious policy formulation. The press not only guides public-opinion but also is moulded, by it and reflects its various dimensions. It is by performing this useful task, that it serves the objectives of an egalitarian society. Policy framers in a democracy get to feel the pulse of the nation through this mechanism, (which they can ignore at the expense of their own official stature) and thereby formulate policies which reflect and serve the common masses, their welfare.

THE SOVIET PRESS

In his classic study of the Soviet Media, Alex Inkeles noted that "the conception of what is news, is everywhere clearly dependent on the social system". In the USSR, he observed at the end of the 1940's, "not events, but social processes are treated as news and regarded as being newsworthy. Events are regarded as being news in so far as they can meaningfully be related to the process of socialist construction."¹

The fact that the two names most closely associated with the Soviet Union, Karl Marx and Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin, were journalists, goes to prove the significance

1. McNair Brain, "Glasnost, Perestroika and Soviet Journalism", "Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media, Routledge pub. London, 1991 p.26.

of the media in forging a link between the masses and their leaders who were to shape their national, political and social destiny. The founder of 'historical materialism', Karl Marx and Lenin, who led the movement which applied Marx's theory to the overthrow of Tsarism in Russia, spent a substantive proportion of their adult lives working and writing for newspapers and journals, an activity which helped them not only to expound and propagate their ideas, but to pay their bills too. Lenin's journalistic activities were confined to the Russian socialist press. When he became the leader of Soviet Russia in 1921, Lenin's membership card for the Moscow Soviet described his profession as that of a journalist.

Marx's contribution to the development of the contemporary Soviet media apparatus was twofold. Elevated to the status of a scientific world view, historical materialism, and its corollary dialectical

materialism were found to underpin the functioning of all Soviet institutions, including the mass media. Next, in applying historical materialism to the world in which he lived, Marx pioneered the establishment of communist media organs providing early models for later generations of Marxists in Russia and elsewhere to follow.¹

The 'German Ideology', argues that the dominance of a class in economic, material relations is reflected in and conditional upon its dominance in the intellectual sphere - the realm of ideology. The relation between the dominant class and the structure of ideas is postulated in the following oft - quoted passage:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society
-----"

1. Ibid, p.9.

is at the same time an intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it."¹

The principal means of producing and distributing ideas is obviously the means of communication, the media, which develop and expand as the system does. In materialist theory, under capitalism the means of communication become on the one hand, the basis for an increasingly rapid and voluminous circulation of capital across time and space, and on the other, crucial superstructural institutions in the reproduction of the social relations of production. Through the media, materialism argues, the antagonistic classes which make

1. Ibid, p.12.

up a social formation are 'cemented' together. The media, in short, are functional to the reproduction of capitalism. The second of Marx's contribution to Soviet thinking on the media, concerns his views on its role in the construction of the future, classless society. (anticipated by Marx). Like the bourgeoisie under capitalism, the proletariat would become under socialism "the ruling intellectual force", by implication 'regulating the production and distribution of ideas, and controlling, the means of mental production'¹. Only then would the foundation of a classless communist society be laid.

For Marx, not least among the preconditions which were required before a revolutionary transformation of capitalist society, could take place, was the coming into being of an effective communication

1. Ibid, p.13.

apparatus. The media, which in Marx's time meant the Press and the , were an important means by which the proletariat would overcome its isolation and become a class 'for itself' - a collective possessed of an awareness of common class interests and the necessity of revolutionary change. Establishing a proletarian media thus became in the materialist schema, an important political priority and an essential element in developing class consciousness to its full revolutionary potential.¹

To implement this belief, Marx and Engels established the first communist media organs. In 1846, they formed the Union of Communists. Its official newspaper, the 'Neue Rheinische Zeitung' is regarded by Soviet historians of the media as the model for subsequent communists' and workers' newspapers, including those established by -----

1. Ibid.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks. One Soviet historian of the media writes that 'Neve Rheinische Zeitung', "appears as the precursor of subsequent communist... and Leninist, Bolshwik publishing, reflecting in its pages the greatness and the multi - faced character of the revolutionary epoch.¹

In the struggle leading up to the October Revolution and the establishment of Soviet power in 1917 a crucial part was played by the Bolshevik media apparatus. This apparatus based on materialist ideas and principles developed from Marx and Engels by Lenin, displayed all the basic features which have underpinned the structure and functioning of the Soviet media system throughout the post-revolutionary period.

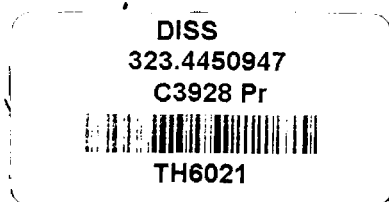
"Local newspapers", Lenin wrote when elaborating his need for centralisation,

1. Ibid, p.14.

"prove in the majority of cases, to be unstable in their principles, devoid of political significance, extremely costly in regard to expenditure of revolutionary forces, and totally unsatisfactory from a technical point of view. I have in mind of course, not the technique of printing, but the frequency and regularity of publication".¹ For Lenin, both the struggle against economism, and the organizational strengthening of RSDLP required a central party media - an 'All Russian' newspaper.

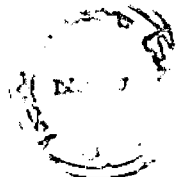
In an article written in 1899, while exiled to Siberia for his political activities, Lenin began to elaborate this view and to develop a theory of the media, which in its essentials, was to guide the organisation and output of Soviet news and journalism after 1917. The 1899 article echoed Marx's point that the proletariat

1. Ibid, p.15.



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could not be expected to develop revolutionary class consciousness while its members remained isolated, localised and in the grip of spontaneity. In 1901 he had written that "the starting point of our activities should be the founding of an All-Russian political newspaper. A newspaper is what we most of all need; without it we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation... which is... the pressing task of the moment." Without such an organ, Lenin argued, "local work will remain narrowly 'amateurish'. The formation of the Party - if the correct representation of that Party in a certain newspaper is not organized - will to a considerable extent remain empty words."

Such a newspaper would become the vehicle for a party wide discussion of 'revolutionary technique', and the 'forms and rules for the conduct of affairs'. Through it 'the content of social democratic

propaganda and agitation' would be deepened and extended throughout the country.

"The need for a central newspaper was particularly acute in Russia, since," Lenin argued, "in the more advanced capitalist countries, the workers had, apart from newspapers, numerous other means for the public manifestation of their activities, such as parliaments, trade unions and the right to hold public meetings. In place of all that, yes, all of that, we must be served - until we have won political liberty - by a revolutionary newspaper, without which no broad organization of the working class movement is possible."

As early as 1899, Lenin had identified what he saw as the two broad functions of the Party Press. The first was ideological: what Lenin later referred to as the role of 'collective propagandist', and 'collective agitator', in the spirit of 'consistent

Marxism,' combating 'economism' in particular and what Lenin perceived as deviations from Marxism in general.¹

The distinction between 'propagandist' and 'agitational communication' was made at a time when the Russian population and particularly those whom the Bolsheviks perceived as their main source of support, was largely illiterate. It had, therefore an important practical significance. After the revolution, as Bolshevik literacy and educational programmes had their effect, the distinction lost much of its significance. The Soviet media later incorporated 'agitation' along with the term 'propaganda'. As in Lenin's usage, propangada, continued to advance 'as a goal, the socialisation of the members of society to communist convictions... to disseminate a particular image of social reality which corresponds to -----'

1. Ibid, p.16.

the values of a socialist society; and ... to create a particular kind of attitude towards reality amongst the people to whom the image is addressed.¹ All information appearing in the news media of socialist societies can be described as 'ideological' in so far as it has been selected and presented on the basis of subjective assumptions and value judgements. Soviet news has been distinctive, however, in loudly and openly proclaiming its propaganda function of teaching and reinforcing Marxist - Leninist ideology, and of agitating the masses.²

The second major function of the Press, for Lenin, was organizational. At the end of 1900, he wrote that the establishment of a central party newspaper would encourage the development of an organisation 'especially for the purpose of establishing and -----

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid, p.17.

maintaining contact among all the centres of the movement, of supplying complete and timely information about the movement, and of delivering our newspapers and periodicals regularly to all parts of Russia. Only when such an organisation has been founded... will the party possess a sound foundation, only then will it become a real fact and therefore, a mighty political force.' Not only did the newspaper play, Lenin wrote in 1901, the role of 'collective propagandist' and 'collective agitator', but that of 'collective organiser'. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effects on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events. To maximise the effect of the

Bolshevik media as an instrument of revolution, and after 1917, of socialist construction, Lenin proposed a number of principles for the guidance of Media workers. They were, to put it succinctly - first, partiality (partiinnost/ideonost); secondly linkage with the masses (mass evost/narodnost); thirdly, truthfulness and objectivity (pravdivost/obyektivnost); and fourthly, openness (otkritost/glasnost).¹

The manner of their practical application, and the relative importance attached to these principles have varied with the shifting character of the regime throughout the post-revolutionary period, but no Soviet leader from Stalin to Gorbachev has seen fit publicly to renounce them. Consequently, they have been to Soviet journalism what such principles as 'objectivity', 'impartiality', 'neutrality'

1. Ibid, p.19.

and 'balance' are to journalists in capitalist societies.¹

Partiality is premised on Lenin's assertion of 'the importance of the subjective factor in social development'. Partiality assumes that social consciousness and the means by which it is expressed, such as communication, have a class nature. There can be no neutrality in cultural production. The character of partiality - the direction of its 'bias' - is determined by class interest. Using the term first in 1894, Lenin defined partiality as 'a commitment to appraising events directly and openly, on the basis of the point of view of a definite social group.'²

The Soviet media set aside several days throughout the year to honour groups of -----

1. Ibid.
2. As quoted in Kunitsyn, 1971.

workers such as miners, steelworkers, teachers and indeed journalists themselves. On Press Day which falls on May 5, the media, print and broadcast material extoll out the virtues of the journalistic profession and spell out its duties and responsibilities to the Party and the State.

The decade of the eighties have seen the Soviet news values changing in significant respects. Attempting to define the appropriate subjects of news coverage in the Gorbachev era, contemporary Soviet journalists cited Lenin's articles, 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Press', 'On the Character of our Newspapers' and 'A Great Beginning', as the key texts, and quote approvingly Lenin's demand for 'a little less of the literary phrase, a little more of and simple every-day affairs, and bread and coal!' The influence of Lenin's views continued, as could be seen, or as was

apparent, from the then newspapers.¹

However, economic news took precedence over all other categories of output. Even during the Chernobyl crisis of April-May 1986, when events taking place in the USSR were making headline news throughout the world, routine economic affairs remained at the focus of Soviet media attention.²

One of the reforms which Mikhail Gorbachev, as leader of the USSR from 1985, ushered in to liberalise and modernise his country was Glasnost, the other being Perestroika. Glasnost was the more immediate and probably the most vital of his reforms. Ofcourse, the term in itself was not new. Its first usage can be traced to the reign of Tsar Nicholas I in the mid - nineteenth century, when it referred to 'an exchange of -----'

1. Ibid, p.24.

2. Ibid.

opinions within the bureaucracy about and country's much needed social and economic transformation. Soviet historians currently engaged in reclaiming the Leninist essence of Glasnost find Lenin's first use of Glasnost in his seminal, 1902 work 'What Is To Be Done?' Here he first posed the question of Glasnost as an indicator of Democracy, insinuating the need for openness in the conduct of party affairs.¹

Gorbachev's usage of the term 'Glasnost' can be said to be closer to the English word 'publicity', meaning an opening of discussion, a freeing of all the constraints of expression, whether in journalism, literature or the arts, that Stalin had imposed on the USSR. Above all it involved freedom of the Press, freedom to criticize, and freedom of forms of activity like religious worship, long denied. The

1. Ibid, p.29.

initiation of Glasnost, some scholars feel, was quite intentional, because Gorbachev thought that he could use the glare of publicity, with journals, free to criticise the ineffecient state run enterprises, to help enforce Perestroika, the restructuring of the economy and the society.

In the absence of `bourgeois' democratic forms such as political pluralism, the Soviet media functioned as organs of socialist democracy. They linked the Party to the masses, and operated as a platform for the transmission of views from below. Two distinctive features, deriving significance from this idea, in the Soviet news media, were readers' letters, and the institution of the worker - peasant correspondent. In this way the Soviet media constituted a channel of two sided communication. Establishing a return link from people to party they serve as a platform for the expression of popular opinion, and assist in the formation of that

opinion.¹

The Soviet attitude towards the media was neatly summed up by the late Andrei Amalrik when he wrote that the KGB spends millions of roubles to stop people talking and then millions more to find out what they really think². But there is more than just absurdity in the situation. The Russians' fear of information was one of the main obstacles in the internal development and external relations of Soviet Union. They feared information coming in and going out and circulating within their own country, unless they could control it. This meant that facts were suppressed or distorted, that people at the top of the system lost touch with those at the bottom, that plans were based on false statistics and decisions on

1. Ibid, p.53-54.

2. 'The Retreat of Moscow', Times, London, September 13, 1982.

doctored information, that rumours abounded, as a consequence of which the entire nation remained isolated from the world. No state can possibly modernise in such conditions or play an effective role in the modern world.

Communication media in the Soviet Union was used as a regular propangada tool to further its interests in international affairs, relations. The Communist International (commonly called comintern) set up in 1919 the first comprehensive, permanent international propaganda organisation. Comintern, nominally an association of national communist parties, claimed to have no links with the Soviet government. According to Barron (1963, 243) Comintern directed the foreign parties. At the same time the Soviet state security services set up "disinformation office" to conduct propaganda. According to Barron, propaganda achieved spectacular success in influencing public opinion and hence government policy

making in the West. At a time when the secret political police were murdering thousands of Soviet citizens, famous Western authors, scholars, journalists and lawyers acclaimed Soviet feats of "human regeneration" and "social correction". Even as millions perished from deliberately caused famines, playwright George Bernard Shaw, praised Stalin for blessing the Soviet people with plenty.¹ This was a feat, no doubt, but one to be associated with the propaganda machine, i.e. the media.

In his book "Power of Words", written at the height of the Cold War, Stuart Chase (1953, 209 +) described how he imagined the morning propaganda exercise of a fictitious Moscow politician who, to awaken himself, would hector his apponents: "They're

1. Kunczik Michael, "Images of Nations and International Public Relations" Bonn: Media and Communication Deptt., 1990, p.212.

Trotskyites, spies, Titoists, fiends, provocateurs diversionists... stooges of moribund crisis ridden capitalised society."¹ This characterization is not too far from the standard of propaganda in those times and the American counter-propaganda was no better. And only recently President Reagan called the Soviet Union an "Evil Empire" while the Soviet media compared him with Hitler.²

According to Koschwitz (1988) a disinformation department was set up in the KGB in 1959. Its task was to influence public opinion: "Media operators have the purpose of stirring up in Western countries, in the sphere of power of the international class enemy, unrest, feeling of insecurity or bewilderment, to disorientate, to destabilise the climate of social opinion in central domestic and foreign issues, selectively to -----"

1. Ibid, p.214.

2. Ibid.

disrupt the relationship between population and leadership, or even to incite important segments against the leadership." Disinformation meant covertly feeding a carefully assembled false news item into the opponents' communications system to influence decision making process and/or public opinion in the country concerned. Disinformation is aptly described - "Propaganda is a long word for the short word lie".

The great advantage the soviet secret services, (The KGB) had over Western secret service was that, most Western democracies have been open societies in which even foreign journalists could move about at will. According to Stanislav Levchenko a former 'Disinformation officer' in Japan in the 1970's, more than half the KGB's agents abroad used the journalists' profession as a cover¹ (for they alone would be in touch with -----

1. Ibid, p.217.

important decision makers and other journalists i.e. they had easy access to information).

However, the methods by which the USSR communicated with the world public changed greatly in the late 1980's. When in 1960 Khrushchev wanted to draw attention to himself in the United Nations General Assembly, he took off a shoe, waved with it and banged the desk in front of him with it. Later, Gorbachev or even his wife Raisa would be seen on the cover of "Time" magazine. In his book 'Perestroika' Gorbachev remarked on the public diplomacy of Americans: "They are always demanding that we treat everything confidentially but their own patience never lasts longer than to the end of the encounter. Once the meeting is over the whole world finds out ten minutes later what was dealt with in the 'confidential'".

meeting.¹

Gorbachev agreed to the view that improved communication ameliorated conflicts. It has to be recognised, he said, that foreign policy proposals in an age of mass information and interest in international problems would be accompanied by propaganda.²

The Soviet media, is not an adversary of the government in the party. The change in role is rather subtle, from looking at Soviet developments from the government's point of view, it is now looking at them from the people's point of view.³

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid, p.226.

3. Lomov Ivan, 'Perestroika in Soviet Media', (APN news Analyst in Moscow), National Herald, New Delhi, April 20, 1988.

Succinctly speaking, the Soviet Union's communication media has had much catching up to do with its counterpart in the western 'open' societies. All through the vast span of history, being pushed behind the iron curtain, the media saw and spoke what the leaders of the country desired and demanded. It was not 'information' it catered to, but 'disinformation', to mentally feed the public with well thought out publicity to suit their vital interests. The media remained a 'propaganda - machine' operated by the power-holders.

'PRESS IN RUSSIA'

The Soviet Press has itself undergone several phases of reform and transformation. Under Glasnost there was factual support for the view that it was the Press that led the way to making it respectable and a cornerstone of Gorbachev's new policies. Vitaly Korotich, a young journalist echoes the popular refrain, that mafia and fascism thrive when criticism fails. He says, that journalists like him have to fight on two fronts - external, to the press - the bureaucracy. The latter is more dangerous. It was left to the Russians to evolve a philosophical explanation for the increasingly popular and important role that investigative journalism plays, in society like their's where basic freedom and respect for human rights although explicit in the constitution have not been found to be part

of the day-to-day experience.¹

In August 1990, a liberal press law was adopted according to which a periodical could be founded by any organization, institution or private person. This is in keeping with the view that the Press should be a private group, discharging certain functions in the public interest, rather than becoming a public institution. It should remain, moreover, in league with the people. In abolition of censorship, this law provided a legal, foundation for media independence.²

Strict media control had been a hallmark of Soviet rule for decades. A journalist's role was first to be an agitator for Communist Party policies and second to be a

1. Cushrow Irani, *The Statesman*, New Delhi, November 15, 1989.
2. Pumpyansky Alexander, "Carrot and Stick: Pressing Times for Soviet Media", *The Statesman*, New Delhi, February 14, 1992.

source of information. The limited reports of the state or party-run media defined what millions of people knew about their country and the outside world. Mrs. Elena Bonner, widow of human rights activist Andrei D. Sakharov said that "press freedom could be guaranteed through changes that will be made in the Soviet constitution¹". Production of paper and printing plants are still part of the state run economy. The economy cannot produce enough newsprint. Scores of unofficial papers have sprung up reflecting the country's new thrust for politics and debate. 'Rabochaya Tribune', one daily newspaper said that shortage of newsprint place in quest the single unarguable success of Perestroika - Glasnost'.²

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1. Porub Cansky J. Mark, "Press Freedom Limited Without Paper", Bangkok Press, June 17, 1990.
 2. Press Freedom Limited without Paper - Mark J. Porubeansky A.P. in Moscow, Bangkok Press: June 17, 1990.

The old centralized communist economic and political system which had dominated all aspects, of Soviet life since the 1917 revolution was already heading towards disintegration at the time of an attempted coup by conservation forces in August 1991. Its failure after three days marked the complete collapse of communist rule, including the banning of, the once all powerful Communist Party of the Soviet Union, CPSU, and accelerated the process of economic and political transformation.¹

The three days of the putsch in August 1991, were a hard and uncompromising test to confirm its commitment to the newly acquired freedom. The new media passed this test. Noveya vreniya published an article under a banner headline "they staged a coup, but their hands were trembling at the harshly

1. Felicity Barringer, "The Growing Pains of Soviet Journalism", International Herald Tribune, September 6, 1991.

anti-coup issue". After the initial hasty ban on pro-communist papers - Sovietskaya, Rossiya, and Pravda, which supported the coup, the new leaders thought twice and lifted the ban a couple of days later. "The Press has earned the bitter privilege to become the first victim of the free market", says one journalist. The much desired freedom turned out to be freedom to die. Clouds seem to have appeared on the political horizon.¹

First the Russian parliament adopted its own Press law which was much worse than the law of the USSR. The Russian law incorporated such provisions as the duty of editors to reveal their source of confidential information on the request of the court and investigators and a ban on the circulating materials made with the aid of secret video taping or picture taking. The Russian law

1. Pumpyansky Alexander, "Pressing Times for Soviet Media" Carrot and Stick", The Statesman, New Delhi, February 14, 1992.

also provided for punishing journalists for their disclosure of specially guarded secrets. Fortunately the media was able to repel the attack, pressurizing Mr. Yeltsin into vetoing the reactionary law.¹

Despite the multitudinous transformations, the opening up, the more breathing space provided to media, the new governments attitude towards the media has not kept pace. But, says the editor of the 'New Times', Moscow, with delicate understatement, the governments' belief that todays media can be controlled with a carrot and stick may be wrong.²

With the collapse of the central authority and the integrating ideology of communism there is little that unites the republics apart from the strong economic

1. Ibid.

2. Pumpyansky A. op cit.

independence forged over 75 years of state planning. Important from the point of view of the media is the existence of 113 recognised languages and five different alphabets. Russians comprise just over half the total population. No republic is linguistically or ethnically homogenous. Under communist rule, Russian was the official language of the Union, although the regional and local languages were widely used in education and the media. There are great disparities in literacy levels and general economic development, which are reflected in the media. Those in central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan, Turkmenia and Uzbekistan) are considerably less developed than in the other republics. Within the later Moscow and St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) and several other major cities are better served than the smaller ones and other

rural areas.¹

Acute economic crisis and the disintegration of all union institutions are the two factors shaping the media. The economic problems are similar to those besetting other formerly communist countries intent on establishing a market - based economy. In the media, the effects of the crisis are felt in terms of the withdrawal of government subsidies, sharp rise in production costs and fall in circulation levels because of peoples' reduced purchasing power. In a process, considerably accelerated after the coup, the republican authorities are taking control of Union and communist party assets located on their territory such as printing facilities and radio and television transmitters. Most dramatically,

1. Wendy Slater, "The world's News Media 1991, Russia," (The regional editor for the Soviet Union and East European, for Keesing's Record of World Events.)

all union institutions such as the broadcasting service are being "hollowed out" through transfer of all or part of their operations to Russian control. This is happening not least because under communism the Russian Federation was the only republic not to have its own media organisations, the all-union institutions doubling up as Russian republican ones (an arrangement which exacerbated the widespread feeling in other republics that equality within the "Union of Socialist Soviet Republics" was in fact subjugation under a Russian Empire).¹

The fate of earlier reformers like Khrushchev, had made it clear to Gorbachev and his team, that the party apparatus could clamp down on a reformer with considerable ease. Gorbachev was aware of the short time at his disposal. He was thus convinced of the need to keep the public informed. This

1. Wendy S. Op.Cit.

was done through the policy of "openness", For "Openness" alone could mobilise people, for reform,, which in turn would spur the 'communication revolution' in the erstwhile Soviet Union.¹

A key aspect of the transformation which should be taken into consideration is that continuity is far greater than the plethora of name changes, of everything from republics' official titles to cities, political parties and newspapers, might suggest. In so many cases, especially in central Asian republics the new leaders are the same old faces, who had been in charge under communism. Their commitments to a multiparty democracy, market based economy and media freedom - universally pledged after the coup - remain to be proved in practice.²

1. Chenoy M. Anuradha, "Systemic Change and Systematic Collapsee", Seminar 393 - May 1992.
2. Wendy Slater, Op. cit.

Even Gorbachev, the originator and proponent of Soviet openness policies, occasionally lambasted overzealous critics and it was assumed that he was behind the unsuccessful efforts in the fall of 1989, to remove V.A. Starkov from the editorship of 'Argumenty i fakty' for publishing a reader survey that cast doubt on the leaders' popularity. Moscow correspondent Bill Keller reported that "Mr. Gorbachev and those around him complain with mounting dismay that the press has split the public into factions, discouraged them with a steady diet of bad news and raised the level of anxiety about crime and ethnic unrest."

In the wake of critical media coverage of Soviet military intervention in Lithuania in January 1991, Gorbachev brought before the Supreme Soviet a proposal to suspend for at least one month the new law of the Press and its guarantees of freedom. According to

official transcripts of the session, Gorbachev specifically levelled criticism at 'Moscow News' for alleging that "there is today a criminal regime, and thus the President (Gorbachev) is listed as a criminal". He continued, "so what I want is not only that this opinion of the founders of 'Moscow News', but also the other side, be printed". However, this motion was rejected by the deputies, who instead authorized a commission to explore means of ensuring objective media coverage of national events.¹

Where previously, the primary role was to disseminate and promote communism, encourage what was deemed to be socially responsible behaviour, under the old style state-owned media, under strict party control, now, the aim was to derive a

1. Schillinger Elisabeth and Porter Catherine, "Glasnost and the Transformation of Moscow News", Journal of Communication - 41(2) Spring 1991.

consensus on the ensuing political and economic reforms, the systemic changes. The aim of the Soviet leadership in giving the impetus to wide-scale 'opening-up', was to provide citizens with ample information about their country to enable them to take an active part in its life, provide a forum for debate and encourage the growth of civil society.¹

The irony of the above claims are brought out in a comment of Vitaly Korotich, editor of the popular magazine 'Ogonyok', in an interview, during the post reform period, "To a large extent, Soviet journalism does not favor facts as much as interpretation of facts. Whereas, in the west, a newspaper includes a large number of facts, we usually have any.... The press is becoming more interesting, but commentaries, rather than facts, still predominate". This view is -----

1. Wendy Slater, op. cit.

consistent with what Hopkin's expressed twenty years ago that "the Soviet journalists tend to a literary rather than a staccato news style, to opinion and interpretation rather than dispassionate transmission of facts, and to discussion of trends and processes rather than descriptions of individual isolated events".¹

As with all developments, under what came to be called 'perestroika', the restructuring of society, media freedom took on its own momentum. Thus a policy inspired and encouraged by the leadership quickly exceeded the bounds originally set. The campaigning of journalists and more radical politicians for true media freedom resulted in a proliferation of views and titles in the written media and free reporting in the broadcasting media, all striving to breakway from old bondages of State and Party.

1. Schillinger E and Porter C. op. cit.

The leadership attempted to create, through the law on the Press and Mass Media, a 'law governed state', that is to separate State from society (a process which included the creation of a directly elected legislature, as well as the establishment of an independent judiciary). For the first time, this law prohibited censorship and granted all citizens and groups the right to establish a "Mass Medium" subject only to registration by the appropriate authorities. It provided the right of access to information, with penalties for those who obstructed journalists, guaranteed the protection of individual privacy and contained a libel clause. It prohibited the dissemination of state secrets, calls for the violent overthrow of the state, pornography and incitement to crime or racial or religious intolerance.

The news media were subjected to repeated attempts to bring them back under

control, both directly through censorship and indirectly through economic pressure (such as restricting access to printing facilities). It deserves reiteration, that the abortive coup of August 1991, revealed the extent to which the changes were wrought in Soviet society, not least as a result of increased media freedom, debate and information. As one of their first moves the coup leaders banned all but a handful of newspapers and closed down the central radio and television stations. In response the editorial officials of banned newspapers combined efforts on a single clandestine paper, and broadcasting journalists voted to go on indefinite strike. Observers noted that a greater access to information via satellite, short-wave radio (foreign stations were not jammed in the coup) and fax machines as well as the population's greater political sophistication, partly fostered by the media's freedom to debate issues were major factors in defeating the attempted takeover.

Not much can be said about media concentration, under the current circumstances, except that the retention of print and broadcasting media in the hands of republican authorities has been recognised by observers as a threat to media freedom in the same way that the old monolithic structure prevented free expression. Critics are of the view that outside the main cities, away from the epicenter of reform, local political leaders retain a virtual monopoly of the news media.¹

The current buzzword, "pluralism", seems to have displaced a traditional list of journalistic ethics headed by high idealism (ideálnost) and communist party loyalty (partiinnost). Yakovlev and similar other Glasnost editors have operationalised the concept through negative reporting and -----

1. Wendy Slater, op. cit.

hard-hitting polemic essays.

Pluralism was the subject of a column, written by historian N. Shastiko : Not so long ago, the word "pluralism" was mainly heard among scholars. Other mortals who looked it up in the dictionary discovered that it was a "false, idealistic philosophy", Pluralism seemed to be something abstract and outlandish. Now it seems to be an essential quality of our life a quality each of us has. For a long time we were made to believe that there was only one truth, only one spiritual value, only one progressive trend in art, only one main road of development. The rest was heresy, alien, vicious and to be eradicated.¹

The predominance of substantive, hard subjects over softer ones, the prediliction for negative subjects and negative

1. Schillinger E and Porter C. op. cit.

commentary, the growing passion for pluralism and the new emphasis on timely and controversial topics clearly indicate the nature and magnitude of change.¹

On scrutinizing the news sources, it is revealed that the main source of all domestic and foreign news for all media are the Telegrafnoye Agentstvo Sovetskovo Soyuz (TASS) and Novosti agencies.

Only the larger media have correspondents around the country and abroad or can afford to subscribe to the international news agencies. Most of the media rely on agencies to supply them with news from outside their immediate regions. The government abolished foreign - currency subsidies to national newspapers to pay for foreign correspondents.

1. Ibid.

Founded in 1918, TASS was made a state committee under the Council of Ministers in 1971. In the aftermath of the coup, it was reorganized to be free of government control. TASS is one of the world's largest agencies: it has a vast network of correspondents at home and in over hundred countries worldwide, around four thousand subscribers at home and one thousand abroad and its world service is distributed in eight languages.¹

Novosti was set up in 1961 primarily to supply information and promotional material about the Soviet Union to other countries and to provide assistance to foreign correspondents visiting or accredited in the Soviet Union. It was reorganized in 1990 and brought under the jurisdiction of the Russian Federation Government in August 1991. Its information service was set up as a subsidiary company at the same time.

1. Schillinger E and Porter C. op. cit.

Since the opening of Soviet society to individual economic activity and the relaxing of censorship, several independent news agencies have been set up. One of the largest, interfaks, is a joint venture between Radio Moscow and a French-Italian consortium. It is widely used by foreign news services. Another important news agency is Postfaktum.

All republican governments of the erstwhile soviet union have more or less, founded or expanded their own news services as a symbol of their independence and as a means of putting over their views in an increasingly polarized society. In some cases they have done so by appropriating TASS facilities in their republics. Apart from Novosti, there are eleven republican agencies: Armenpres in Armenia, Azerinform in Azerbaijan, Belta in Byelorussia, Sakinform in Georgia, Kztag in Kazakhstan, Kiztag in

Kirgizia, Moldova-pres in Moldovia, Khovar in Tajikistan, Tia in Turkmenia, Ratau in Ukrain, Uztag in Uzbekistan. The Russina Federations' agency, Rossiyskoye Informatsionroye Agentstvo, (RIA) was merged with Novosti in September 1991. As their activities expanded, these agencies are becoming increasingly important suppliers of news from their republics. Government departments, including the Ministry of Defence, and other Organizations have also established news services of their own.¹

There is now broad spectrum of opinion represented in the Soviet press, as many new titles have appeared and established publications have fundamentally changed their stance. Most newspapers and magazines are sold by subscription, organized centrally through the post office. Papers are also on sale at kiosks and pasted up on boards at public places.

The press, transformed in terms of quality and diversity, is in deep crisis. Not only is it suffering from the impact of the general economic malaise, but also due to the collapse of outdated production technology. The collapse of the distribution system, and perhaps most importantly, an acute, paper shortage, are other factors deepening the crisis faced by the press. The acute paper shortage is the result of increased demand for newsprint which old equipment is unable to satisfy, and Finland's halting of supplies because of soviet failure to pay debts. Printing of various publications has been disrupted and some have had to suspend Sunday - editions for instance, and economise. Some newspapers are also reported to be in financial doldrums as a consequence of rising prices of newsprint. The economic implications of freeing newsprint prices was that cover prices of newspapers rose steeply, in many cases by a factor of two or three. As a direct result,

and also because of the general decline in living standards, newspaper subscription fell by 35 percent for all-union newspapers and by 54 percent for periodicals. This trend is most likely to continue.

Foreign publications are delivered to the entire territory of the Soviet land in exchange for soviet publications sent abroad. The government decided in 1990 to cut the funding of exports because of the shortage of hard currency, thus making the purchase of foreign publications difficult. Individuals were allowed to subscribe to them, but only for hard currency (since the rouble is non-convertible), effectively placing foreign newspapers and magazines beyond the reach of all but a few.

In 1989-90, 8,622 newspapers were published in the Soviet Union, as per official data, including 32 all union papers

based in Moscow, 171 republican, 98 autonomous republican papers, 338 regional, 729 city papers and 3,680 papers published by large industrial and agricultural enterprises. Over 3,000 newspapers are published in languages other than Russian. Some 200 appear daily 275 on weekdays, 3,600 triweekly and 2,600 weekly. The number of titles published in different republics varies widely, matching the disparities in literacy levels and economic development.

From the 1917 revolution until the mid-1980s the soviet press was dominated by Pravda and Izvestiya, the organ of the Communist Party and the government respectively and probably the best known titles outside the country. The former tended to concentrate on domestic issues and the latter on foreign affairs, while it was commonly accepted that neither's content lived up to its title ('Truth' and 'News' respectively) Both had circulations running

into many millions. Under glasnost many readers deserted Pravda because of its conservatism. It was briefly banned after the coup, as mentioned before, and when it reappeared it described itself as an independent 'community' paper. Izvestiya, on the other hand grew in popularity as it moved to a more reformist stance and strengthened the quality of its reporting.¹

Before the coup, the other established all-union papers were published either by the communist party or mass organizations. They included *Trud*, the trade union paper, *Selskaya, Zhizn*, catering to the demands of farmers, and *Krasnaya Zvezda*, published by the Ministry of Defence. All three were strongly conservative. The only exception was *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, which published controversial material and enjoyed growing popularity and influence, in sharp contrast

1. Schillinger E and Porter C. op. cit.

to its parent organization, the Young Communist League (Komsomol) several of these papers were relaunched as independents in the post reform period.

The main papers of the Russian Federation rival the All - Union press in influence, if not in reach. Two which are often considered all union papers are *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, which was hardline conservative before the coup and tends to promote Russian nationalist sentiment and *Rabochaya Tribuna*, the Russian trade Union paper. The Moscow and St. Petersburg papers are also available in many other cities and are important opinion formulators. They include the radical *Moskovskaya Pravda*, the only regional newspaper available on subscription throughout the country. *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, and *Sankt-Petersburgskiye Vedomosti* (formerly *Leningradskaya Pravda*), the voice of the city's radical council since the late

eighties. Both also publish more locally distributed evening editions, Vechernyaya Moskva and Vechny Sankt Petersburg. When the Moscow and Leningrad city branches of the communist party took sole control of the cities' newspapers in April 1990, the Moscow council announced the formation of two new independent papers. One of them, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, has become one of the best-informed and most popular of the new launches. Another recent arrival that has assumed significance is Megapolis Ekspres.

The parliaments and governments and formerly the local communist party committees of the autonomous republics and other regional districts across the country also publish dailies or weeklies.¹

Weekly newspapers and magazines have become increasingly popular. Reflecting the

1. Schillinger E and Porter C. op. cit.

political and economic upheavals of recent years and the demand for information, some news and current-affairs titles in particular enjoy very high circulations, although all have been hard hit by the slide in subscriptions. Foremost among them is Argumenty i Fakty, an independent weekly tabloid whose circulation soared from 1,500,000 in 1986, to 35,000,000 in 1990 making it the largest publication in the world. It has built its reputation on revelations of corruption, political radicalism, and efforts to stimulate debates on major issues through its emphasis on readers' letters. Two other news weeklies which have thrived on the new openness are Ogonyok, an early champion of glasnost which also does not shy from tackling sensitive or previously taboo subjects. (so is its reputation). Moskovskiya Novosti, which comes out in English, French and Spanish as well as Russian is distributed worldwide, and is another well known and liked paper.

Literaturnaya Gazeta, a uniquely Soviet phenomenon, is published by the Union of writers and examines social and political issues as well as literature in a two section format with indepth interviews and articles.

Given the interest in economic reform, the business sector has undergone great expansion, with several western investors setting up joint ventures for specialist financial and commercial publications. Two more general titles are Kommersant, relaunched after 1990, after an absence of seventy long years, and now, it has become a serious competitor to the established Ekonomika i Zhizn on the strength of its investigative reporting.

The great demand for inter-national news is met by Za Rubezhom, which includes translations from foreign newspapers, Novoye Vremya (from the MNoskovskaya Pravda stable) and Ekho Planety. The post-glasnost period

witnessed the emergence of hundreds of unofficial publications brought out by associations, groups and individuals and covering a very wide range of subjects. Generally denied access to resources, they were invariably financially insecure and many were unable to establish themselves. It is unclear how many will survive the strained economic circumstances.

Under the Law on the Press and Mass Media all mass media had to re-register stating their 'founder', that is the owner or the body of which it was the "official organ", and the relationship between the editor and the founder. To formalize their independence, many newspapers and magazines defined their founder as an editorial collective. After the coup party-owned presses in the Russian Federation were brought under the control of the Russian government in order to hand them over to public enterprises and associations to be

formed on the basis of the printing facilities. The Russian government also pledged financial help for journalists who wanted to make their publications independent.¹

The potential independence of the mass media remained an issue for the post-coup Parliament. During the 1992 April Congress of Peoples' Deputies, a number of Parliamentarians wanted to put the media's handling of government affairs on the agenda for discussion. Many of the deputies had clearly expected the unequivocal support of the press, and their complaints largely concerned the media's critical approach to the work of the Congress. Some newspapers like Izvestia got singled out for their so-called non-objective coverage of the congress. When the Russian Guild of

1. Stater W. op. cit.

Parliamentary journalists¹ protested the government debate over what they considered regular journalistic commentary and analysis, the item was pulled from the agenda, but of not without considerable debate.

The government in Russia can be witnessed playing a capricious game of favourities with the subsidies it grants. Determining eligibility for subsidisation is now done almost openly on the basis of a newspapers' loyalty to the government: Rossiskiie Vesti (Russian News), controlled by Yeltsin, is fully funded by the Russian government; and Komsomolskaya Pravda (Komsomol Truth) receives a government subsidy, as also Rossiskaya Gazeta, which

1. The Russian Guild of Parliamentary Journalists was created during the tenure of Anatoly Lukyanov and Speaker of the Parliament by journalists who reported regularly on political affairs. The goal of the guild is solidarity against government pressure on media coverage of political affairs.

remains the formal publication of the Congress of People's Deputies and sympathetic to the Parliament. Pravda receives no subsidy, and is instead financed by a large bank loan.¹ Well known newspapers such as Moskovskie Novosti, too depend on subsidies for more than ten percent of their budget. Aleksei Pushkov, the Deputy editor in chief succinctly remarked, "It is an issue for us... Do we criticise Ruslan Khasbulatov,² who will then refuse us money tomorrow?"³

The most bitter post coup controversy seemed to have developed between the Supreme Soviet and Izvestia on 23 August 1991, immediately after the coup, a group of

1. Jensen Linda, "The Press and Power in the Russian Federation," Journal of International Affairs, Summer 1993.
2. Speaker of the Parliament.
3. A Pushkov discussed subsidies and other pressures on the press in Moscow, at the Institute for the study of USA and Canada, Moscow, 21 May 1992.

Izvestia correspondents led by Editor-in-Chief, Igor Golembiovsky requested registration of the newspaper as an independent joint stock company, freeing it from its long time tie to the Supreme Soviet. The registration was granted, leading to the surrender of Supreme Soviets' control over the newspaper. Despite this, Khasbulatov, the speaker of the Parliament denied recognition to this decision. Over the course of the next year and a half, he forced parliamentary decrees to nullify independent registration of the newspaper and reinstating it as an arm of the Supreme Soviet.¹ It is needless to say that this conflict increased the difficulties for Izvestia's journalists in maintaining an

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1. Izvestia was registered on 23 August 1991 and received its "Certificate of Registration as a News Media Outlet", No. 1057 from the Russian Federation, Ministry of Press and Public Information. The registration owners are the "Journalists and Staff of Izvestia Supreme Soviet Resolution, 3686-1, "On the Publishing House, Izvestia", 20 October 1992.

objective line in relation to certain members of the Parliament. However the Russian constitutional court passed its verdict, on May 19, 1993, concerning the relationship of the Supreme Soviet and the newspaper. It declared the Supreme Soviets' resolution claiming ownership of Izvestia unconstitutional.¹

These and such other precedents in media-government relations, seem to insinuate that the Russian media remains more notable for their politicization than for their independence. Most of the individuals involved in the media feel compelled to participate in the political and resource struggle and thus align themselves with some force or movement in society. Major organs of the media can be in fact lined up along the spectrum of the current political struggle

1. Supreme Soviet Resolution, "On the Newspaper Izvestia", No.3333-1 of 17 July 1992.

(as is evident from the chart shown alongside.) Even infrequent readers and viewers are able to quickly label Moskovskie Novosti and Izvestia as pro-President and anti-Parliament, Pravda and Sovietskaya Rossiya as pro-Parliament and anti-President: and Den (Day) as reactionary hard-line.

1. J. Linda, op. cit. p.114

POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF THE CENTRAL RUSSIAN PRESS

Publication	Estimated Audience	Comments on Political Loyalty
Argumenty i fakty (Arguments and Facts)	12,772,000	Support from President
Commersant (English-language weekly)	200,000	Independent business (Joint-stock company)
Den (Day)	150,000	Support from Supreme Soviet.
Izvestia (News)	1,100,000	Influenced from President
Kommersant (Businessman) (Russian Daily)	150,000	Independent Business (joint-stock company)
Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star)	223,596	Support from Military/Govt.
Kuranty	150,000	Influenced by President
Literaturnaya Gazeta (Literary Gazette)	500,000	Geared towards reformed intelligentsia
Moskovskii Komsomolets (Moscow Komsol)	1,516,000	Support from President
Moskovskie Novosti (Moscow News)	800,000	Support from President
Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper)	100,000	Support from President
Novoye Vremya (New Times)	N/A	Support from President
Ogonyok (Flame)	N/A	Independent and Pro-reform
Pravda (Truth)	500,000	Support from Supreme Soviet
Robochaya Tribuna (Workers' Tribune)	N/A	Conservative
Rossiskaya Gazeta (Russian Gazette)	790,000	Controlled by Supreme Soviet
Rossiskie Vesti (Russian News)	150,000	Controlled by President
Sovietskaya Rossiya (Soviet Russia)	600,000	Influenced by Supreme Soviet
Trud (Labor)	N/A	Conservative
Zhurnalist (Journalist)	N/A	Trade journal for journalists pro-freedom of the press.

Source: Russica Information Service - a joint-venture with Dialog, a Western, on-line information service and CNN Moscow; Calculations of estimated audience are also from the mastheads of the printed publications.

N/A = Not Available

- The closest type of affiliation is denoted "controlled" - meaning "under the supervision of" and funded by the respective entity or individual. "Influenced" refers to private influence as the result of personal ties to the editors, or partial control of the resources. The loosest type of affiliation is denoted "supported" - meaning that the particular media organization is in general politically independent but electively supportive of the Supreme Soviet or President, as indicated, although not in every case.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS AGENCIES

News Agencies	Comments
INERFAX	Independent
(Novosti) APN	
POSTFACTUM	Independent, pro-reform
TASS	No longer in existence

Yeltsin's sacrifice of some of the key reformers in his government in a bid to appease the conservative factions and to maintain Yegor Gaidar as Prime Minister created a furore among journalists. This array of forced resignations so agitated journalists that even the most neutral of the media jumped into the fray, manifesting that media support for the President was restricted when he was not perceived as acting in the interest of reforms.¹

In both the print and television media, Yeltsin's ousting of Yakovlev as head of Ostankino was a widely, publicized story - probably an indication of journalistic solidarity, Moskovskie Novosti ran a cover photograph of its former editor-in-chief with

1. Resignations included those of Galina Starovoitova, presidential advisor; Mikhail Poltoranin, Minister of Information, Gennadi Burbulis' The President's State Secretary; and Yegor Yakovlev, head of Ostankino television.

the years 1968, 1991, and 1992 put in bold - 1968 for the year when Yakovlev was booted out as the head of Zhurnalist (journalist); 1991, when Moskovshie Novosti was closed down by the coup plotters and 1992 when Yakovlev was removed from the Ostankino Television. Vitaly Tretiyakov, editor-in-chief of Nezavisimaya Gazeta, wrote an article calling the dismissal of Yakovlev, "a tactical error of the President fraught with bad consequences," and heralded the move as the "beginning of the end of free speech".¹

In the print media, on the far right, Den (Day) published derogatory poetry and slogans about Yeltsin and Gaidar. They gave front page coverage to the claims of the peoples' congress that Yeltsin's "Appeal to the People" in his December 10 speech at the

1. Vitaly Tretiakov's editorial, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, November 27, 1992, p.1.

congress was unconstitutional.¹ Along with the text of a separate appeal to the people on behalf of the conservative deputies of the congress, published the following verses: "Yeltsin, how much longer will you torment Russia? Yeltsin return the stolen Soviet Union! Yeltsin, your people lie! Yeltsin, you have poisoned the Soviet Army! Yeltsin, where are the fruits of our labours? Yeltsin you have let spies in the government, you have strangled culture, suffocated science! Yeltsin, the children of Russia detest you! Yeltsin, veterans spit in your footsteps! You are covered in blood! get out!" This was published in the Den December 13-19, 1992. If also published the following on Yegor Gaidar: "Americans think Jeffrey Sachs is an idiot; Gaidar is a Sachs manner!" In the moderate and pro-reform press, Moskovski komso molets, Kuranty and Izvestia focussed on Yeltsin's activities, offering support to -----

1. J. Linda., op. cit. p.117.

Gaidar as Prime Minister and pointing out Khasbulatov's violations of protocol.¹

During the early months of 1993, Khasbulatov matched Yeltsin's every step towards media control. An "anonymous, mono draft resolution" of the Supreme Soviet, the origin of which many attributed to Khasbulatov, proposed wresting control of subsidies and other privileges to newspapers from the Ministry of the Press - a Presidential body - and giving the privileges to the Supreme Soviet. Khasbulatov moreover, also vowed that he would close down Yeltsin's Federal Information Centre by having Parliament issue a decree declaring it unconstitutional.²

1. The front page article of Kuranty, December 11, 1992 included "Is Yeltsin Right?" and blared titles like, "with this Congress, we're on the wrong track". Moskovskiye Komsomolets, December 11, 1993, said "Decembrists Wake Up Yeltsin."
2. J.Linda, op.cit. p.120

The post congress encroachments on the media by the President and the Parliament, were mild, as compared to the events of late March 1993. On March, 24 Yeltsin appeared on TV to announce "special executive rule" in Russia, alongwith two new decrees on the mass media. The first, "On Defence of the Freedom of the Mass Media", declared that the mass media was defended by the laws and the President of the Russian Federation.¹ In his decree, Yeltsin also warned state organs and other organisations against interference in the free work of the media and called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take the necessary measures to protect the state television company, information agencies and publishing houses.²

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1. Address of the President of the Russian Federation", channel 1, March 24, 1993.
 2. "On the Defense of the Freedom of Mass Information" Decree of the Russian President, No.376, March 20, 1993.

Irrespective of the fact that neither
decreed was immediately implemented,
Yeltsin's steps proved what most journalists
already realized; as a vital tool for
manipulating public opinion, they were in the
line of fire in the showdown between the
President and the Parliament. Not even
Yeltsin, democrat, though he is reputed to
be, could afford to fight this critical
battle without the media as a weapon in
hand.¹

Soviet historian Yuri Afanasiev, among
other like minded scholars, links press
freedom, press performance in the provinces,
to the strength and integrity of the local
party organizations, whose power still
prevails in many areas. Though glasnost is a
necessary precondition for journalistic
experimentation, it has not catapulted every

1. J.Linda, op.cit. p.121.

national publication into prominence. Even through press organizations located at or near the political centre of the country are more likely than provincial media to test the limits of free expression in the present political environment, geography alone does not determine press performance. Mass media, even though is likely to be shaped by the political orientation of their parent organizations and powerful individuals, such influence is not absolute. The fluid state of the Soviet Mass Media makes any long term predictions about the future, hazardous, if not pointless. The founders of the 'Moscow News' feel that a newspaper cannot exist only as a museum exhibit, even if it is the museum of democracy.¹

All revolutionary presses are processual, on the way to becoming something else.² The

1. Schllinger E. and Porter C. op.cit.

2. Ibid.

current period may be a rare point in media history, a narrow window in time when political authority has ceased to exert control and economic constraints have not yet emerged to curb editorial imagination.

The Russian media has snapped the umbilical chords of the past, but only partially. Today, the media is more notable not for independence, but for politicization. The obvious and sometimes covert attempts of the ruling regime, power, to control the press continues. The helplessness of a deputy editor-in-chief, Aleksei Pushkov, is implicit in his words, - "It is an issue for us.... Do we criticise Ruslan Khasbulatov, (Speaker of Parliament) who will then refuse us money tomorrow?"

What can be sensed from the present condition is that the Press is trying hard, fighting on several fronts simultaneously (economic and political specifically) to assert its hard earned and nascent Independence.

CHECHNYA CONFLICT - 'CASE STUDY'

The notion of 'Press - Freedom' is one of the greatest benefits of a liberal society. The same words re-arranged in another symmetrical order would mean, that press freedom can be used as the indices of judging, or evaluating how open a society is.

The democratic form of society demands of its members, an active and intelligent participation in the affairs of their community, whether local or national. Democratic society, therefore needs a clear and truthful account of events, of their background and their causes; a forum for discussion and informed criticism; and a means whereby individuals and groups can express a point of view or advocate a cause.¹

1. McOuail Denis, "Performance Norms in Media Policy Discourse: The Newspaper."

The responsibility for fulfilling this task is vested in the 'Press', the 'Fourth - Estate' of Democracy, since 'public opinion' is the fundamental pillar of such a social set up.

The newspaper's role in public affairs is that of a critic and investigator. Newspapers are expected to maintain a distance from the institutions on which they report and must serve to stimulate public debate and organise public conflict in respect of the main issues of the day. (Fletcher 1981)¹

The view of the Press as a watch-dog against the abuse of power and against corruption in public life has long been a staple ingredient of journalistic self image,

...Continued...

Press," Media Performance Norms, Sage, 1992, p.41.

1. Ibid. p.114.

press mythology and of western democratic political theory. It has often been described as an 'adversarial' role, especially in respect of government, big business or other authority. If we are to assess the independence of the media, we should look for evidence that this role is being carried out.¹

The News-media should go further than just observe and report, while avoiding slant, rancour or devious purpose. Press is to fulfill the purpose of its existence by providing 'eyes' and 'ears' to the public and reaching out to those realms of darkness where the public cannot reach.

The journalistic side of the twentieth century has been described by some, as the struggle for democracy and an independent media against propaganda and subservience to

1. Ibid. p. 121.

the State. This struggle culminated during the first half of this century in the seizure of the means of communication by the demagogues in the 1930's and 1940's - Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin - and their cold war reincarnation of the 1950's, Joseph McCarthy, the ghost, that still haunts American journalism.¹

The present study intends to delve into the metamorphosed fabric of the Russian print media, (especially Press) with the help of a case-study of Chechnya's present crisis. The conflict, in the small, till now lesser known Chechnya, has brought it into world focus. The killings, brutalities the various dimensions of the current situation in chechnya has been widely reported and discussed in the fauna of international news media.

1. Carey W. James, 'The Mass Media and Democracy', Journal of International Affairs, Summer, 1993.

Tucked in the north - Caucasus, Chechnya is a small republic of Russian Federation, with an area of 19,000 square kilometres, and inhabited by the Vainkh ethnic group. With sixty-six percent Chechens, the remaining 200,000 consist of Russians, Ukrainians, Jews etc. General Dzghokar Dudayev declared Chechen sovereignty on November 1, 1991, against which Boris Yeltsin declared emergency and economic sanctions. Russian troops entered the breakaway Russian republic on December 11, 1994.

It is imperative that for fearless and free reporting, by newspapers, they should have inhibited access to the epicentre of the crisis struck location. A news headline, 'Chechnya: Press Obstructed by Army, Government; 34 Journalists Have Been Persecuted by Military in, Near Chechnya; Many Were Detained, Had Film Confiscated; Some Were Fired Upon; On December 17, Russian

Government told Journalists to Leave Grozny.¹
'The Press Is Not Being Allowed To Work -
Persecution of Journalists in the Region of
the Russian Chechen Crisis'. This had been
reported in Nezavisimaya Gazeta (December 20,
p.2) and gives a clear indication of the
difficulties faced by the press in providing
first hand information. This news report
says that according to Glasnost Protection
Fund, between 1 and 17, a total of 34 Russian
and foreign journalists were subjected to
various forms of persecution in the Chechen
Republic and nearby areas of Russian
Federation. On December 1, military
personnel did not allow 10 Russian
journalists in Mozdok to continue a flight to
the Chechen Republic on a plane carrying a
group of Deputies to the state Duma. A
Temporary Information Centre was set up under
the Russian Federation government and began

1. Current Digest of Soviet Press, Vol.XLVI
No.51 (1994) p.13.

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1. Current Digest of Soviet Press, Vol.XLVI
No.51 (1994) p.13.

They have no information on bombing, but Chechen sources do; Temporary Information Centre, Government Press Service, Defense Ministry Pass Buck on Queries, Create "Image of Chechen Enemy".¹ (By Valery Takov, Izvestia staff, Izvestia, December 21, p.1). The TIC Temporary Information Centre manned by one person each from the Ministry of Defense, Internal Affairs, Federal Counterintelligence Service etc. is though, supposed to help supply information, actually, are found to control it. Their task is to keep the Press away from information and to impose on society primarily the official assessment of what is happening. They are probably behind the clumsy propaganda stories about armed groups of Chechen militants in Moscow and the feverish creation of the image of an enemy with a chechen face - with the object of giving the people an understanding of the -----

1. Ibid.

bombing strikes and troop operation. The authorities are obviously trying to conceal their actions or at least to justify them somehow. But the effort is not working very well.¹ as this particular news says.

The hollowness and inanity of the claims of government officials of "restoring constitutional legality, and providing economic assistance to Chechnya, is wrung out blatantly in reports such as this one from Sevodnya. It says, "Moscow Continues Totalitarian Tactic of Disinformation; Homes, Factories, Refugee Columns Are Targets of Bombing', Generate's Plan Seem To Be To Destroy Grozny; Government Even Says Locals, Fake Bombing, Pinpoint democracy" (By Maria Eismont, Sevodnya, December 24, p.2)² This report says, that in its time the Soviet Press relished reporting to the population under its thumb about the successful

1. Ibid. p.13.

2. Ibid. p.14

operations of valiant troops who went around establishing order in Hungary or Czechoslovakia. But it turns out, says Maria Eismont, that the breakup of the soviet union and the establishment in the Kremlin, of a new regime that condemns communism does not mean that the link between the two eras has snapped. Disinformation, a valuable gain of totalitarian society for skillful leaders was too luring to afford being discarded, out of considerations of decency and morality. General Grachev was over-optimistic in saying that a regiment of airborne assault troops could finish off the Dudayev regime in two hours. More and more forces have been coming into the rebellions region since then, stretching the conflict beyond the imagination of myopic officials. The Officers have (so says the report) said, repeatedly that they do not intend to storm Grozny. 'It seems that they have decided simply to destroy the city'. (Maria Eismont).

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The President says nothing, but at the same time, the head of States' press service releases the complete text of an appeal to Boris Yeltsin from Deputy Vladimir Katrenko, who calls for "finishing off the Dudayevites, despite the noisy chorus of petty Moscow peacemakers". A new height in lies and cynicism was reached by the report, released by the government's press service, to the effect that Grozny is not being subjected to air raids but, "the bombings of residential areas was stimulated through the efforts of militants." It seems to make no difference at all that videotapes exist showing Russian ground - attack aircraft destroying entire boroughs. The official interpretation has been given. Whether one believes it or not, things go on the way certain circles want them to be. The irony of the condition is brought out in Maria Eismont's concluding note, "Go ahead and scream, Messrs, Deputies and journalists. That's not yet forbidden -

it's just that they haven't gotten their hands on you yet."¹

The Press, through several opinion polls, has pointed out that the intentions behind the whole mishap was very opposite to the one trumpeted by the government. The July 18, 1995, Sevodnya had the following headline: "Poll shows, 74% would not face Chechnya to stay; 39% say, war launched to conceal illegal business, 32%, to squelch crime area; 65% always opposed sending troops; 2 experts say Russia would gain, if it allowed chechnya to secede; Leontyev: Moscow had to keep order."²

The question "What do you think: Why were military operations in Chechnya began drew the following replies (in %).

1. Ibid. p.14
2. By Rosalina Ryvkina and Yury Simagin, Sevodnya, July 18, p.3, CDSP, Vol.XLVII, No.30, (1995) p.13.

TABLE 1

To conceal illegal business	39
To eliminate a hothead of crimes	32
To preserve Russia's Unity	26
To protect railroads and oilfields	22
To protect Russian citizens	17
To punish separatists	10
To discredit the President and the government	12
To satisfy the Army's interests	09

The table shows that about half of the respondents cited the first reason. It is noteworthy that these respondents belonged to the higher education bracket.

Table 2 presents the answer to the question, "who is to be blamed for the turning of Chechnya events into a war?" broken down by the respondents', educational level (%).¹

1. Ibid. p.14

TABLE 2
E D U C A T I O N

Answers	Less than secon- dary	Secondary type	Higher	Average
Russian politians who allowed Dudayev's regim to come to power	32	37	46	38
President Yeltsin	33	32	29	31
Dudayev's Regime	27	20	11	19
Army leadership, power-wielding ministers	05	07	10	07
Chechen opposition to Dudayev	00	02	01	02
Chernomyrdin government	02	01	02	02
Duma Council of the Federation	01	01	01	01
Total	100	100	100	100

The next, table 3 shows responses to "What is your personal attitude towards the events in Chechnya?" (in %) ¹

1. CDSP op.cit. p.14

TABLE 3

I oppose sending troops into Chechnya at the outset and still do.	65
First I supported sending in of troops, but later I stopped my support.	13
First I opposed, but now I believe, it was right.	06
I supported the sending of troops to topple the Dudayev regime at the start and still do.	16
Total:	100

The report not just gives the opinion - poll data but also explains the public and its psyche. The negative attitude of chechnya (which has caused the current imbroglio) towards Russia has evolved historically since the last century. It is the only area annexed not as an official request to become Russian subjects but as a result of the long Caucasian War. (1817 - 1864). The report further says, that after the 'second Caucasian War', Chechnya will undoubtedly top the list of recipients of federal subsidies. Its recovery will require enormous sums of

money that are beyond the capability of today's crisis ridden Russia. Therefore its secession (of course only if the local population so wishes - which it does and the population of the rest of Russia gives its consent) is economically advisable and would strengthen its economy.¹

A 'Kommersant Daily', news candidly blames Yeltsin for the Chechen War. 'Initial Report by Govorukhin - led Panel (Russia's Choice, PRUA, Stability Deputies Dissent) Faults Yeltsin for letting the crisis occur, Mismanaging war; His Ouster should be considered; much blame Put on 'Incompetent' Grachev; Govorukhin Kick Chechnya out of Russia' (By Yevgeny Yuryev. Kommersant Daily, July 22, p.3). The report noted Pavel Grachev's special role in the deepening and tragic development of the Chechen crisis - the incompetence shown by the Minister of -----

1. CDSP op. cit.

Defense led to the collapse of most of the structures necessary for the normal functioning of the Army. A large share of the blame, "for the arming of Dudayev's formations with up-to-date weapons and for the inexplicably hasty withdrawal of troops is also placed on Grachev.¹

The above views are echoed also, in another report, which says that Grachev should be sacked for the developing complicities. A quick little war in Chechnya - a war Grachev predicted would be over in a few hours - offered him a way to divert public attention from his and his military's deteriorating reputation.² This write-up opines candidly that Yeltsin did not order his troops into Chechnya to save the Russian Federation. He moved against Chechnya to

1. Ibid, p.15

2. McFaul Michael, "Russian Politics After Chechnya," Foreign Policy (99) Summer 1995 p.154.

save his presidency.¹

This report rightly indicates that even if Russia vanquishes Chechnya, it will be merely a pyrrhic victory. Russian forces gained control over Grozny, after an estimated death of 4,000 Russian soldiers, several thousand Chechan fighters, and 15,000 to 25,000 residents of Grozny. But the final curtain down is not to be too near as the forces of Dudayev. Which vastly outnumbered, backed by no outside force has vowed to continue to resist "Russian occupation" until the bitter end. For the first time since the war in Afghanistan, comments the report, the Russian military is now engaged in a protracted battle. For the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Civil War rages within Russia's borders. The war has bitterly exposed the weaknesses and fractures in the Russian armed forces. it has moreover

1. Ibid. p.152.

threatened to undermine Russia's economic reforms as well, fuelling inflation and straining the 1995 budget with an estimated cost of \$ 5 billion which equals 2.5 percent of Russia's gross national product (NGP) as of March 1, 1995. Finally the war has also strained relations between Russia and the West fueling momentum for the expansion of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in Europe while undermining support, for aid to Russia in the United States.¹

The report also analyses the international repercussions of the crisis. Some headlines speak out as "Chechen War Seen As Causing Russia's Growing International Isolation. A condition that may very well suit an authoritarian regime Isolationism as a forced doctrine" (By Vladimir Abarinov;

1. Ibid, p.150.

Sevodnya, January 10, p.1)¹ "International Respect For Russia At lowest Ebb since Brezhnev period. Vladimir Lukin: 'No one Fears or Respects Russia' (By Pyotr Zhuravlyov. Sevodnya, January 11, p.2). "Kondrashov: Western Response to Chechnya Likely to be Modified 'Containment Strategy' with Faster NATO expansion, Less Heed of Moscow, More Attention to Other CIS States" (By Stanislav Kendrashov, Izustia Staff. Izuestia. January 12, p.3).²

All the above headlines expose the erroneous, misleading nature of the statements issued by government officials "The Chechen Crisis is strictly Russia's internal affair. This is not an ethnic conflict or one between the Centre and a member of its Federation, Dudayev's criminal

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1. Current Digest of Soviet Press. Vol.XLVII, No.2 (1995) p.20.
 2. Ibid. p.20.

regime expunged the republic into an economic disaster... mass violation of human rights and the spawning of gangster units -", says Andrei Kozyrev, Foreign Minister of Russia, justifying the use of force, he further says, "the main purpose of military operation in Chechnya is to fully re-instate the right and freedom of Russian citizens. Another task is to vanquish the seet of separatism, threatening not only the unity and territorial integrity but also stability of the whole world."¹ It is to be noted that atleast some twenty five thousand of Grozny residents have lost their lives including Russians, (the Foreign Minister claims to have undertaken the operation to protect them) with many more residents moving out as refugees. One of the headlines say - "Migration Agency Would Not Rregister Either Russians or Chechens as Forced Migrants, -----"

1. Kozyrev Andrei, 'We do not want Foreign Mediators in Chechen Crisis', Times of India, February 2, 1995.

200,000 have left." (By Svetlana Gannushkin, Moskovskiye Novosti, No.11, February 12-19, p.4)¹ Andrei Kozyrev further states that Chechnya left them with two alternatives - either to sit and wait until the country crumbled or else use the armed forces to counter the gangsters. The troops, according to Kozyrev were moved in, as per the norms of international law and the conduct code of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) members states.²

The following report brings out the dualism of the above professed statements of the Foreign Minister. "Moscow Admits OSCE Mission But Insists Its Role Be Limited To Humanitarian Issues." Even a day after permitting the entry of OSCE observer mission, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the person of First Deputy Foreign

1. CDSP, Vol.XLVII, No.6, 1995, p.6.
2. Ibid.

Minister Igor Ivanov stated that any OSCE participation in a political settlement of the Chechen conflict was out of the question; its involvement was to be limited exclusively to the humanitarian aspect. Mr. Gyarmati objecting to this said, that OSCE was not the Red Cross or the UNHCR, and its functions are by no means confined to the humanitarian aspect. What was Moscow thinking when it gave full support to a broadening of the OSCE's competence and moves to enhance its effectiveness? That no one would turn to the organization about completely unknown Chechnya.¹

The use of force solved four important tasks, according to Andrei Kozyrev. "First we were able to localise and largely isolate the sources of threat that Dudayev regime presented for the past three years. Second we de-legitimized that regime. Third we -----

1. Ibid. p.21.

stopped the flow of weapons and militants from neighbouring states. Fourth Dudayev cronies who embarked on the armed violation of the rights of their compatriots realised that the horror of retribution had struck and they would not get away with unlawfulness. Regretably there were no other means available other than the use of army....it does not make sense to hold dialogue with "Dudayev." One can easily read between the lines, and this kind of a justification has failed to convince anyone within or outside Russia. The opinion polls tabulised earlier (Table 1,2, and 3) and Michael McFaul's piece on why Yeltsin ordered troops entry (cited earlier) clearly expose the lies inherent herein.

Andrei Kozyrev goes on to say, that they are open for cooperation with international community. "Our partners and friends including OSCE and the UN to restore peaceful life and democratic institutions in Chechnya

(after having initially denied entry to OSCE observers saying any OSCE participating in a political settlement of the Chechen conflict was out of the question, and having violated the OSCE code stating OSCE members duty to notify their partners, of major troops movements at least six weeks in advance).¹ Kozyev ended by reiterating that Chechen crisis was an internal affairs and needed no foreign mediators.²

Despite Moscow's ready excuses, even the most superficial assessment of the visible damage in Chechnya (loss of life, damage of infrastructure, rise in inflation, influx of refugees etc.) leaves absolutely no doubt that they have reached damaging proportions on a macro scale. No one in Mocsow directly responsible for the intervention should have been under any illusion about military,

Ibid.

2. Ibid.

political, and the economic risk of such a decision. The kind of explanation which is being forwarded by Moscow further explains the inefficiency of the military operations, and seem to indicate that the decision makers were convinced of the operation being limited and that the global fallout from it would be acceptable. Starting a war against one's own people under such conditions can not possibly be a sign of astute statesmanship.¹

Not only the government spokesmen but also the opposition were permitted to air their point of view. Khasbulatov is critical of the Yeltsin policy of untangling the Chechen conflict. It was unfortunate according to him that the Supreme Soviet did not heed the results of the opinion polls conducted during the end of 1991. he visited Chechnya and surveying the situation,

1. Vogel Heinrich, 'Partnership with Russia: Some Lessons from Chechnya,' The World Today, April 1995, p.66.

discovered that the majority of people in Chechanya were in favour of Dudayev and hostile towards Abdurkhanov, who happened to be Russia's co-man.¹ (such reports fail the attempts of officials like Kozyrev who paint Dudayev as a villainous militant and enemy to his own people.

In an exclusive interview, Dudayev, the rebel leader spoke out at length before a Press Conference which was reported in 'Moscow News'. "Day in and day out, there is massive shelling," he said "Ichkeriya has been turned into a test ground. You who are present here have yourselves seen these shellings. And whatever Russian media reports is no longer accepted by anyone in the world." He further opined that the Chechen people were prepared to live in peace, but Russia was not - you have a little

1. Guha Kaushik, 'Chechn War. Anti-Kremlin Stand By The Press' Statesman (Calcutta) February 4, 1995.

bit of a mental problem," - he said. "You have the world domination mania. Get rid of this schizophrenia and you will live peacefully with everyone."¹ Dudayev's counter allegation brings out, to light the Chechen side of the story to some extent, as do the war-front stories of people actually falling prey, a victim to the hostilities.

One of the interesting news-stories belittles Russian military's efforts to intimidate the Dudayev regime. It says 'The Chechen people have won the battle of Grozny even though their city lies in ruins. They will win the struggle for independence even though the forces, arrayed against them seem overwhelming.'²

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1. 'Bring Gorbachev Back To Leadership', Moscow News, No.46, November 24-30, 1995. Transcribed by Vladimir Stokovsky.
 2. Goble A. Paul, 'Chechnya and its Consequences: A Preliminary Report,' Post Soviet Affairs, 1995, 11 (1) January - March, 1995 p.23.

The Russian operation against the Chechens has highlighted three things that Moscow and the Western apologentsia have been at pains to deny. First, recent events show that the Chechens are not a criminal class, that their cause is not about Islamic fundamentalism, and that President Dudayev is not a thug. Moscow's efforts to portray the Chechens as nothing more than a mafia, (as it did in October 1993, when the Russian government expelled "persons of Caucasian nationality" from Moscow and when the West failed to denounce that action) has been futile. The Chechens are Muslims but their cause is now obviously a national one, even as Moscow tries to link the West to Russian actions by suggesting that the Russian forces are somehow defending Europe against Islam.¹ The same report further points out the link between the present crisis and the Afghan

1. Ibid, p.24.

imbroglio, both as contretemps for Russia. The hubris of Moscow, it writes, with respect to Chechnya is just like that of Moscow with respect to Afghanistan in 1979.¹ Another important thing noted is that the public attention to the Chechens elucidated the fact of the borders of the Russian Federation being the most artificial of the post Soviet states. Moscow's violations of its CSCE undertakings and of generally accepted human rights principles, undercut the argument of those who want to dismiss the Chechens as simply an "internal affair" of the Russian State.²

The nationalistic fervour and the steely will of the Chechens to back Dudayev is revealed in other news stories as well. Among the fighters, no less laden than the -----

1. Ibid, p.24.
2. Goble A.P., "Grozny is the Vilnius of Today", The Baltic Independent, December 23, 1994.

others with automatic rifles and magazines, was a thirteen year old boy called Esha. Esha had come to fight in Grozny with his father. Though his features were smooth and puerile, his words reflected the concerns of a hard bitten - "I can feel nothing when I fight on the front line" claiming to have often killed on a number of occasions. He further says - "I did not go to Russia to fight the Russians," which brings out a stark reality and the distance between the two warring sides. Esha further says - "I am fighting in my own country, for my country, for my village, for my people, and my God"¹ an outpouring too strong, replete with patriotic zeal and brimming valour for a thirteen year old, adolescent.

Often newspapers have played an important role in combating rumours. A

1. Loyd Anthony "Fleeing Chechens Pledge, War with no front lines," Times, London, February 8, 1995.

disastrous rumour was circulated by the Russian defense ministry that the Chechens have Nuclear weapons in their arsenal. 'Izvestia' rose to the occasion and published a statement by Dudayev, the rebel leader, wherein he denied the possession of any nuclear weapon. 'Moscow news', a weekly publication carried Dudayev's statement where by he reiterated several times, that the Russian troops were using weapons forbidden by international convention: needle and pellet bombs and "chemical mines."¹ Along with 'Izvestia' and Komsomolskaya Pravda, 'Nezavismoe Gazeta (Independent Newspaper) have tried to expose every form of "double-speak". Nezavismoe Gazeta also published an opinion poll where 85% of the population opposed the war.²

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1. Apex of Chechen War still Lies Ahead, Moscow News, No.20-21, June 2-8, 1995.
 2. Ibid.

The Press deserves to be commended for looking into the Chechen problem from various aspects. Paul A. Goble's report also cited earlier, writes of an extremely positive development in Russia in the context of the Chechen crisis. That is, the emergence of a genuinely active and possibly even effective public opinion. Thirty years ago, the great Chechenemigre Sovietologist, Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov objected to calling the Soviet Union, an 'industrial society'. This was remarked not because there were no industries, but because there was no society. Recent events show that some thing have changed for the better.¹ This positive development can be accredited to the Press, as one of its achievements in the changed Russian secnario.

Much has been written, about the
outspokenness of the Russian media ever

1. Ibid, p.25.

Chechnya but facts still remain. What is incontrovertible is the final collapse of the state propaganda machine, whose efforts were so inept, that they called down official rebukes. But it is altogether fallacious to represent 'independent' i.e. privately financed press, as carrying the flag of truth for objective political reasons. Its most prominent organs NTV (Television) Sevodnya and Ekho Moskvi - are owned by the powerful most group. This indiscriminately uses every opportunity to discredit Yeltsin to the benefit of Grigori Yavlinsky, whom it backs as a candidate for the presidency. The war came as a surprise to most Russian journalists who still live on 'rejecting the past' and have yet to come to grips with more demanding situations. Newspapers indulged in a riot of unsubstantiated figures and there was at least one case of picture faking.¹

1. Bachkatov Nina and Wilson Andrew, "Fallout from Chechnya," The World Today, May 1995.

(Publication by Rossiyskiye Vesti, of a photograph, credited to Reuters, of the Russian flag hoisted on the Grozny Presidential palace. When Reuters disowned it, the Editor admitted it as a piece of photomontage).

Figures varied wildly - from the pay of mercenaries alleged to be fighting for Dudayev (variations of up to 300%) to the number of military casualties (differences of upto 1,000 percent). Some of the most accurate and courageous reporting was by independent minded reporters in the 'official' media who refused to be intimidated by State pressures. Reporters secured incredible 'scoops' often from service officers whose lack of inhibition would have astounded Western counterparts. All of which showed the significance of personal connections in Russia, a left-over

of the old comradeship culture.¹

World opinion, alarmed by television pictures of Chechen violence, have left Western politicians hard pressed to maintain a balanced view. All those who had earlier advocated a return to a policy of containment vis-a-vis Russia now consider themselves vindicated. The feeling has been intensified by Moscow's attempt to justify its actions by bringing back arguments from the Brezhnev era (The brusque refusal to countenance any 'interference in internal matters.') and by attempting to play down the extent of the crisis with a campaign of disinformation reminiscent of the old Soviet days, and threats against its own media. It has become impossible for the West to continue, with its policy of unconditional trust.²

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid, p.65.

The efforts by the Kremlin officials to teach a lesson to the rebel Chechnya, and to picture it as an enemy were also of no avail. The Russian, as well as the non-Russian media, has called this crisis as a blunder of Yeltsin. One report was entitled as Boris Stalin, (Indian Express, January 13, 1995) another, President Yeltsin's Caucasian Blunder (Pioneer, January 24, 1995) Chechnya Tests Russian Democracy (Zafar Imam, Indian Express February 2, 1995). The headlines sum up the attitude of the news towards Yeltsin's capability and efficiency test. 'Will Chechnya Be Yeltsin's Waterloo?' (Potriot, February 5, 1995); Yellsin's Megalomania (Statesman January 4, 1995); The most Unpopular Invasion on Russias's attitude to Chechnya. (Richard Beeston, Times, London, December 23, 1994). 'The New Russian Empire,' which says, that slowly but surely Russia is extending her hold on the very same republics that had formed part of the old Soviet

Union.¹

"Almost all the newspapers in Russia, too, have been unanimous in condemning the Russian government's decision to wage war against Chechnya," says the author who claims to have scoured the pages of Izvestia Pravda, and Nezavismoe Gazeta.²

Sergei Stephashin, the FSK Chief, was obliged to admit that journalists could have reported the war 'more objectively' if they had not been denied access to army sources. (Ostankino Channel 1, January 11, 1995). The point was repeated by Duma speaker Ivan Rybkin on January 30, Ostankino channel 1.³

1. Chenoy M.Anuradha, 'The New Russian Empire,' the Pioneer, New Delhi, August 12, 1994.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

It will have to be admitted that the Russian media has done an admirable task in reporting the Chechen crisis from different aspects. Ofcourse, the facts have been few, but news stories which successfully analysed the cause and effect, with the needle of blame pointing towards the faulty decisions of the ruling regime, have been numerous.

Despite restrictions imposed by the government, denying access to the waravaged site, the media has done a praiseworthy job in bringing home to the people, the harmful and destructive face, and nature of the war. Besides this, the Press also published how the public felt and reacted, its views and opinions and above all, even its suggestions to stop the hostilities was given respectable place (through public opinion polls and surveys). The Russian Press is learning (rather fast) to adorn and live up, to its new image of an Information medium, shedding the one previously thrust, that of a

'disinformation agency', a propaganda machine.

The Press showed good understanding of the public pulse, its psyche, by explaining not only the How and What, how and what happened) but also the Whys (Chechnya's historical hostility, and why people opposed it). It gave forth an assessment of the aftermath of the crisis. Even if Chechnya lost, it would still be a mere pyrrhic victory for Russia. The cost of re-building not only the bombed infrastructure, but the sinking morale of the citizens would be too challenging and exorbitant. The former would erode into its already topsy-turvy economy. (The war seems to have cost 5 billion dollars i.e. 2.5 percent of Russia's GNP till March 1, 1995).

The balance sheet of the performance of the Press has been, though more or less commendable, what remains to be considered

is whether the Press has served the purpose of its 'unfettered' status in making or marring the nation's policies. . . It may not have made the policies as such, but it has certainly 'marred' and tarnished the image of policy makers and decision makers who have been outrightly blamed for the crisis.

The official interpretations are given whether one believes it or not; things go on the way certain circles want them to be.

Maria Eismont writing in the sevodhya, summed up the ironical condition, the mediamen are in - "Go ahead and scream, Messrs, Deputies and Journalists - that's not yet forbidden, its just that they have not gotten their hands on you yet."

CONCLUSION

In the modern world, the importance of the media cannot be condoned off by the 'Statesman'. If they try to sidetrack it, their own seat of power would be rocked and endangered. On the other hand, if they attempt to control it, the very life and breath of democracy would be put at stake.

Boris Yeltsin, (a statesman who seems to realize the truism of this notion) gives the impression of being a great 'messiah' of journalists, while clandestinely doing everything to clip its freedom. "He deplores bullying of journalists, denial of access to government information: declares war on monopolies that drive up costs; Affirms papers' Need for State Subsidies, During 'Transitional period'." Boris Yeltsin says 'Democratic values do not conflict with the

concept of statehood'.¹ (Russian President addressed Democratic Press Forum).

Addressing the Press Forum, Yeltsin said that the Russian state and society had a vital interest in strong, professional and truly free news media. One of the main conditions for this, he agreed, was consistent implementation of the constitutional principle of public freedom of information. Public freedom of information assumes the right of the citizen to seek, obtain and disseminate information. Public freedom of information is the guarantor of the independence of journalistic and editorial staff. "It must be admitted", proceeded Yeltsin, "that there is a gap - one that is even widening - between legally codified public freedom of information and the actual observance of that freedom. Such is the harsh reality of the press's situation

1. Ressiiskiye Vesti, September 2, p.1

today.¹

By pointing out the lacunae between what constitutionally should be and what actually exists, he intended to touch and impress the pressmen. The concealment of publicly significant information by state agencies is an acute problem. In recent years many structures and departments have set up press centres, public relations centres and so forth. Their most important job is to facilitate communication between government agencies and the news media. But in practice the reverse is sometimes true. They become a barrier between the state structure and the press. They release information in measured doses distort information and assume the role of censors, which is inadmissible. It is the duty of state agencies to make publically significant information available to the citizens. This duty is set forth in the

1. Ibid. Aiyaz Wazir

Presidents' December 31, 1993 decree, "On Additional Guarantee of Citizens' right to information". The Russian Federation Law on the News Media also prohibits published materials that incite to violence, kindle social, ethnic and religious strife, or promote violent change in the integrity of the state.¹

President Yeltsin in his address also said that political and ideological pluralism is one of Russia's most important constitutional gains. Unless chauvinism and Xenophobia are re-buffed the fate of pluralism is fore-ordained. The fundamental problem confronting the overwhelming majority of Russian News Media outlets is that of financial difficulties. Price increases for printing services and the distribution of publications have made subscriptions unaffordable for many Russians.

1. Ibid.

Consequently, the central press has been almost forced out of the regions. National newspapers that once had circulations in the millions are becoming publications whose influence is bound by the Moscow Circle Line. In April, in accordance with the Law on the 1995 state Budget, State subsidies for general news publications were ended. This step was stated to be in keeping with a market economy and fortifies the real independence of the Press. What hurts the newspapers is not the market, but monopolies, monopolies held by government structures above all, the Ministry of Communications.

After rendering a speech meant to give the impression that he (Yeltsin) is deeply concerned for the democratization of the press, Yeltsin closed by saying that the coming elections would see the newsmedia acquire the central arena in the campaign. "The character that the campaign assumes will in many respects depend on your position."

In a bid to woo the journalists, he said, "I hope that editorial boards and, above all journalists themselves will approach the campaign with a sense of utmost responsibility...."

The leaders of the journalists union weren't able to hear the Russian President's heartfelt speech to the gathering, security guards denied entrance to the President Hotel, where the forum was held, to Usevolod Bogdanov, Chairman of the Russian Federation Journalist's Union, and many others, Eduard Sagalayev, head of the Confederation of Journalists called the incident a "slipup by the security guards service." The indignant Mr. Bogdanov felt that what happened was a "deliberate act" to exclude the Journalist's union leaders from an important event involving the Russian president....¹ (By

1. Current Digest of Soviet Press, Vol.XLVII, No.35 (1995).

Natalya Gorodetskaya. Sevodnya, September 2, p.2) Another newspaper called it a "bombshell". It said, "The President appeared and delivered a speech. The media called it a "bombshell". The President professed his love for journalists, something that hasn't occurred in quite a while. He forbade officials to insult them (that is journalists) or treat them high handedly". The report further wrote that the whole show cost more than a billion rubles and that Boris Berezovsky (major Shareholder in the Russian Public Television) paid the bill. "This is when average journalists' earnings in the country range from 50,000 to 150,000 rubles (a month), and immediately before the forum the President vetoed state support for district and city newspapers, the largest and most destitute sector of the Russian media. (By Anna Politkovskaya Obshchaya Gazeta, No.36, September 7, 13, p.1).

Nezavisimaya Gazeta, one of Russia's leading newspapers, made a plaintive appeal

to its readers, before finally succumbing to economic constraints. its editor-in-chief, Vitaly Tretyakov wrote on May 24, 1995, "Nezavisimaya Gazeta has been forced to suspend publication. The reasons are banal: the absence of money and the presence of debts..... This is one paper devoid of party affiliations, receives no subsidies from either the central or the Moscow (city) government. At one time, many publications got along that way; now Nezavisimaya is perhaps the only daily newspaper in Moscow that does not have steady outside source to supplement its budget. The newspaper must die or find sources of financing that do not alter its professional and a priori (by name and essence) political character.¹

In modern times, there has been virtual unanimity that the 'Press' should enjoy full freedom of publication, within the limits set -----

1. CDSP, Vol.XLVII, No.,21 (1995).

by the individual rights of citizens and ultimately, the need to safeguard the integrity and security of the state which guarantees freedom in the first place. There is less consensus on how to provide in law for this freedom, since the forms range from an absence of specific law (as in U.K.), through the prohibition of any law which would limit freedom of publication (as in the USA), to specific constitutional guarantees of freedom (as in Germany, France and many other countries). Quite widely the most essential aspect of freedom, however secured, is thought to be the absence of any form of pre-publication censorship or any requirement for a licence, or permission to publish.

Nearly everywhere, the economic freedom of the press is viewed as essential, but the potential effects of market freedom are also viewed with concern. The market liberates, but its 'laws' also lead to concentration of ownership, reductions in diversity and

commercial failure, leading to closure. In so far as the newspaper press is not just 'any other business', these normal contingencies of free market life may not be acceptable, even when the benefits of competition are valued. Much of what passes for press policy, when not designed to guarantee freedom, has been activated by the wish to protect the newspaper press from the full rigour of market forces. The contours of the debate are indicated in an oft-quoted phrase from a judgement of judge Frankfurter in the case of Associated Press V. US (1, 28, 1943): "In addition to being a commercial enterprise, it (the press) has a relationship to the public interest unlike that of any other enterprise for profit.... The Business of the Press... is the promotion of truth regarding public matters by furnishing the basis or an understanding of them".¹ This

1. McQuail Denis, 'Media Performance Norms', Sage Pub. London, 1992, p.36.

view is echoed in documents and pronouncements around the world, perhaps even more forcefully in countries with less firm commitments than has the USA to the primacy of the market.

The First Amendment (US Constitution 1791) says that people are free to gather together, to have public spaces and to speak to one another free of the intrusion of the state or its representatives. They are further free to share what they have to say beyond the immediate place of utterance. Freedom of the press, in this case, means simply the right and ability to record and preserve, to enlarge and disseminate the conversations of culture.¹

The passions for public life only grow and persist when people can speak and act as citizens, and have some guarantee that others

1. Ibid. p.8

Therefore, the object of politics remains the desire to restore what Alexis de Tocqueville called the "Little republics within the frame of larger republic", and to create a palpable public to which each citizen can belong.¹

The Canadian experience of press freedom has resulted in a different perspective on what counts as being 'in the public interest', despite its sharing a similar tradition of press freedom with the US. There is a high degree of concentration of the press industry, partly as a consequence of economies of scale in a relatively small total national market; there has also been the influence of European thinking about press accountability, as a result of British and French connections; and policy traditions which have a more 'Social' or 'Collectivist'

1. Bruce Smith, 'Politics and Remembrance', Princeton University Press, 1985, p.252.

character.¹

The press in Britain experienced a rapid commercial growth and a strong trend to monopoly in the early part of the twentieth century, much as occurred in the United States. In its report, the Royal Commission on the Press, 1949, established by Parliament, took the view that the press is more than just a business (as in Judge Frankfurter's case) and has a public task and a corresponding public duty, responsibility, being the 'Chief instrument for instructing the public on the main issues of the day.'²

The media and democracy are seen to have increasingly reduced to a game and a dialectic of appearance and demystification, which tied the state, interest groups and the press together in a symbiotic relationship

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

against the fragmented remains of the public. The game was played because each had something the other side lacked. Interest groups and sources had newsworthy political information, the indispensable raw material needed to construct the news. Journalists could provide publicity slanted favourably or unfavourably. Elites sought to exchange a minimal amount of potentially damaging information for as much positively slanted coverage as could be obtained. Journalists sought to extract information for stories that would bring acclaim or acceptance from editors and colleagues.¹

Walter Lippmann was right: Journalism cannot tell the truth, because no one can tell the truth. All journalism can do is preside over and within the public conversation to stimulate and organise it,

1. Carey W. James, "The Mass Media and Democracy," *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, p.16.

keep it moving and leave a record so that other conversations - history, art, science, religion - might have something off which to feed. The public will continue to reawaken when it is addressed as a conversational partner and encouraged to join the talk rather than sit passively as a spectator before a discussion conducted by journalists and experts.¹

A real breakthrough in the area of communication is possible only if the responsible and able figures, among the democrats and the Russian media manage to rise to positions of influence. In the words of one of the most important democratic politicians, Grigory Yavlinsky: "Russian democracy is only a half way democracy. We can say and write what we want. But the

1. Ibid.

administration can do what they want.¹

Yeltsin must seriously consider the media's role in this volatile political context. Although the media have traditionally treated him well, his hold on power has consistently weakened (his victory in the June 1996 elections merely shows the people's craving for 'openness'.) The liberal press seems to be showing a tendency to support reformist ideas instead of supporting Yeltsin personally. Thus, outright attempts to control the media would not bring Yeltsin exactly what he is trying to avoid: 'bad press.'² The government believes it has a right to control the media, based on historical precedent, and given the quasi - independence of the press in terms of -----

1. Vagel Hienrich, 'Dilemmas for Western Policy,' *The World Today*. April 1995, p.67.
2. Jensen Linda, 'The Press and Power In The Russian Federation' *Journal of International Affairs*, Summer 1993, p.122.

financing and resources, it believes it can successfully achieve this control. Likewise with its own precedent of pushing the limits of glasnost and remarkable success during the August coup attempt, the media have not stopped trying to force their way out from under the rubaic of government influence if only to participate more fully in the quest for power and resources now underway in Russian society.

A prognosis for the Russian media is difficult. The situation is like the current condition of privatising Russian military factories: New managers want to buy them out and run the show, but the state - which understands the importance of the factories' resources and output - will not relinquish more than 49 percent of the stock. More balanced, depoliticized media are urgently needed during this time of power struggle to facilitate a democratic resolution. Paradoxically, less politicized media are

likely to be a component of Russian society only if and when the power struggle is more or less resolved, and the general scramble for resources is over.

Economic bondages can be seen restricting press independence even in India. Majority of the newspapers are today, owned and edited by the same person. No specific law on the freedom of the press, or freedom of information exists (currently under debate). The press derives its freedom from the 'freedom of speech and expression' guaranteed to the Indian citizens, by the constitution¹ of India. (Article 19 (1) (a)).

However it would be befitting to claim that, Media freedom cannot be established by constitutional or legal decree, but has to be constantly developed and re-affirmed in daily

1. Basu D.D., 'Introduction To The Constitution of India,' Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi, August 1992, p.100.

practice.¹

Taking into consideration the Russian media (Press in particular) which has recently joined the comity of 'open societies', and has democratised its media, its progress so far has been promising. Even though it has constitutionally earned legal sanctions of freedom from government censorships, the ground realities have made their task doubly challenging. And yet they have fulfilled their duty of serving society to the best of their ability in the changing difficult transition period. It is no doubt a testing time for Russian media for it alone can steer the nation towards more 'openness' and 'democracy'.

The Press in the Soviet Union had been nothing more than a mouthpiece of the Communist Party and its chief henchmen. Its purpose was to disseminate not information,

1. McQuail D., 'Media Freedom', Media Performance Norms, Sage Pub., London 1992, p.111.

but disinformation amongst its own citizens and the outside world. As mentioned in the first chapter, the 'propaganda machine' i.e. the press under the direction of the KGB was misused to stop people from thinking freely, in other words controlled and monitored their mental waves.

The decade of the nineties witnessed, the birth of a more assertive and independent press. Backed by new constitutionally sanctioned laws, the general awakening dawned, with the realization that Press should be a private group, discharging public functions rather than becoming a public-institution.

The Press grabbed the given opportunity to shed off its old identity, its loyalties to the Party and the State. The 'Chechnya Conflict' has been a testing - ground for the Press. Despite its fair and candid coverage it has still to break new grounds in acting as a 'pressure group' and making the government more accountable, to its people.

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