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MASS MEDIA OF CENTRAL ASIA IN 21ST CENTURY

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**MASS MEDIA OF CENTRAL ASIA
IN 21st CENTURY**

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Summary

The media in Central Asian countries began its development after gaining sovereignty after the collapse of the USSR. In this process, each country has been practicing its own path with both positive and negative news. They have one thing in common: in all states the media has two positions both with, state newspapers, radio, television, news agencies, and non-state mass media. The difference is that in one country these positions are somehow opposed to each other, and in another country they are almost leveled in one line without confrontation.

This paper presents the progress of mass media in the perspective of each of the five countries of the region with an indication of their distinctive sides. Recommendations on reforming the mass media system is mentioned too.

Introduction

The 21st century continued the content that was acquired from the media in the first decade of sovereignty (90's of the 20th century). The Central Asian region with five former union republics of the Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, is the focus of this paper. Today they are members of global and regional unions such as the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization for Security and Co-operation of Europe (OSCE), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In the category of the exclusion of Turkmenistan as the only one that chose the status of a neutral state.

Bishkek, which is the capital of Kyrgyzstan, has been an absolute exception from the very beginning. The communist leader was dealt here through civil protest (political hunger strikes, rallies, pickets, Democratic factions in Parliament). A prominent scientist (academician on physics) Askar Akayev was elected as president of Kyrgyzstan. The example of neighboring rulers became contagious for him, but here again the civilian sector played a role - hunger strikes, rallies, pickets, protests against deputies. This began after his election for a third term (contrary to the Constitution, where two terms were established). In 2005, he fled to Moscow. Kurmanbek Bakiev came to replace him, he had a choice - either as reformer or as a dictator. He chose the second and paid. In 2010, he fled to Minsk.

The work of the media in Central Asia was carried out in the light of extreme events - the civil war in Tajikistan, the invasion of Islamic militants in Kyrgyzstan, protests, executions of demonstrators (Aksy events), two Kyrgyz revolutions with two fugitives, and the arrest of the fourth Kyrgyz president. On these issues, the eternal re-election of the presidents was taking place with their elevation to the status of "fathers of the nation", with the renaming of cities in their honor (the city of Turkmenbashi, the city of Nur-Sultan). The list of facts and events (extreme, extraordinary, unprecedented, totalitarian) is not closed.

The life of the region continues and is reflected by its journalists. Autocracy is valid. An exception is only in Kyrgyzstan, where in 2010 the

electorate established rules of public administration - the president is elected only for one term of six years. Other states in the region do not have such “one-time terms”. The Kyrgyz experience was made possible through the efforts of civil society, where the media played a key role. The fact of deliverance of citizens from fear of the ruler is very obvious. From the perspective of this geo-political layout, author proceeds on the subject of the topic in the context of each country of the region in a comparative analysis.

Mass media in Kazakhstan

There are 1,156 newspapers, 1269 magazines, 108 television companies, 61 radio stations, 108 cable operators, 8 satellite broadcasting operators, and 41 news agencies in the country. There are 15 operating as networking publications. This data is of 2016. Print media prevalence (over 80%), of which more than 70% are non-state [1].

Cable television was particularly developed, there was not such a quantity (more than a hundred) in the region, the indicator for other republics did not even reach the middle of this level. The most popular among the Kazakhs was the company «Secatel», which successfully worked for 10 years. It was closed after the broadcast of the film by Sasha Borat, a British comedian who shot a story about Kazakhstan showing the outskirts of Almaty, where farmers milk the mares. The usual picture for Kazakh and Kyrgyz people. This is the same process of getting mare's milk, from which the drink "koumiss" is made. The landscape is from the eternal way of the nomads, but the author gave a shocking commentary to this video - he said that the Kazakhs receive "horse urine" and eat it. The absurdity spread to the whole world. The wise Briton made a name for himself.

That year, I was the ambassador of Kyrgyzstan in London, in any meeting people kept asking about the plot of the film. He answered that Borat does not know how to distinguish stallions from mares, that he should come close and see what exactly "stands out" there. In October 2009, the MTV Russia television channel released this film on the air (only he gave it in the CIS). All other translators refused to show this film, and the Kazakh «Secatel» was an exception. In 2010, the company ceased to exist.

In 2017, Kazakhstan ranked 157 out of 180 in the press freedom rating. This is a category of non-free countries. Tamara Kaleeva, head of the "Adil Soz" public organization (from Almaty), clearly stated that "democratic journalism in the republic has been crushed, pressure

is comprehensive, often latent, and has been going on for many years" [2]. She brought such facts. The court banned the editor of the newspaper Tribuna. Sayashi Kalam» Zhanbolat has been engaged in journalism for three years, his newspaper

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was closed. Bigeldi Gabdullin left journalism, his popular site «Radio Point» was closed. In 2018, the online publication “Ratel” was closed. The independent publications Dat and Uralskaya Nedelya work was under pressure.

This is how the deputy of the Parliament Dariga Nazarbayeva (ex-head of the Congress of Journalists of Kazakhstan) explains the task of a journalist. “The biggest challenge facing journalism is not only today, it will always be - to be a moderator or mediator between the state and society. The ability to convey the “bird language” of officials to a wide audience” [2]. If this is stated more readily, that is, “not in a bird’s tongue,” a journalist’s most important mission is to decipher official speeches (their twittering), showing how smart and necessary they are. As we see, according to the logic of the first daughter of the first Kazakh president, the function of the “watchdog of democracy” turns into the function of “servant of power”. It is clear that “always this way” will not be.

The number of libel cases after 2015 has risen sharply due to the fact that in 2014 they adopted a new version of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, where the liability for defamation was tightened. In criminal procedure, one can claim any amount by paying a state duty (it is equal to half the cost of living). In 2014, an innovation appeared in the Criminal Code - article 274 “Dissemination of knowingly false information”. UN and OSCE committees have criticized this article.

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After 2015, the number of civil claims in the media (under the Civil Code) decreased, but the number of prosecutions (under the Criminal Code) doubled. If in 2015, under the Article 174 “Excitement of social, national, tribal, racial, estate or religious hatred”, 10 sentences were pronounced, then in 2017 there were already 59, and the number of accused increased from 13 to 84 [2].

The largest party media holding Nur-Media (established in 2008) operates in the country, is owned by the ruling Nur Otan party, which includes: Astana TV channel, NS radio, RFE radio station, Liter, Aykyn newspapers, “Izvestia-Kazakhstan”, “Turkistan”, “Dola men kala”, “Country and the world”, “Nur Astana”, “Kazakhstan temirzholchysy” [3].

In 2010, a study was carried out on the project “Monitoring of public procurement in the media of Kazakhstan”, it showed that “many private media stopped developing their management, relying solely on funding through public procurement” [4]. And this is how

experts evaluated the situation in the light of these government orders. Andrei Sorokin writes: “Independent media has virtually ceased to exist. If independent, it means opposition. The state controls all the rest without state order through editorial offices, through owners. Kazakhstani media are turning into an information system, in which the main task is to communicate information paid by politicians, oligarchs, etc.” [5].

The situation is depressing, but it has not reached the state of “hopelessness” and will not, because there have always been, are and will be journalists in this country for whom honor and dignity do not go by the wayside in the face of authoritarian power. This is what they say in the journalism manual. “Today, thanks to certain norms in the legislation, any official or politician can sue the journalist and the media that have printed critical material against him and will win, because journalists often do not know the law well and therefore make distortions. But even if journalists know the law, the court will still make a decision in favor of the official” [6]. The effect of Krylov’s fable about a wolf and a lamb is obtained. The strength of the Kazakh government is obvious.

Western experts give an enthusiastic assessment of the country’s media sphere. Here is one of them. “Over the past years, Kazakhstan has undergone dramatic changes in the media sphere. The privatization of the sector occurred, which resulted in the fact that today more than 80% are non-state. Today, Kazakhstan is ahead of most countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus in terms of media development. The leadership of Kazakhstan in the development of media infrastructure is evidenced by the fact that the country held the annual Eurasian Media Forum” [7]. Outwardly everything may “shine”, but these experts never look at the inner essence. They don’t need it, therefore their analytics comes out not real, but “front”. This, as the Russian classic said, “reflections at the front door”, where there are neither “burning huts” nor “galloping horses”.

Such large media organizations as the Kazinform agency, the Kazakhstan, Khabar, Channel 31, Era TV, and Rakhat TV channels carry out the state order for conducting state information. They highlight the progress in implementing the Kazakhstan-2030 state strategy. By this year (literally in 11 years), the country should join the 50 advanced states of the world. So planned «el bashy» - Nursultan Nazarbayev. In 2019, the capital Astana became known as Nur-Sultan. For this reason, satirists composed a short joke concisely, “He flew to Astana, fell asleep, woke up - there is no President. He flew back, fell asleep, woke up - there is no Astana.”

Fifteen years ago, the situation was different, then there was neither a “state order”, nor lawsuits for “false information”. Here are the results of a sociological study from 2003. The majority of respondents (38%) believed that in the country «freedom of speech has some unjustified restrictions.» 28% thought that “freedom of speech was minimized.” The rest noted that “representatives of private media outlets have a much more clearly defined critical attitude than colleagues from state-owned media.” Such was the picture in the early years of the 21st century [8, p. fifteen]. Now there is no such thing, now it is, as the hero of the famous film used to say, an old «landscape».

As for the «leadership» of the country in terms of media, this, as weavers say, is tense. The fact of holding a media forum is not a leadership criterion. Regarding the “denationalization of the sector”, it is once again tense, because the country does not have a public television channel according to international experience standards. Attempts have not been made, as there are no non-state newspapers modeled after European media outlets. Everything is concentrated under the pivot of the state order for information - for campaigning and propaganda of the «bird» work of government officials. Such is the “market» in a country with a large territory.

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Mass media in Uzbekistan

In this country, the region's largest circulation newspaper the Daily, is published in two languages - "Narodnoe slovo" (Russian language) and "Hulk susi" (Uzbek), with a circulation of 60 thousand. The press organ of Parliament and Government was founded in 1991. The newspaper Pravda Vostoka (in Russian) is published five times a week, with a circulation of 30 thousand. In third place is the press organ of the People's Democratic Party of the Republic - Voice of Uzbekistan (in Russian) and Uzbekistan Ovozi (in Uzbek), three times a week, with a circulation of 10 thousand.

Each of the 12 regions has its own newspaper. There is a newspaper of autonomous Karakalpakstan. The Russian-speaking Andijan Pravda and Samarkand Bulletin, founded in 1917, stand out from the regional press, co-author of the USSR anthem El-Registan, Vladimir Khodasevich, Lev Korsunsky, Eduard Sagalaev worked here.

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It should be noted that such a distinctive moment as the Uzbek-language newspapers published abroad. They appear as state press bodies in other countries of the region - one newspaper in Tajikistan and two in Kyrgyzstan. «Hal ovozi» - owner of the Government of Tajikistan, weekly, eight pages, circulation of 6 thousand, with an office in Dushanbe. "Ush Sodosi" is the owner of the state administration of the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan, a weekly edition of 2 thousand, founded in 1932, an office in Osh. "Zhalolobod Tongi" is the owner of the state administration of the Jalal-Abad Oblast of Kyrgyzstan, a circulation of 2 thousand, a weekly, founded in 1940, an office in Jalal-Abad.

In addition, there is the newspaper "The Bukharian Times" - the owner of the Congress of Bukhara Jews, a weekly magazine with a circulation of 10 thousand, an office in New York. Editor Rafael Nektalov (a native of Samarkand). Languages - Russian, Jewish, Tajik, Uzbek, English.

Electronic mass media are represented in the status of state (republican and regional), private (at the level of the republic and regions), as well as paid TV channels. Twelve regions and one

autonomy have their own broadcasting companies. Broadcasting is in analog, digital, cable and over the Internet. All regional companies are included in the structure of NTRK (National Television and Radio Company) of Uzbekistan. This name was adopted in 2005. The permanent chairman is Alisher Khadzhayev. In total, this structure includes: 12 regional shopping centers, 12 republican channels, four radios, one international radio “Tashkent International”.

In 2003, at a conference of journalists of the Ferghana Valley (held in the Kyrgyz city of Osh), the deputy editor-in-chief of the Andijan Pravda newspaper (it is connected with the editors of the Uzbek-language newspaper Andijon Noma) Abdumutalib Abdullaev said that the words of President Islam Karimov say that neither one official will not go far for persecuting a journalist, they did not inspire anyone, because persecution for criticism is not stopped. In this case, the fate of such authors as Karim Bakhriev, Khurshid Dustmukhammad, Alimkul Karimov became a bitter lesson. They dared to have an opinion [9, p. 7]. Yes, officials went far and brave journalists went to «places not so distant.»

The deputy chairman of the Ferghana Region Television and Radio Company Zufar Sultanov, as an example of journalistic courage, spoke about the Chaganion regional newspaper (Surkhandarya region), whose circulation reached 20 thousand (for the district’s press it’s very large). Here are his words: “The editor of this newspaper, Zoir Mamazhanov, has the courage to criticize local officials, including the prosecutor. For this he was arrested several times, but he did not bend. The authority of the newspaper rose to the highest level” [9, p. 8].

Mujabbat Otamirzaeva, a special correspondent of the 7 x 7 newspaper from Andijan, spoke about the work of women in Uzbek journalism. Here are her words. “In terms of circulation, commercial publications are much ahead of state ones in our country. For example, the newspaper «7 x 7» has a circulation of 37 thousand. In our life there are a lot of women’s problems, but the true image of a woman in the Ferghana Valley has not yet been created” [9, p. 39]. Add to this that the image of the men of this valley has not been created.

Legislative acts adopted in Uzbekistan create democratic conditions for media activities. There are norms on freedom of speech and publicity. There is a law on the media, where “Article 4” says that censorship is not allowed. The legal framework allows journalists to use the opportunity to cover the life of the country. That was until a certain point. For example, in 2001, experts could draw optimistic conclusions. The

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journalist from Uzbekistan, Nadezhda Stepanova, rightly noted at that time that “the Uzbek media can criticize the authorities, but only at the local level” [10, p.20]. Criticism on a regional scale was allowed in some places, provided that the central authority remained unavailable to critics. Tashkent should be beyond suspicion.

In 2001, a collection of articles was published in Alma-Ata, entitled “Media in Central Asia: Analysis of the Situation and Development Prospects”, where a section on Uzbekistan was prepared by Galima Bukharbaeva and Alisher Taksanov. They summed up the first decade of independence, and they noted: “Journalists’ materials are censored, despite the fact that the censorship is not allowed in the Constitution of the Republic.” You can’t write about beggars, street children, a living wage, a real consumer basket, and price increases. Materials about corruption, the arbitrariness of the court, police, and prosecutors do not pass. The facts of the removal of materials, the chairman of the State Committee for Press, R. Shagulyamov, explained to the state secrets guard that they did not remove the materials, but “advised the editors not to print this or that article” [11, p.29-30]. After such «advice», the editors cannot help but remove the material from print, otherwise they will be removed. Such dialectic of opposites on the principle of «either-or.»

It all began in the last decade of the 20th century with euphoria from high expectations. Here are the materials of a round table of journalists of the Asian region, held in 1996 in the capital of

Mongolia. Information on Uzbekistan was presented by A. Melibayev. He noted that peace and quiet reigned in them, he cited an anecdote about a fly and a minister, in the sense that there is

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no difference between them - both she and he can be stuck with a newspaper. Then he said that “now we can argue with government policy, there is a fund to support democratic media, and journalists need to “realize the responsibility for freedom of speech and learn to objectively reflect this or that event” [12, p.19]. This was the fifth year of sovereignty of the countries of Central Asia, it was a period of dreams and faith in success. This attitude was characteristic of all the speakers at that round table. U. Esdavletov and R. Nurgaly spoke from Kazakhstan, A. Sultanbaev from Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan were not represented there. Everyone spoke in unison, because everything was just beginning, the first “five-year plans” of the first presidents had not yet ended, and none of them had yet extended their authority [12, pp. 13-20]. Life, however, later showed something else - it was not the ministers and flies who began

to “spank”, but journalists for their “importunity”.

Now (in 23 years) the situation has changed - the smoke from the “white apple trees” has passed, the expectations have gone to the archive, the “five-year plans” have passed into the “thirty years”, the “censorship” has become “advice” to the editor, the freedom of speech and thought has become “freedom” state order choice. Here is the current state of affairs in Uzbekistan. The editor-in-chief of Ts-1 G. Bukharbaeva notes that there is no free media in the country, and government agencies are not able to communicate with the press. She said this in response to a statement by the deputy director of the Agency for Information and Mass Communications at the Presidential Administration. The name is Deputy Said Mirziyoyev (she is the daughter of the president). She wants the national press to satisfy the demand of citizens for information. It is commendable, but for this it is necessary to change the principles that were established during the first president, when, according to G. Bukharbayeva, people “were killed, tortured, and imprisoned” for dissent, [13, p.2]. It would be necessary to ask here why the president’s daughter works in his administration, why such a “family contract”.

President Sh. Mirziyoyev admitted that as prime minister he was forced to remain silent about many things, including the events in Andijan (May 2005). The president is invited to meet with reporters so that he is asked not flattering, but topical questions. While this is not there, while Uzbekistan “has not reached the level of openness and accountability that it was before 2003. When I. Karimov held press conferences where he could be asked a hot question, when Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Kamilov and Minister of Finance R. Azimov regularly met with reporters when major officials came to the National Press Center in Tashkent, where frank and heated discussions. « This conclusion was made in the publication of G. Bukharbayeva [13, p.4].

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In 2019, the country’s media reflects such events that are not so significant, but very characteristic. The presidential spokesman, Mr. K. Allamjonov, was offended by a comment from Ozodlik radio station (the Uzbek service of Radio Liberty) and threatened to call for responsibility. It was about the comments of readers. It is clear that the “nervousness” of such an official will in no way give rise to a constructive relationship between society and the authorities.

The University of Journalism and Mass Communications is opening a faculty of military journalism, where they will graduate 20

staff a year. In other countries of the region this is not, therefore, one wonders why such an initiative, what kind of war graduates will cover. In a strange turn of events, the teacher of Namangan University S. Ashurov turned to the head of state for the 50th time with a request to restore justice. Seven years ago, students beat him for «poor grades.» This aroused the interest of readers - why did he put “deuces”, why did he address the president so many times, that now he is not attacked by domestic students.

The fate of the daughter of the first president is also in the focus of public interest. Here is how they write on the net: “The state lawyers appointed for the convict of Gulnara Karimova were once called “furniture”, and independent human rights activists are in no hurry to help her.” Another response: “The authorities intend to keep the daughter of the first president in prison until death, which means she has a chance to live life for good reason: to go into the opposition and change the country” [13, p. 8-9]. As for the opposition perspective, it’s not so realistic, but the assessment of lawyers is substantial in the sense that they were in her “furniture condition” under her father, and if they remain so under the second president, then this is problematic not only for her, but also for the country.

Let us pay attention to the assessment of the current situation from geo-politics point of view. This is reflected in the Regnum news agency. Here is the forecast: “After the regime change in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan will become the main target of the migration expansion

of the Uzbek population, which is fraught with an ethnic explosion in southern Kazakhstan and around Almaty.” This is the first conclusion, it is formulated in the affirmative plan, they say, it is Kazakhstan that «will become the main

object» and that is all, without options. The second conclusion is simply peremptory - “in the conditions of traditionally conflicting relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, this will inevitably lead to spontaneous military operations along the borders” [14, p.6]. The conclusions, frankly, very subjective, are drawn without knowledge of historical realities.

Firstly, there has never been a “traditional conflict” between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan; there are no dispute territories there. The authors mixed up the common ground between the countries of the region. Secondly, there is no scale for migration expansion (there has never been such a thing before) in Kazakhstan, and the appearance of the second president in the Uzbek arena will not lead to an “ethnic explosion” around Almaty, for what reason. Thirdly, there is no reason

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for the “inevitability” of military operations along the borders (even for “spontaneous” manifestations) in relation to the territorial plane along the Tashkent-Chimkent-Almaty line. Such “spontaneity” itself exists, but in other trajectories and with other participants. This is essentially a «wandering in three pines.»

Mass media in Tajikistan

There are about 200 newspapers registered in total in Tajikistan. Critical materials are also published in them, but they abruptly suppress inflammatory articles, referring to incitement to a civil war. The country experienced a long period of such a war immediately after the collapse of the USSR. In 2003, two newspapers appeared in Dushanbe - Ruzi Nav (New Day) and Nerush Sukhan (Strength of Word). They published materials about corruption in the highest echelons of power, but this did not last long. The Sharki Ozod concern (controlled by the state) refused to publish these newspapers, and the prosecutor general charged the editors “for undermining the president’s honor”. According to the Freedom of the Press rating from Freedom House, Tajikistan ranks 74th in the category of non-free countries [15].

Two newspapers are published in Russian. “Evening Dushanbe” was founded in 1968. It was published in print form until 2011, then switched to electronic format. The owner of the LLC Charhi Gardun. Narodnaya Gazeta - owner Government, weekly, eight pages, circulation of five- thousand. The Dzhumkhuriyat newspaper is published in Tajik language - the press organ of the President and the Government, five times a week, 16 pages, circulation of 48 thousand. The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan publishes its Nachot (Salvation) newspaper.

State television is represented by seven channels of the republican level and six of regional scale. The main channel of the country is called «Tajikistan» (Tojikiston) - broadcasts around the clock with 20 million

audience, the owner of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. There is a state information channel “Jahonnamo” - around the clock in Tajik, Russian and English. There is a state-owned TV

channel Safina with a universal theme. The regions have their own state channels (Sogd, Khatlon, Kulyab, Badakhshan and Poytakht). There are also non-governmental (private) channels - TV ANT, TV Mavji Orieno, TV Mavji Istiklol, TV Service, TV Alliance.

The deputy director of the Varorud news agency Hulkar Yusupov (from Khujant) participated the conference of journalists

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of the Ferghana Valley in 2003. He noted that the journalism of his country is dominated by the “civil war syndrome”, when the motto “do no harm” acts as a brake, causing excessive self-censorship, when access to information sources becomes a serious problem, which makes the media weak in terms of efficiency in reporting on facts and events” [9, p.12]. During the years of the Civil War, dozens of journalists were killed here. The war placed the correspondents of one country on opposite sides of the barricade. Yes, there was such a thing, but journalists contributed to overcoming the enmity.

The laws of Tajikistan regarding the media comply with the standards of democracy. Articles of the Constitution provides a guarantee for freedom of speech, prohibiting censorship and prosecution for criticism, but the real picture is different. This is how experts say it. “In practice, the situation is different, and Tajik journalists are constantly confronted with censorship,” Marat Mamadshoev said in his report in 2001, emphasizing that when sensational information is received, the authors smooth out sharp corners, and there are no materials on corruption and journalistic investigations [11, p.20-21]. From this it was concluded that Tajik media occupy an intermediate position between free (Kazakh and Kyrgyz) and less free (Uzbek and Turkmen) media.

Indeed, sharp materials appeared in the press, but punishments were there for it. Experts cite the example of the newspaper “Evening Dushanbe,” which was closed for several months after an interview with an opponent of President Rakhmon. The newspaper “Business and Politics” suffered the same fate for extensive material about the United Tajik Opposition. Mujiddin Idizoda, editor of the opposition Najot newspaper, noted that «freedom exists in Tajikistan only on paper». However, not everything is so gloomy in the country, there is a place for democratic media promotion. We are talking about the Sughd region, where television companies, newspapers, radio, news agencies are successfully operating. That’s what the director of the Sogd newspaper, Mahmudjon Dodobaev, said in 2001: “We do not feel any pressure from the local authorities” [11, p.21-26].

The first independent news agency in the region, Varorud appeared in Khujant, created by Ilkhom Jamolien, correspondent for Radio Liberty, with support of the OSCE. It must be said that in those years this radio played an exceptional role for introducing democratic standards in the sphere of mass media in Central Asia. Now this role has become different, as evidenced by the scandal that

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erupted in 2019 around this radio in Dushanbe and Bishkek. There was a fact of collusion with the authorities. It was established that the Tajik service of Freedom, under the leadership of Sojida Jahfarova, became engaged, turning into an instrument of support for the Tajik ruler. In this regard, they changed the leadership of the Tajik service. Information about this was published in the press [16].

In 2016, the Government of Tajikistan adopted a resolution entitled «The main directions of preparing television and radio programs for 2017-2021,» which states that the State Committee for Radio and Television has the right to «regulate and control the content of all television and radio networks regardless of their form of ownership». Such total control over the media is justified by the goal of providing residents with «impartial information.» Naturally, experts protested the “monopoly”. A 2016 Freedom House report stated that the Tajik government continued to restrict freedom of speech, block access to information, and infringe on the rights of public organizations.” In the World Press Freedom Index in 2016, the country slid down 34 positions, ranking 150 out of 180 countries [17].

The authorities began to block the pages of Facebook, You Tube and all independent news sites. These actions will not give the state positive results. Such a struggle (any struggle) with freedom of speech and thought is doomed to failure. Examples of failure in the history of the region are available.

Mass media in Turkmenistan

The country's main newspaper is called «Neutral Turkmenistan» - the founder is the Government, published daily in Russian, with a circulation of 49 thousand. The Turkmen-language version is called "Turkmenistan" (the country switched to the Latin script), with a circulation of 36 thousand. This is the printed organ of the official publication of state laws. An English version of this newspaper is also being published.

According to 2013 data, there are 39 print publications in Turkmenistan, all of them are entirely state-owned. Previously, the president was their founder, but in 2013 G. Berdimuhamedov refused this role, the foundation passed to the Government. The press is published in three languages - Turkmen, Russian and English. In 2013, the first law on the media was adopted, which recorded the rule on the prohibition of censorship. The president of the country expressed criticism of the regional mass media for their isolation from local life (from the realities of the region), when they do not prepare their own materials, but reprint the texts of central newspapers.

After that, a shift began in the direction of being substained, the press began to gain a new quality. The newspapers «Vatan», «Nesil», «Galkynysh», «Zaman-Turkmenistan», «Business and Advertising» are popular. The magazines Zenan Kaaba, Renaissance, Diyar, Miras and others are published. Today, the country's media are already taking part in international festivals, where they exhibit their pavilions, and foreign experts positively note this process. Turkmen editors representing the country at these events (in the USA, Iran, China, Pakistan) are already making enthusiastic conclusions. Here is what Ussa Ussaev wrote. "International tensions and even civil wars can be prevented or stopped if the opportunity for a free exchange of views is provided in society and at the international level. Today, the development of the Turkmen media and the creation of free media play an important role in ensuring democracy, peace and stability" [18].

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Now let's see what this "provision" actually looks like. The Turkmenistan TV and Radio Company is controlled by the Coordinating Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting under the Cabinet of Ministers of the country. Together with the Altyn Asyr shopping center, it acts as the state's main television channel. Founded in 2004, broadcasts around the clock in Russian, English, French, Chinese, Arabic, Iranian and Turkmen.

Along with this, five more state channels are broadcast, covering the entire territory of the country. They broadcast in Turkmen, do not differ from each other in quality and content. This is the ideological mouthpiece of power. There is no criticism and dissent here, there are no special opinions nor ideas either, and everything goes in line with the statements of the head of state. In addition to news, there are educational and entertainment programs, Turkmen films, sports with the participation of Turkmen athletes, that is, everything is purely domestic with nothing from the outside. No ads on these channels. Cable television is prohibited in the country.

Until the end of 2007, satellite television was operating from Russia and Turkey, but President Berdimuhamedov said that «antennas will distort the look of cities.» In 2011, he had already given the command to dismantle all private satellite dishes on the pretext that they "adversely affect the architectural and urban planning appearance of the capital of the republic" [19].

Radio in this country (there are only four) is also entirely state-owned, broadcasting only in Turkmen language. Their programs are no different from television. There are no ads. Broadcasting of the Russian Mayak radio was banned in 2004. The only foreign radio station broadcasting here is the Turkmen service of Radio Liberty (Azadlik radiosy). The country's main radio is called Vatan (Homeland). Three more radios span three areas - music, culture and entertainment.

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There is one detail to be noted in that there three specific editions. The Diyar magazine reflects the country's foreign policy and international relations. "Vedomosti of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan" is a publication about all the laws, orders and resolutions of the parliament. "The collection of acts of the President of Turkmenistan" is the publication of all resolutions and decrees of the head of state [20].

In 2001, Nazik Ataeva (a Turkmen journalist) wrote that the country's constitution gave freedom to the media, but life established the ruler's monopoly. The very name of her report said a lot - «Obedient

Media of Turkmenistan.» She said that the Turkmen newspapers were compared to the “miraculous Quran, and the author to the wise prophet,” the Sakharmurad Niyazov’s “Ruhnama”. She brought the logo of the newspaper «Neutral Turkmenistan», where there was an oath with the text: “Turkmenistan, my beloved homeland, my beloved land. Both in thoughts and in heart I am always with you. For the slightest harm done to you, may my hand be taken away. For the slightest libel on you, may my tongue become weak. At the time of treason to the Motherland, Saparmurad Turkmenbashi, may my breathing be interrupted!” [10, p.28-29]

Against the background of such servility for the sake of the “head of the Turkmens,” there could not even be breathing towards dissent. A correspondent who declared his desire to go abroad fell into the hands of the National Security Committee. If someone managed to leave the country, then he was fired upon his return. N. Aktaeva writes that this was the case with reporters who attended refresher courses in Sweden in 2001 [10, p.30]. [21, c.123].

Here is information from 2019. There is a site “Chronicle of Turkmenistan” (news, photos, videos, human rights), it is not controlled by the president. It is reported that in August, shops in Turkmenistan offered school uniforms on credit, that is, sellers are forced to sell in installments due to a lack of consumer supply. Here is a photo of President Berdymukhamedov, as he rides a bicycle on the highway and shoots targets with a pistol. Presumably, accurately shoots. Here one can read about the work of the Republican Party, banned in the country (it was founded by Boris Shikhmuradov). One can read about Abdy Kuliev, the first foreign minister (exiled in 1992). All this confirms that absolute dictatorship over freedom of speech and thought is absolutely impossible, it is impossible even in a country of absolute dictatorship.

Another fact from 2019. Information appeared on the Internet that the president of Turkmenistan had suddenly died. Official sources immediately denied this. The editor of the site Gundogar-news.com Yhlas Amanov said instructively. Here is his text. “Lying is the only argument that allows them to exist and earn. However, other media should think about their reputation and not rush to replicate unverified information. Let’s not forget about journalistic ethics” [22].

As they say in such «opportunities», “that is what you deserve, what a defender”. Firstly, the media owes nothing to him or his presidency, and secondly, ethics is used here as a “poultice”. It would

Here is information from 2019. There is a site “Chronicle of Turkmenistan” (news, photos, videos, human rights), it is not controlled by the president.

be enough for the website editor to give real information about the president without exposing himself as a “widow hunter”. Thirdly, this is not a “lie”, but a manifestation of interest in this country, which was closed to the last gap. Blaming colleagues for such an interest is disrespect for the profession of a journalist. The site editor might not have shown so publicly its “flattery” to its ruler, who established a cult of his personality in his state.

We turn to the situation in a country where there is no such “cult” either in theory or practice, where this was ended in 2005 with the first president (“done” in the sense of “completed”).

Mass media in Kyrgyzstan

By 2005, 807 media outlets were registered with the Ministry of Justice, 189 of which were functioning. The layout was as follows: print - 137, electronic - 53. State - 46% (87 units), non-state - 54% (102). The legal status for this area is determined by the Constitution and three laws - "On the media", "On the protection of the professional activities of a journalist", "On guarantees and freedom of access to information". The theoretical basis is sufficient, the practical part is productive [23, p.3].

The Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic prohibits censorship, article 65 states that «the adoption of laws restricting freedom of speech and the press is not allowed.» That is exactly what happened during the two constitutional terms of the first president, but the temptation of personal power and the contagious example of neighboring leaders pushed him to usurp power, when he was elected for a third term in 2000, was elected contrary to the Constitution, which allowed only two terms in a row. From this moment, the confrontation of civil society with the president began. In this process, the leading role was played by the media. This reached particular intensity in 2002, after the shooting of a peaceful demonstration of voters in defense of his deputy, A. Beknazarov, who initiated the impeachment of the president for transferring some of the Kyrgyz land to China.

A flurry of criticism forced the president to seek ways to suppress dissent. For this, articles 127 and 128 of the Criminal Code (on defamation and insult) were used, as well as article 18 of the Civil Code (protection of honor, dignity and business reputation). A series of lawsuits against journalists began, but failed to suppress them without a trace. In 2003, an amendment to the law was adopted, which was given to the Prosecutor General of the Republic the right to file suits in defense of the honor and dignity of the president. However, even this did not lead the ruler to triumph. In March 2005, against the backdrop of a rally of thousands in the main square of Bishkek and regional centers, Askar Akayev fled the country to Moscow. This was the first Kyrgyz revolution.

There was a real chance to reform the system of jurisprudence

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and journalism, but it was missed in view of the fact that the second president Kurmanbek Bakiev continued the baton of the first in terms of authoritarianism a year later. If the first brought his brother-in-law Adil Toygonbayev (a businessman) to the political scene, the second gave carte blanche to his brother Zhanysh Bakiev (police general). The second president lasted five years, after which he fled to Minsk. This was the second Kyrgyz revolution. Escaping to the Slavic capitals has become a tradition for Kyrgyz rulers.

The fourth president Almazbek Atambayev did not change the situation, he ruled for six years (in 2010 the Constitution fixed only one term for the president). He did not run, but after leaving

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his post, he embarked on the path of confrontation with the fifth president Sooronbay Jeenbekov (elected in 2017). This led to the fact that the Parliament deprived him of the status of «ex-

president», after which he took the path of an enemy of the state. In August 2019, he was arrested and currently in the cell awaiting trial.

Against the background of such a presidential history, the republic's media have not changed their essence. Each president did everything possible so as not to reform this sphere. They managed to keep the state media as an advocate of power. The mass media could did not keep the posts of supreme rulers, but they kept themselves under power. From this point of view, the layout is this. There are 48 newspapers operating as state newspapers in the country: republican - three regional - 11, district - 35. All of them are under control of the authorities. Three state newspapers are published in Bishkek - Slovo Kyrgyzstana (in Russian), Kyrgyz Tuusu, and Erkin Too (in Kyrgyz). They clearly demonstrate their position in crisis situations - rallies, protests, demonstrations, political hunger strikes and revolutions. Their circulation is small (no more than 5 thousand), published twice a week. They cannot compete with non-state newspapers, they lose informational fights.

A dissenting press in Kyrgyzstan has always been in existence and still is. The authorities closed newspapers, they came out under new names. Editors planted, they did not break. It was these newspapers that provided the country with the image of an “island of democracy in Central Asia.» In the capital of the country today there are a dozen of them. The most famous of them are “Case No.,” “Respublica”, “Asia news”, “De Facto”, “Maidan”.

A special place is occupied by the large-circulation Russian-language newspaper “Vecherniy Bishkek” (published three times a week), it was led out by the editor Alexander Kim (ethnic Korean).

With all the presidents, this newspaper honorably fulfilled its mission to the reader, and each president tried to «curb» it. The son-in-law of the first president seized “Vecherniy Bishkek” through court (raiding), but did not deter him. In the second, the court returned it to A. Kim. In the third, Kim was again captured through the court (also raiding), but again he was not detained. After the change of power, he returned to the original owner. The story with the newspaper has already become a legend in the context of seizures and returns.

For several years now, the republic has been discussing the issue of releasing the entire state press from the control of the authorities, but each time there is sabotage. The situation is exactly the same with electronic media, where the main state television channel in the capital of the country with state channels in seven regional centers has existed for all years. Particularly acute was the issue of state broadcasting after the first revolution. They created a commission with the task of preparing a draft of public television. In 2005 they created the TV channel El TR (People’s Television and Radio) in Osh. This was a step to the left, because the world standards of public television require the creation of such a channel on the basis of the republican channel, rather than regional. After a while, “El TR” was returned to the guardianship of the state, and in this capacity it remains to this day [23, p. 7].

After the second revolution (2010), this question again became acute. This time, the authorities found a way out through a change of scenery - they changed the name by entering the word «public» and created a supervisory board. However, the essence remained the same, that is, state. The process of electing board members with its chairman, as well as the process of appointing the head of a television company, is under the strict control of the ruler. The country’s main television channel always remains in the hands of the incumbent president.

As for the problem with lawsuits against journalists from the head of state by the hands of the prosecutor general, under the fourth president this became a «national disaster.» In 2019, this norm (filing a lawsuit from the prosecutor general) was removed from the law, after which the lawsuits to protect the president’s honor ceased.

Public Foundation “Journalists” has experience working in the republic; it was created in 1998 after the trial of the multi-circulation newspapers Limon (in Russian) and Paishamba (in Kyrgyz), which reached 60 thousand copies. The lawsuit was filed by the Commission on Morals, created under the Ministry of Justice of the Republic.

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Through the efforts of the public, this commission was abolished. There was a case when an association of journalists petitioned Christopher Warren (president of the International Federation of Journalists). He wrote a letter to the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, so that an investigation would be conducted into the beating of journalists at a customs post, then there were correspondents from Kyrgyzstan (of Uzbek nationality). After the letter from Brussels they were no longer touched [24, p.66]. The authors were guilty in a statement via radio broadcast that it was easier to get to Beijing from Osh than to Tashkent.

In Kyrgyzstan, a strange (or rather, characteristic) situation has arisen in the field of media, when the confrontation between state and non-state media is ongoing, as if established forever. This takes place under each president, only the forms of confrontation change, and the content remains unchanged - one side politely defends the ruler, the second purposefully criticizes him for choosing a “family”, and not “a country.” The most amazing thing is that the ruler loses every time, but the sphere of the media does not change at all. For 26 years, the «cult of the personality of the ruler» continues stage by stage.

All these years, journalists, human rights activists, opposition members, deputies, and democrats have been fighting this cult. They fought this battle and are leading through the media. The outcome of the struggle in the form of two revolutions for the Central Asian region is by no means negative. It is not contagious, but striking.

Let us give an example of the “Aksy events of 2002”, when a police detachment shot at peaceful demonstrators in support of their

Let us give an example of the “Aksy events of 2002”, when a police detachment shot at peaceful demonstrators in support of their deputy.

deputy. Six citizens were shot. In that situation, the flaw in the state media was clearly manifested, with which non-state newspapers and radio started an information war. The state television and radio corporation was especially distinguished in those days, reaching in

places abomination, causing public outrage. They broadcast on the air that the demonstrators did not die from shots from the service weapon of police special forces, but from the fact that they killed each other under the influence of alcohol and drugs, which the oppositionists abundantly crammed with. Such a lie overflowed the patience.

Here is the assessment of the deputy of the Parliament of convocation of B. Asanov. “In that information war, the government media and the government that controls them took an anti-people

position. As a result, they lost the fight. The main reason for the defeat was the inaccuracy of information” [25]. In itself “inaccuracy” does not become a cause of defeat for the forces of those who are “anti-people”. It also requires what is called the “strength of mind” of the people themselves, and this spirit is reinforced by the courage of the media. At that moment, Azattyk Radio (the Kyrgyz service of Radio Liberty) was at the forefront of such “courage”, whose correspondents showed a model of journalistic courage. It must be said here that this radio became a national treasure during the reign of the first president. In subsequent ones, it was engaged in some way.

In 2019, the Azattyk position becomes the subject of a political scandal, and this is an indicator of a systemic crisis in this source of mass media. At the beginning of the year, elements of collusion with the authorities were established in the Tajik radio service, after which they were removed from the post of head of this service. In August, the turn came to the Kyrgyz service. An article appeared in the Respublica newspaper with the headline - “They complained to the President of Radio Liberty about the conspiracy of Azattyk and Atambayev.” It used to be simply unthinkable to have such “flashy” headlines on such media.

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A letter addressed to the leadership of Svoboda was written by well-known people in the republic - Begaly Nargozuev, co-chairman of the Committee for the Protection of Freedom of Speech, ex-Governor Bektur Asanov, political analyst Tabilda Akerov, journalist Adilet Aitikeev and public figure Manas Samatov [16]. They pointed out that the radio became the patrimony of the state press service, whose representatives during the reign of the third president became heads of the Bishkek office one after another. This order was ensured from Prague by the head of the Kyrgyz radio service. At the end of August 2019, Jamie Fly, the new director of the Radio Liberty media corporation, arrived in Bishkek, but did not meet with any author of a critical letter.

Local experts have already designated Azattyk the epithet “unfree radio”. Journalist Y. Omurzakov writes like this. “Radio Azattyk” was distinguished by super objective and super advanced broadcasting. Tasks were set in a quality manner and problems were raised that other media were afraid to raise. Now all the past is slipping into oblivion, it is very sad. «Azattyk» has lost its grip» [26]. Yes, sadly, but the grip can be returned, provided that personal addictions will be

eliminated from the head office of the radio. To do this, it is enough to change the head of the Kyrgyz service, as was done in Dushanbe. If they do not, then freedom of speech in this country of Central Asia will not fade, because its principles were introduced by more than one person and not one radio station.

Strange metamorphoses in Bishkek also occur with the Internews organization, which during its period of activity has made a significant contribution to the development of democratic media. She also showed excellent qualities during the period of the first president, and after the first revolution she lost ground, under the third president she “went into a nook”. In 2019, her new leader, Elina Karakulova, cast her voice and stated through the newspaper that “it’s impossible to talk about freedom of speech in a country” [27].

As for the main issue of our topic (freedom of speech and thought), in Kyrgyzstan this has been resolved, and will be continue to be in a positive way. This is an obvious fact of the history of this country. This is a fact in the context of the history of all of Central Asia.

Conclusion

The difference in scale and prospects is also noted by Western authors. This is how Norway mistress Erika Fatland praised Kyrgyzstan. As quoted: “This is the only country in Central Asia where the incumbent president voluntarily resigned. As for the hierarchy of freedom and democracy, in all respects the tiny neighbor of Kazakhstan sparkles with different colors than the neighboring countries, the freest press in the region is here. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in Central Asia to introduce parliamentarism, thus limiting presidential power. In all other «camps» the monarchy rules, at best, enlightened «[21, p.335].

Yes, that is right, only time makes adjustments to such a vision. As for «other colors,» it is also true, with the exception of discussions about parliamentarism. Firstly, parliamentarism is not only in Kyrgyzstan, and secondly, Kyrgyz presidential power is not limited by the efforts of the Parliament. This is from the category of significant analysis points. Regarding the «monarchy» is not so global, because they have not reached this status (monarch, khan), there are still procedures for the eternal re-election of leaders, although they have already come quite close to their «God’s chosen people» when they are already the «fathers of the nation», and “saviors of mankind” when they rename cities (the city of Turkmenbashi and the city of Nur-Sultan) in their honor. We don’t know what such a «cult of the person» will lead to, but it certainly will not lead to the «temple» of democracy.

One place from the book of Mrs. E. Fatland is interesting. This is a dialogue with an Uzbek border guard when she entered his country. This is the place.

- Uzbekistan is not a dangerous country, is it? I asked.

“No, everything is quiet and calm, but over there ...” he nodded. Kyrgyz side. “It’s dangerous there, very dangerous.”

He waved to me, and I, passing through the barrier, hurried to Uzbekistan.

- Be careful! he shouted after me.

Such a conversation took place under the first president of Uzbekistan. He (the border guard) did not know that he had already visited the “dangerous country” and appreciated her “danger” in two

headwords - “Moment of Freedom”. Today, under the second Uzbek president, the situation changed - political prisoners were released, who were convicted of dissent, creativity, irony, humoresque and cartoons against the ruler.

Here are the latest news from Tashkent. On August 26, 2019, the president took part in an international music festival, where he said such words. Here they are. “In recent years, Uzbekistan has opened its doors to the world; it wants to bring to the international community the whole truth about itself. The most important thing is that you can take everything under criticism” [28].

If the head of state declares this publicly, then the matter now, therefore, is up to the critics. We do not know what the essence of criticism will be (and whether it will manifest), but the words of the president, in any case, inspire change.

At that time, in Bishkek, they took the initiative to combat the “fakes”, they say they will ruin the state, thus we need laws and measures against them. Under such a slogan they are preparing an attack (the next in terms of dullness) against dissent, this time against bloggers from a worldwide network. The arguments cited with reference to the spread of rumors about the «third revolution» - she is allegedly already on the way, stock up on food. The authorities saw this as a «misfortune» and panicked. Not the people, but the power. If the family allows the housewife to go about the «fake» and spend family savings on the purchase of canned food, then this is not the «end of the world» for the country, and this is not the end for her family members - they will eat bought before the New Year and rebuke their mother. They will make a warehouse, they can even trade in bulk and retail.

It is necessary to fight not with “fakes on the network” (this is the business of the special services), but with “fakes in the head”, in other words, it is necessary to fight against the fighters themselves and against dissent. In Kyrgyzstan today, such a barrier to dissent is being erected at the Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism. Yes, it was precisely such a ministry that was created under the fourth president, who formed a whole “phobia” for freedom of speech and thought. Pathologically, he did not tolerate criticism, fines against the authors and the media in his lawsuits (from the prosecutor general) exceeded \$ 20 million and created a nightmare atmosphere. Before him, the country did without a ministry over information. Under the first president, a press ministry was created, but after some time it was abolished in view of the odiousness of such a structure in a democratic country. Abolished under a barrage of criticism, which

compared such an institution with the Ministry of Propaganda under Hitler (Goebbels was the minister). For many long years Kyrgyzstan lived without this, until Atambayev had the idea to “curb” all state information. It is possible that the next composition of the Government will not have such a ministry, and if it continues, it will become a “bugbear”.

The system of state media in Central Asian countries remains at its former positions; sovereignty has not changed it. Kyrgyzstan had a chance to move forward in this area, but failed to ensure reform, the government defended its ideological bastion. Yes, they could not create a public television channel in exchange for the state channel, they were not able to remove government reins from the newspapers, but all this, as it may be a matter of time - one way or another, the region will come to this. In the meantime, the information battle continues between state and non-state media. The country is one, the truth is also not in plural.

The main television channel in Kyrgyzstan is called OTRK (Public Broadcasting Corporation). Only one principle of the public television channel is embodied here - the Supervisory Board, but it works unprincipled in the sense that it changes its decisions in favor of the supreme power. There were several examples in this regard. Here is an estimate of the channel given in a reputable newspaper in the country. “Another thing is more important (and worse): the state is being destroyed, in which, presumably, the media financed from the state budget are also participating. Strictly speaking, the Kyrgyz OTRK is considered to be a public television channel only on paper” [29].

The legendary Soviet-era journalist Valery Agranovsky has such words on this subject. “They say the truth is one, many truths do not exist. Nevertheless, different writers can build different houses from the same brick facts” [30, p.23]. Of course it is. For instance, the taking of the Government House in Bishkek in 2010 for one side was like a storming of the Bastille (in Paris), for the other side it was a revelry of hungweibins (in Beijing). Some saw the courage of the assailants when they dragged from the square the corpses of their killed comrades-in-arms and again went under the bullets, walked again and again, without retreating. Others saw in this the fanaticism of the crowd, stuffed with vodka and drugs (this side always sees only such a plot). And where, one asks, is it true, is it really somewhere in the middle (between the facts-bricks).

No, she’s taller, she’s always taller than all the bricks. It is that with these bricks one can build the House of Liberty, but one can also

build the House of Obscurantism with them. One can create the altar of the temple or scaffold for the guillotine. It has always been like this, because in the world there have always been, are and will be two sides - civil society and state power. The truth is that there is journalism between them. It can be called the “second oldest”, and “watchdog”, and “sharks of the pen.” As you like, she will not be impoverished from such comparisons; on the contrary, she will be tempered.

The essence of journalism is the same for all eras and systems, in all places there have been and will be righteous and evil. In 2015, a Russian translation of the book by the German author Udo Ulfkotte, the catchy title - “Selling Journalists. Any truth for money. ” One quote from the text. “Without a doubt, journalists should not work in lobbying organizations or be in elite networks hidden from the public. But many of them do just that. And they don’t like it when they tear off the mask from them ”[31, p.17]. The author wrote about the realities of Germany, but this is very similar to the realities of Central Asia, and if one takes the scandalous story from Radio Liberty, it just goes “one to one”. Based on the specified layout (or overlays), the author formulates these questions. “If a journalist gets exclusive access to the circles of power elites, does this not mean that he is too close to those who made this access possible for him? Is such a journalist in this case a long time ago “corrupt”? [31, p.18].

Yes, rhetorical questions, but well-aimed, are in the top ten. The answers to them come through the prism of public contempt. On the other hand, the context of personal temptation also acts here - awards and positions from the local ruler, deputy mandates, money for the necessary “truth”. A sort of set of incentives for the «shark pen.»

Recommendation

Reform in the field of mass media involves the removal of direct state control over newspapers, magazines, television channels, radio stations and news agencies. Such control is expressed in the form of foundation (ownership) in the person of the Government, Parliament, and the Presidential Administration. Now such control is available in all five countries of Central Asia.

For print media, we recommend the following:

1 All authorities of the country (executive, legislative, judicial, presidential) to leave the status of the founder of newspapers and magazines at all levels - republican, regional, district, departmental.

2. Legislatively consolidate all power structures to act as the founder of newspapers or the holder of a controlling stake in the media.

3. Government should collaborate with civil society working on freedom of speech. Media should not be centralized in a country as a legacy of USSR. Active and constructive participation of civil society groups should in prerequisite for a government.

4. The restrictions on freedom of speech by government must be reasonable and proportionate and must not render freedom of speech illusory or make it ineffective.

5. Unbearably rude or offensive types of expressions should be dealt with by society (civil society groups dealing with mass media), not by the state. In other words, the state should not take a regulating position in freedom of speech.

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