

VIOLENCE AND IMPUNITY: LIFE IN A RUSSIAN NEWSROOM



NOVEMBER 3, 2009

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Washington: 2012

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Helsinki process, formally titled the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. As of January 1, 1995, the Helsinki process was renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The membership of the OSCE has expanded to 56 participating States, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <www.osce.org>.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance by the participating States with their OSCE commitments, with a particular emphasis on human rights.

The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <www.csce.gov>.

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Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Washington, DC

The briefing was held at 11 a.m. in room 1539, Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC, Kyle Parker, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating.

Panalists present: Ron McNamara, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Kyle Parker, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Dmitry Muratov, Editor, Novaya Gazeta; Maxim Trudolyubov, Op-Ed Editor, Vedomosti; and Grigory Shvedov, Chief Editor, Caucasian Knot.

Mr. McNAMARA. OK. The first [audio break] put the mic on [audio break] works. Test. OK. [Audio break.] Yes. Good morning. My name is Ron McNamara. On behalf of our Chairman, Senator Cardin, and our Co-Chairman, Congressman Alcee Hastings, I welcome you to today's briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding developments in the state of media in the Russian Federation.

I'm joined by my colleague Kyle Parker, who's serving as our analyst for developments in the Russian Federation. I'll share a few brief opening remarks and then certainly recognize any members of the Commission or Members of Congress who might appear this morning, and then Kyle will do an introduction of our special guests today.

As with all Commission briefings, there will be a full transcription of today's proceedings posted on the Commission's Web site, which is www.csce.gov. In addition, should time permit, we will entertain questions from the audience. We ask that you do keep your question succinct, provide your name for the transcription purposes, and any affiliation that you might have. So we'll see if time permits.

Ask Prime Minister Putin about the state of media in the Russian Federation, and he is likely to launch into a barrage of statistics that would make an apparatchik from the Soviet Planning Agency proud. But the numbers—this numbers game is merely a diversionary tactic aimed at overwhelming the bothersome questioner and masking the truth about the gradual yet steady erosion of independent journalism in Russia since his assumption of power a decade ago.

This is not to suggest that there were not challenges during the tumultuous 1990s, a period which witnessed upheaval, as well as conflict that raged for much of the decade in the North Caucasus. Putin's pursuit of what he and his Kremlin colleagues termed

“managed democracy” has taken its toll on Russia’s democratic development and key elements of civil society, especially human-rights defenders and independent journalists.

On one of its growing lists of victims, Anna Politkovskaya, once quipped, “my job is simple: to look around and write what I see.” Like her, scores of her colleagues, including Paul Klebnikov, have paid for their journalist pursuits with their lives. The harsh reality is that those who venture into sensitive subjects such as human-rights abuses or corruption run the risk of sharing that fate.

Investigations are opened, rarely leading to arrest and even rarer, to prosecutions. At least a handful of Russian journalists have been killed in the past year alone, among them journalist and human-rights activist Natalia Estemirova. Meanwhile, Russia’s information space for independent media outlets—newspapers, radio and television—continues to shrink, with Russians increasingly migrating to blogs and other technologies to fill the void.

We are fortunate to welcome to the Helsinki Commission today several of Russia’s remaining independent journalists, committed to pursuit of their professional activities in an often hostile and potentially dangerous environment. Before turning to my colleague, Kyle Parker, I did want to make a special note of appreciation to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty for their assistance with the witnesses in today’s program.

Just going back a little bit in my own involvement in the Helsinki process, when I was detailed to Vienna in the late 1980s, it was a rather strange dynamic. One of the issues I was dealing with was a free flow of information. Most of the western broadcasts, including RFE/RL’s broadcast, were jammed at the time, and there was an erstwhile RFE/RL correspondent, Roland Eggleston, who dutifully covered the proceedings.

But my Soviet colleagues refused to even sit down and to speak with him, so after each of our negotiating sessions I’d go over and speak to them, to the RFE/RL correspondent, when the Soviet colleagues would walk by. And I’d occasionally say, well, wouldn’t you like to give your own take on today’s discussions, or what have you? And they utterly refused and swore that there would never be a secession of jamming of foreign broadcasts.

Well, we thankfully have moved significantly past that step, or phase, in development. However, there are troublesome aspects of the media environment today, and we look forward to the presentations of our expert panelists. So I’ll turn to Kyle Parker now for any additional comments and the introduction of our expert [audio break].

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, Ron. I would also add that the proceedings are being televised on the House TV system and will later be posted on YouTube for anyone who wants to review them or someone who might not be able to be here. We will start off with Dmitry Muratov, and the bios should be outside and also on our Web site, but just a few words. Mr. Muratov is the Editor-in-Chief of Novaya Gazeta, which is an independent Russian newspaper widely acclaimed for its critical and investigative reporting. Mr. Muratov helped found the newspaper in 1993 before taking its helm in 1995.

In the mid-1980s, he was an Editor for Komsomolskaya Pravda. Mr. Muratov and his colleagues at Novaya Gazeta have been awarded numerous journalistic and human-rights prizes. In 2007 he was recognized by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists for his “courageous fight for press freedom”. Since 2000, Novaya Gazeta journalists Igor Domnikov, Yuri Shchekhochikhin, Anna Politkovskaya, and Anastasiya Baburova were killed in response to their work.

It's certainly a great privilege and an honor to have you here today. I might note that Yuri Shchekhochikhin was well-known here in Congress and had taken part in a number of exchanges to the Open World Program in 1999 and, I think, 2000, and had a lot of friends among our commissioners and throughout the halls of Congress here. So we certainly are very happy to have you here and would welcome any remarks you have for us today, Mr. Muratov.

Mr. MURATOV [through interpreter]. Right, thank you, well then, maybe let me say a few words about my perished friends and colleagues, and then I will say a few words about how we see the current situation in Russia from the vantage point of our newspaper. Yuri Shchekhochikhin was a member of the Russian Parliament, the state Duma, and was head of the Duma Committee on Combating Corruption. He was my best friend. He died in 7 days and he had no skin on him left. His hair was gone; in 1 week he aged 30 or 40 years.

The criminal investigation into Yuri's death was launched only 6 years after the fact, after personal interference by President Dmitry Medvedev. Yuri was investigating a major smuggling affair that was involved in contraband and smuggling of weapons and furniture, and people who were able to stop this investigation are now in high places. They are senators and members of the Parliament, and their names are Bierkov and Kolesnikov.

And in part, this investigation revealed a theft or loss of over 50 charges of highly toxic substances from the stockpiles of the KGB. This is what I learned from an investigator who was assigned to this case and who was hastily retired. And the medical charts and the medical records and history of Yuri Shchekhochikhin somehow also got misplaced or lost, and can you imagine this is a medical chart of a member of a national parliament who was diagnosed with a very rare disease, layoa disease, and somehow they can't find these medical records?

The body was exhumed and analyzed, and unfortunately, the results were inconclusive after all this time in labs, and again, this only became possible due to personal involvement and interference by the Russian president. The investigation of another crime, the murder of our beloved colleague Anna Politkovskaya, is slowly dragging. Somebody—and of course, nobody knows who that somebody is—issued a travel document, a passport, to the person who was suspected in the killing of Anna Politkovskaya, and he was able to leave the country after this person's name was placed on most-wanted lists both in the country and by the INTERPOL.

I sincerely hope that the current political leadership will have enough willpower and courage to pursue with the investigation to get some results, unlike the previous administration. And I would like to ask you a huge favor. In every meeting, in any encounter with representatives of Russian political establishment and government, please, bring up this meeting. Please ask these uncomfortable questions. Please try not to be too polite. You don't have to be friends with murderers in order to be successful in trading oil and gas. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Muratov. We will certainly carry your suggestion back to our bosses, to our Commissioners in their meetings with senior officials of the Russian Government. And now, we will turn to Maxim Trudolyubov, who is commentary editor for Vedomosti, an independent business daily published jointly by the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times. He also co-hosts a weekly talk show on Russia's Ekho Moskvyy radio. Trudolyubov was awarded the 2007 Paul Klebnikov Integrity in Jour-

nalism Fellowship and is currently at Yale University, where he was selected to participate in the 2009 Yale World Fellows program. Mr. Trudolyubov is on the Russian panel of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council. Mr. Trudolyubov, your remarks.

Mr. TRUDOLYUBOV. A few words about the newspaper. It's a national business daily, just like the Wall Street Journal here or the Financial Times. So we're catering to a business audience and top politicians and younger people who are involved in pursuing careers in business. But we have an opinion page which is one of the very few in Russia. This whole concept of an editorial and opinion page is relatively new in Russia. We had to actually, in a way, present it, because Russia's tradition of journalism doesn't really divide between fact and opinion, and we had to, with time and effort, to explain and to show to our audience, even the educated and enfranchised audience that we have, that it's an important concept of distinguishing between news and commentary on that—on fact.

And I guess we've been relatively successful, although the whole concept is not really developing very well, simply because most media are under heavy control in all kinds of ways. But I think that an encouraging sign is that opinion and discussion is—has become really important, much more important than it used to be. We—our opinion page has got more visibility for the past year or two, which probably means that people start to think more and start to get—are getting more serious about crucial issues, because we are about crucial issues of policy, economic policy, freedom or speech, human rights. That's what we cover.

I strongly agree with Dmitry Muratov, and I just want to put my own voice behind this as well, because there's not much that foreign, external forces may do for Russia's situation. The freedom of speech is our internal—most of the things we're dealing with are internal things. We have to deal with them ourselves. But when we are talking about people who've been killed on their duty, being journalists, investigators, it's important that Russian authorities do not forget that people—that there are other people abroad who care about it, and they don't forget that there is a system of coordinates, a system—a moral compass, as it were, in the world, that good and evil are still considered good and evil. And that, I think, is very important for us who work in Russia and for people who are in journalistic profession in Russia to feel that this moral compass does exist. And we still have—we still live in the world where good is good and evil is evil.

And one last thing is, that something that we noticed, the attitude is changing in—obviously, the current administration in the U.S. is doing a lot new things, and many of the policies of the past administration are, of course, rejected. But when we see things like an editor of an American magazine advising—it's probably—somebody heard there was a story, a magazine published in the United States by Condé Nast, they had a—they carried the story on Vladimir Putin, and their internal law department, legal department, advised them not to carry that story in Russia. That's GQ, that's a magazine published by Condé Nast.

And so they asked, and they basically asked their Russian edition not to run that story on Putin in Russia, which is a case of an American company caring about their business in Russian and at the same time forsaking values of freedom of speech, which is one little example. It happens a lot with China, as you all know, because business is business. But this is something that's troublesome and worrying for us who work in Russia, who deal with—who have to deal with a very hostile environment where people don't—many people don't understand what freedom of speech is for, simply because they are not

allowed to try and test the effect of media on—of media as a check on government. That's the important cause that we are pursuing, and we need some support, sort of some moral support from the outside world. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, Mr. Trudolyubov. And finally here we'll turn to Grigory Shvedov, who's Director of Caucasian Knot, www.kavkaz.memor.ru—yes?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE. Caucasian [inaudible] that will be easier, I think. That's an old [inaudible] unfortunately.

Mr. PARKER. Oh, that's the whole URL, OK—an independent media service providing news and information on the Northern and Southern Caucasus. Mr. Shvedov is also Director of the Memo.Ru Information Agency, which focuses on new strategies of mobilizing public opinion and has directed numerous projects on social-marketing techniques. Since 1999 he's held several posts with human-rights organizations, with Memorial, and is currently serving as a board member of the International Memorial and a representative in Memorial's Moscow office. In 2002 through 2006 he supervised the organization's regional network of 70 branches in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union. He is also a previous witness at a hearing on Ingushetia we did a couple years ago.

Mr. Shvedov is really probably the best there is inside or outside a government on current, reliable information on the turbulent North Caucasus, someone who is able to travel throughout these regions, which certainly is fairly complicated logistically and takes no small amount of courage these days, with the violence that takes place there. Someone who's given—I think he had a recent 5-hour sit-down with the President of Dagestan, so a person with great access, and during the question-and-answer period, please, our topic is free media, but we have a world-renowned expert on the Caucasus, which is of great interest to this Commission. Please feel free to pose him some questions on that topic. Mr. Shvedov.

Mr. SHVEDOV. Thank you very much. That was presented too complimentary. Thank you. While I will try to address the two main points now, I would like to share what's going on in the Caucasus, most of all in the Northern Caucasus, and then I would come up with some specific ideas of what might be done on, first of all, on what's going on right now.

Unfortunately, we do see that from the time that we've been talking here in the hearings in June 2008, the situation in the Northern Caucasus became no less a challenge. It's still the region which is very important to recognize not just a part of Russian Federation. It is a part of Russian Federation, but as a region where human-rights violations are mass and cruel. It is a part of the world which really requests attention from the people in this room, in many auditoriums, because unfortunately, this region is a region where the rights of freedom to religion, the rights of the freedom of be free from torture, the rights—even such rights as a freedom to leave are violated.

Our colleagues and friends have been killed. That was mentioned already Natalia Estemirova, the person who worked a lot in Memorial and provided enormous materials to Human Rights Watch for their reports. After that, two other activists of NGO have been killed in Chechnya. Just recently this month, a colleague of ours in Ingushetia, Maksharip Aushev, was killed, and we do see that this wave of killings is not something new happening in the region. We do see that—at least we in civil society in Russia—my colleagues publicly said that we share responsibility for their killings, because before those people in the NGOs had been killed, it was an enormous number of killings among

just regular people who have been announced to be a terrorist, who have been announced to be a rebel.

In some cases, definitely they do unfortunately have terrorism rebels in the region, and in some cases terrorists and rebels have been killed, but even by the Russian laws, it's not allowed to kill a person, even if he is seen as a terrorist or rebel. It should be the decision of the court, the person should be taken to prison. In many cases, before the killings increased that much this summer, we had seen dozens and dozens of people kidnapped and killed, and our responsibility, I believe in that, in being not much heard, not much understood how important it is, has now led to a situation that not even unknown, innocent people are tortured and killed, but also very well-known human-rights defenders, journalists, are targeted.

And by saying this, I also want to put some sort of responsibility to our colleagues abroad. I was sharing this with our European colleagues. Right now, Sweden is chairing and talking to the officials in the European community on their level of responsibility. I believe we share responsibility for those people in the region who are brave enough to do their daily work, and I strongly believe that it is complicated not to see that they very much depend on how you react. If it is any public interest in your country, in Europe, toward what they do, because in our country, unfortunately, we have, as it was described by Dmitry, our approach toward journalists as it was described by Maxim, we do have a very specific approach toward those people.

It would be unfair to describe the situation in the Northern Caucasus just from a point of view over human-rights violations, which are essential and very important. Unfortunately, from the spring 2009, we have an increase in terrorism. There are terrorist units which have not been active for a long period of time which now are. More than 14 suicide bomber's attacks have been implemented in different parts of the northern Caucasus, and we need to admit that these types of activities are growing.

We need to admit that it is not the same situation in Chechnya and in other parts of Russia, although it is publicly announced as an equal by the local leaders. We need to admit that the real terrorism, not just a threat but reality, exists. Civilians are targeted, not only officials. We need to admit that from the statistics we have and also from statistics which are provided by the initiatives of the CSIS here in Washington, it's quite clear that the number of attacks, the number of operations is only increasing from both sides, from the sides of rebels and terrorists and from the side of law-enforcement agencies.

This all is showing another picture for us, the picture which is quite clear. There is a fight going on within the society. More and more people are involved in that. I could be finishing this main part of the picture of the region, it would be unfair to say that we don't see any difference from what is going on right now toward what was going on during so many years.

I do believe that there are new leaders and new policies implemented in the Northern Caucasus. There are leaders who are trying to fight against corruption, as the president of Ingushetia, and that's the main reason he was attacked and almost killed. There are people who are trying to buildup the trust, develop a dialect in the region, as the leaders of Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan. There are such new approaches on the ground.

The thing is, they are unfortunately not that successful so far. Although there are new type of officials who are trying to think in a different way, it would be optimism to

say a Medvedev-type of way. And let me share this optimism. Still, these new policies are not dominating in the region, and let me share very shortly these five main recommendations which actually have been published in an op-ed of Washington Post before the meeting of Medvedev and Obama, and I know our colleagues shared this recommendation with Mr. Obama.

I strongly agree that perezagruzka, which was announced within the relationships between Russia and the United States, United States and Russia, should really include the civil-society sector. It is not just the governmental officials who are in relationships. It's not OK that the governmental talks and relationships are monopolizing relationships between our country.

I strongly believe that this perezagruzka should include much more look of grassroots initiatives, and we have very interesting results of the Obama-Medvedev civil forum, which was happening in July this year in Moscow. And unfortunately, Mr. Medvedev was not able to join it, but I strongly believe that if American NGOs as well as Russian ones would be interested in the real cooperation, new type of cooperation, not training from one side to another side, but a real partnership, that would be strongly developing our societies.

The second is to really focus on the region which faces crises. You know all what was going on August—in the August between Russia and Georgia. We know all that there are mistakes which have been clearly done by the Russian officials, by the Georgian officials, but I want to address the issue of the frozen conflict regions. For many years, these situations have been seen as a frozen conflict. The international community almost gave up on it, and then finally, we got what we got that August. If there could be a more active role and if there was a more active role now in the Northern Caucasus, in the South Caucasus, more active role might prevent the serious crisis which we saw in the August.

The third is to recognize the importance of media and a new type of participatory media. I strongly believe that old-fashioned strategies based on 20th-century approach [inaudible] that support the existing media, are not going to work. I strongly believe that in the countries like Iran, countries like Russia, even in China, the participatory media might really involve the society in discussing and dealing with problems.

And the fourth recommendation comes through forming new strategies which would be facing these new types of developments of the 21st century. And we see the essential role of the Internet, and we see the essential role of a public engagement which might be so differently developing the situation in the region. Right now, I'm not talking about the political developments, I'm talking about social and public developments which we saw are coming up from people nowadays, in many cases, including the campaign we saw organized during elections in the United States.

And the last one would be to focus on these approaches targeting people instead of targeting the decisionmakers, instead of targeting those who are really in charge of so many issues, in charge of so many issues. We have a chance always to work with people through social-marketing activities, through any other public initiatives, through different participatory media-Internet additions, through those additions which are really popular and read by the Russianers by certain target groups of Russianers. I strongly believe that idea of working with the values of a people.

This word, value, was recently mentioned in the visit of Hillary Clinton to Moscow. Working with values of people is so essential. We are losing the battle for the public con-

sciousness, at least in Russia. I strongly believe it is possible through op-eds, through independent coverage of the newspapers, through the Internet, through public-awareness campaigns to work with the people on the ground, not only with intelligentsia, not only with opinion-makers. There are those people who right now, unfortunately, are not so much pro-liberal or pro-democratic.

I strongly believe that these points are important ones to the direction of a new approach, new strategy that we are lacking. I strongly believe in Russia, in many of the poor Soviet countries, I strongly believe, and in South Caucasus as well. And these new approaches, this is a challenge. Would we see any change, or are the changes just supposed to happen here in the United States? I strongly believe we need change as well over foreign policies of our colleagues here. Thank you.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Great, thank you very much, and we certainly appreciate the variety of issues and concerns that the panelists have raised. I did have one or two sort of general questions. There were mentions of President Medvedev, and I wonder if the panelists could point to any substantive changes in approach to the media under President Medvedev, compared with his predecessor, current Prime Minister Putin.

And just picking up on this last point regarding new technologies and media and so forth, I wonder if you could also talk about the challenges that—sort of the typical Russian citizen who's interested in expressing his or her opinion in utilizing these, and then also the adeptness of the authorities in utilizing these new technologies as well. I guess one of the thoughts that comes to mind is, we might see somebody with an iPod or some outward manifestation of a buy-in into some of these technologies, but I would suggest that those types of technologies can also be utilized to reinforce certain messages that some of the Russian leadership through organizations such as Nashi, which I see is pursuing lawsuits against foreign journalists in addition to domestic lawsuits that have been brought by a number of individuals.

So mainly, the differences in approach between President Medvedev and his predecessor and now Prime Minister and these new technologies. The Commission did—Kyle organized a briefing about a week ago or so on the use of these new technologies, so if you could address that question in the context of the Russian Federation, that would be great. Thank you.

Mr. MURATOV [through interpreter]. Well, I knew, I anticipated this question about Putin and Medvedev. Is it true that they are really different? And I sort of knew that we were going to go back to this old cliché from Hollywood movies about a good cop and a bad cop. I would say that one of them is a cop; the other one is not. [Laughter.]

Mr. MCNAMARA. The other one is a lawyer.

Mr. MURATOV [through interpreter]. And there's been a visible change in public opinion recently, primarily reflected in the condemnation of Stalin and also in the personal statements made by President Medvedev that were addressed to the more advanced members of the society, to the small minority. That's actually the big difference between them; whereas Medvedev has the courage and musters some courage to address the minority, traditionally, Prime Minister Putin appealed to the vast majority of Russians.

But of course, the minority that President Medvedev is appealing to is defenseless. And regardless of the fact that none of the representatives of this minority were represented, registered or even victorious at the recent elections of October the 11th. But

when we uncover facts of falsification of votes at the election, it is a good testament to the fear experienced by the majority. This is Ms. Merkel calling, I suppose. [Laughter.]

Now, I'd like to say a few words about the new technologies. We were just sitting here and a few minutes ago, you could hear the sound of police sirens. I suppose that the German chancellor was passing by this building. You heard them, right? And just recently, we uncovered—in fact, there were actually hearings on the allegations that someone named Yusufov, a very well-known corrupt official, in Russia who unlawfully gained about 300 million euros, and he was trying to use this money to purchase old unused shipyards in Ms. Merkel's homeland.

And he's a very typical Russian corrupt individual. He has got a vast collection of cell phones, about 4,000 of them. They are very expensive and very exclusive cell phones, and when he has a birthday party, Sir Elton John performs for 3 million, if I'm not mistaken—dollars. I investigated the activities of this gentleman jointly with Der Spiegel magazine, because leaders of Russia and Germany were compelled to discuss this issue of these murky dealings. And this is my message to Mr. McNamara and Mr. Parker: I think that within this framework of a Commission on Cooperation and Security in Europe, we have to establish a panel, a standing committee on fighting corruption in Europe.

I suppose jointly, with our non-government organizations, other players such as Transparency International this Committee or Commission has to build upon the best work of independent journalists in the United States and in Europe. There's got to be a white paper or white book on corruption, because I believe that corruption is just one of the varieties of a party. This is stealing the future. And I love this saying that I like to quote. It was published in my newspaper. The elites in Russia want to rule like Stalin and to enjoy Abramovich's lifestyle. But in order to prevent them from ruling like Stalin, we have to pursue them and persecute them so they wouldn't enjoy the lifestyle of Abramovich. Thank you.

Mr. TRUDOLYUBOV. Yes, I think we don't have much time, but yes, it's a very good way of putting it. I totally agree that corruption is—actually is one single, huge, problem that prevents Russia from developing as an economy and as a society. And I totally subscribe to an idea of an international cooperation in pursuing stories of Russian corrupt officials and well-connected businessmen who are trying to legalize their gain abroad in countries like the United States and in Western European countries. And I think that's also—I wanted just to touch an idea of Russia having a minority of people who understand the country's situation and who would be able to contribute to country's development if they had a chance.

Many of these people are my audience of my newspaper. We have a fruitful exchange of ideas all the time, and I feel their response and I see that that we have a lot of people, not just in universities of non-government organizations, but in government, people who work for all kinds of ministries, and Presidential administrations who actually understand very well the limitations of the current system of government. They just need coordination. They just need this feeling that change can be brought about.

Russia currently is a society which doesn't believe that change is possible. It's a moral problem, in a way. It's a social and moral failure to believe that a joint effort, collective action may be useful, may work. So we very much need, probably little, tiny successes on things like civil society achieving its success, press publishing something and achieving a result, however limited and local. That's what we are working on and we need the moral support that foreigners can provide. Thank you.

Mr. SHVEDOV. Well, while I am trying to briefly answer the questions you addressed, I believe the differences you've been pointing out within the new media approaches, I think, there are maybe not so many examples. We don't see substantial change toward media in Russia. We don't see how independent TV stations, radio stations are flourishing in Russia. We don't see it. But we do see Mr. Medvedev talking to Novaya Gazeta, which is important, which is not only about material but also a very important message.

We do see Mr. Medvedev publishing an article and opening a discussion about this article on "Gazeta.ru, Internet edition." We do see other steps which do exist. They maybe are not about change of a strategy, but on the tactical level, we do see the differences. On the second issue you raised, the new technologies and if they might be utilized by what we call the dark part of a civil society, or it might also be not presented as a civil society at all, and that's the issue of debate in academia.

Yes, for sure, it exists. I need to admit, it's much more effectively used by neo-fascists than by liberals. The 2.0 platforms, sure it is so. That's why it is essential to put attention. That's why it is essential to look toward these new approaches because those who want distribute hatred, those who want to distribute any kind of radical ideas, those who are terrorists, by the way, are very effective.

Check out the YouTube. It's not about some forgotten Russian Web sites. How much you have on YouTube with terrorist statements. How effective are terrorists' leaders? They are using it a lot. That's why it's challenging for us. For sure they are effective. What about our ideas? What about our messages? First of all, do we have messages? I think we have a lack of messages, truly speaking, in Russia, toward the society.

What actually we want to say? We can criticize officials. Yes, for sure, they are doing a lot of mistakes, but what's the role of society? What do we have to say? This part of society, which, as was described maybe minority, what do we have to say? Not too much of a message as I personally see. Not too many good and effective leaders I see in YouTube and other Web sites and the social networks. That's why it is a challenge. And you are right. But being right, you are giving another point for me, for us to focus on these new approaches, for us to really think how to work within society. They are the people. Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Thank you very much. We'll now entertain any questions that you may have from the audience. There is a microphone set up in the room here. We do ask that you keep your question fairly to the point, and if you could start out with your name and any affiliation that you have. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE. Please press the button.

[Off mic.]

QUESTIONER. Can you hear me now? OK. My name is Alex Van Oss. I teach at the Foreign Service Institute, the Caucasus area studies, and I was actually interviewed in June by Caucasus Knot when I was in Moscow. They got me by surprise. I have a bookshelf about twice as long as this desk, books about Chechnya, and they're all grim reading. There's only so much I can read. And therefore, I'm fascinated by Mr. Shvedov's suggestion that there need to be new kinds of NGO projects that are perhaps different from this old style of journalism, which is very important to documents what happens. What kinds, specifically, of new projects might there be?

Mr. SHVEDOV. Thank you very much for addressing this. I strongly believe that we live in an old frame in Russia specifically, but I think in many of our post-Soviet coun-

tries, as well. But further than the human rights groups are trying to send as many messages, as many materials as they produce toward our Western colleagues, here in Washington, in Strasbourg, in Brussels and many other European and other capitals. Within this framework, it was expected that politicians here in the West would influence Russian politicians, and they would make our life better.

It's not working at all. It's not working not only in 21st century, it was not working already in the end of 20th century. I strongly believe in new strategies which are focused on the Russianers are essential, which are focused on dealing with the people who live in their particular region are important. So that might be the social marketing strategies. That might be any kind of strategic communication strategies. We do have experience of this kind of projects, and we have data which shows they are effective; they are making difference, they are changing things.

And for sure, that's not about political change. Personally, I don't believe in any Orange Revolution in Russia. I don't think that's a good scenario for the country. I don't think the political issues are the most important ones for the country right now. I think the most important ones are these issues when we are working with social apathy. Then they are targeting people in order not only to criticize officials, but to act. Then they can act, then they can change things on the ground. And there are hundreds of cases like that.

Be active, don't slip. Just rise up and be active, because in many cases, it's just a lack of information. In many cases, in the Caucasus as well, by engaging in solving the problem, by talking to officials, you can really do the change. [Audio interference.] Am I saying something bad? [Laughter.]

Sorry. So I strongly believe that yes, we have very different points of view in many cases. But the apathy is a major threat, and a lot of different specific stories, and even the stories which are very unfortunate, with the people kidnapped and tortured, might be addressed. Then the society reacts properly. That's the only kind of protests which are needed. It's not only the meetings and the demonstrations that are needed.

I strongly believe that—for example, in the Caucasus, we do lack very much that public discussion, debate. There are so many discussions and so many debates coming back to the question you raised on the hatred-based Web sites and discussions how bad are Ossetians in Ingushetia, how bad are Ingushetians in Ossetia. And so many of the discussions are not taking place, if we are talking about the future. What really can people do in order to change things in their region? So these specific scenarios, these specific projects, I think, might come up from the people on the ground, and we do have such people. So we do need just a little more of work here.

In the peoples' conscious area. In the area of specific projects which might make a difference, even if it is a little difference. Thank you.

[Audio interference.]

Mr. McNAMARA. Perhaps we will hold off until the bells.

[Audio interference.]

Mr. McNAMARA. I think you're good to go.

QUESTIONER. All right. Good afternoon. My name is Karen Fisher. I'm from APCO Worldwide here in DC. I'm wondering, given that the state owns or controls all of the media outlets in Russia, when you have a situation with a highly publicized case, such as that of Yukos Oil CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky, to what extent does the press become

part of the Kremlin's strategy to fulfill its political agenda on top of the manipulations of the legal and judicial system against those like Khodorkovsky?

INTERPRETER. Could you repeat the question, please? I'm sorry.

QUESTIONER. Oh, I'm sorry. Given that the state owns or controls most of the media outlets in Russia, when you have a situation with a high publicized case, such as that of Yukos Oil CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky, to what extent does the press become part of the Kremlin's strategy to fulfill its political agenda on top of the manipulations of the legal and judicial system? So utilizing the press and media as part of their means to—

Mr. McNAMARA. Perhaps we'll take another question.

QUESTIONER. OK, no problem. Thank you.

INTERPRETER. [In Russian.]

QUESTIONER. Good afternoon. My name is Valery Zutsev. I'm freelance writer covering the Caucasus region. I have a question for Dmitry Muratov and Grigory Shvedov. The one for Mr. Muratov—you've mentioned that Medvedev and Putin are not exactly the same, there are a lot of differences. You've mentioned Medvedev's recent statements. But what about actions? Don't you think that it is possible that these statements are just signs that do not lead to any action, any real practical thing? What do you think about this?

And a couple of questions for Grigory Shvedov. There has been a speculation that the killings in the Caucasus will stop after the fight in the Kremlin will stop. What do you think about this speculation? Do you think it is true or not? I am particularly referring to, for instance, the opinion that President Yevkurov was appointed by President Medvedev—sorry about two Presidents—in spite of Putin's skepticism, to say about this.

And another question is about rise of violence in North Caucasus following the war in Georgia in August 2008. Do you think there is a connection between the war in August last year and the rise of violence in North Caucasus? Thank you.

Mr. MURATOV [through interpreter]. I will be able to answer these questions only in part, not in full. Sorry. In a very short time I will have a personal interview with Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev. The court gave permission for such an interview. And right now, preliminary through the defense attorneys who are discussing possible approaches to that interview. In these negotiations, Khodorkovsky is referencing his own article that was published in Maxim's paper where he is saying, well, we shouldn't really wade or interpret the situation. We need to see this majority that is willing to modernize. He calls it a modernizing majority of innovating majority. These are, by few million people—3 or more million people who would be able to embark on this huge task to modernize and reform the society in Russia.

And this article, I think quite justly, resonated with a lot of readers. I think that eventually the Russian society should take full ownership of its future. It should take charge in the forming and shaping the agenda and the plans. And it might seem bizarre, but looks like Khodorkovsky and Medvedev were reading from the same page. It's a very interesting story.

Mr. SHVEDOV. Thank you for questions. On first run, if media is part of Kremlin agenda, I'm just not able, actually, to answer. I don't know where Kremlin agenda, but I strongly believe that there is need in the information, for example, from the Caucasus. So there is need to know what's going on. Then you have so many channels which are

transmitting the pictures which are not showing the essence of what is going on. You really don't know what's going on in the region.

So I think in many cases, those independent pages and papers which exist are showing that there is an understanding that there is a need for facts, which would be provided not by PR companies, which are collecting, monitoring, sending and actually, in many cases, not what is really going on, but a real mirror.

On the questions of Valery Zutsev, definitely Yevkurev, President of Ingushetia, I think very much implements the different task from what was done prior to his job in this region. Definitely he implements different policies, not Putin's that much. But at least we see these in his actions. But if the killings would stop by the decision of the Kremlin, that is really a very open question. I strongly believe that there is a role which is essential of Kremlin in what is going on in the Northern Caucasus. But it's already too late to expect any other bureaucrats to make a decision, sign a piece of paper in any other tables, and then overnight everything would change.

You probably remember, just recently there have been talks between Kadirov and Zakayev. And Zakayev filed a statement that from now on, no more violence in Chechnya. Guess what? Nothing changed. Zakayev is certainly not much more influential than Russian officials in the Kremlin, but unfortunately, my feeling, and the information I'm gathering in the meetings which are off the record—just last Monday I was in Dagestan, and many of the remote places of this huge republic—were giving me a feeling that there are so many people who are ready to fight, who are ready to organize terrorist attacks, who believe in things which is not so easy to understand, but strongly believe in these things.

And none of the decisionmakers would influence that. But that's already the good thing, that there is a recognition, in a couple regions of the Northern Caucasus, excluding Chechnya, that there is need to talk, maybe not to those people who commit terror attacks, but to huge number of their supporters. So the second—and you also mentioned on Yevkurov, that he was—I would really say that I strongly think that he was attacked not because of the developing terrorism in the region. He was attacked because of his fight with corruption, which shows on what Maxim described here earlier, to what extent it is a real problem, that the president of a regional republic might be attacked just due to such a reason.

And the second issue of the rise of the violence, which is linked to the crisis which we had in August—we had the war. Yes, I think then we have in the region, like the Caucasus, military strategy implemented that certainly leads to the further crisis and further violence. I won't answer to make a point or that further developments in the Northern Caucasus, or the whole approach of separatism. For many years separatism was not any more an issue. Chechnya was leaving, and leading from this discussion because of lack of leadership and lack of real examples, and many other reasons of responsibility of a separate state.

But recognizing South Ossetia, recognizing the Abkhazian people—not a region, but people—as those who have the right to an independent state, the Russian state gave a huge credit to literally dozens of those people in the small nations which are, as South Ossetia of 30 or 40,000s of people, to talk about possible independence from Russia or independence from the region they live in. And that's really very much developing the whole idea of a violence, and that's very much the solution which leads to the dead end, unfortunately.

So I think you, Valery, also wrote one of the articles about Ossetians, as well, in the Northern Ossetia, to what extent this is an issue even for North Ossetia to talk about the Ossetian state. So very much I believe today the South Caucasus and the Northern Caucasus are linked to each other, and the whole approach, including the approach I see here, United States and in Europe, in dealing separately—these are one country, these are another country—approach we know from ancient Rome.

This approach is not going to be successful, because unfortunately today, the terrorists, the rebels, those who promote hatred, they are very much in context, they are very much communicating with each other. Those who promote different scenarios to actually develop a community which called now Imarat Kavkaz—they certainly, in context, and they certainly work together and they are popular among the population in those regions.

So by forgetting that this whole region needs some different messages, and different policies and different steps than the military tanks, and the soldiers marching, we are going to the direction which is not going to be peaceful. Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. If you could identify your—

QUESTIONER. Yes, my name is Jaroslaw Martyniuk, and I work for Intermedia Research Institute, and my question to the panel is twofold: First of all, Intermedia's and other surveys have shown that the majority of Russian are quite happy with the media that they have. In fact, about two-thirds to 70 percent say they are content with what they have. How does one explain this attitude?

The second part of my question concerns also some survey results. Surveys show there is a very high level of anti-Ukrainian sentiment in Russia. For example, only one-third of Russians have a favorable attitude of Ukrainians, while in Ukraine the opposite is true: 90 percent have a favorable attitude toward Russians. And as you aware, President Medvedev wrote a letter to Yushchenko accusing him anti-Russian policies, which include the desire to join NATO, discussion of the 1933 famine-genocide, et cetera. This undoubtedly has fueled, contributed to the anti-Ukrainian attitudes. So my question is this: to what extent does this represent genuine attitudes of Russians? Or is this largely or mostly a product of Russian media? Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. If we could have another questioner, given our limited time—yes, please.

QUESTIONER. Nadia McConnell, U.S.-Ukraine Foundation. I apologize if this was covered in the hearing, but I was attending a meeting on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We and several other organizations operating here, like the Moldova Foundation, the Baltic and Georgians, believe that we need to address some of these issues on a regional basis. And by region, we mean the Baltic, Black, and Caspian Sea region. And to that end, we're also interested in creating a network of information and media sources in this region. My question is, do you have cooperations with media organizations in this region, and if so, to what extent, or what would you like it to be in the future?

Mr. McNAMARA. I think we have time for one additional question, which will be the final question, and then we can have about seven or so minutes for our panelists to respond. If there are any other questions?

QUESTIONER. Thanks. My name is Alex Maffest. I'm an intern for Senator Cardin. This is not really a question about conventional media, but it's a question about, do Russians have access to social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook? That these were

quite influential in the Iranian elections—they give access to the public for a source of identity.

Mr. MURATOV [through interpreter]. I will answer only one of the questions that were posed. That was Mr. Martyniuk's question about the sentiment toward Ukraine. I wasn't aware of this survey. If they ran this survey, I suppose they polled the owners of the TV channels. And I can confidently state that the majority of Russians don't watch official Russian TV channels. If they do watch them, they do it just for one simple reason: They want to understand what the officials want them to think. What I know for sure is, it was actually proven by one of our reporters that during the commercials breaks, you get a better idea of the Moscow sewage system for wastewater. That way our TV industry saves our water sewage sector. And therefore I'm very thankful to our TV for that.

Mr. TRUDOLYUBOV. As for the Russians being content with the kind of media they have, well, the question is—I think—well, yes, our audience is limited. Even Novaya Gazeta, which is a much larger publication than us, we are about—let's say 100,000, 150,000. That's our readership. But we are, again, a business newspaper and our op-ed page is widely read, but read mostly by people who are among the minority that's been mentioned here already, people who are already enfranchised, people who understand what's going on. So we are not converting them, in a way.

I think that there is a certain problem of people who don't know that they don't know. That's the problem. They may become a lot more active if they would become aware of the scale of corruption, the scale of mismanagement and inefficiency that is represented by the current government. And it's our challenge. It's the challenge that we are facing. The publications that are free and that are quality newspapers—they are, of course, limited in scope.

But whenever possible—and new media is a great help in that sense—whenever possible, our message is being carried further down the line for people who don't read quality newspapers, who don't live in Moscow, who are not involved with businesses. But in the end, the message gets through, and I think that new media will be a great help more and more in distributing.

And also about the social networks—yes, social networking is a growing area. Lots of people are more and more connected, and that's where—again, quality press has a role to play, because as anywhere in the world, networking is developing but quality journalism is not. Quality journalism is suffering because of the market situation, because of the business model that's failing, because of the advertising-based model for financing. Quality journalism is in crisis everywhere in the world, and it will be in crisis in Russia very soon. We are lagging behind in that sense, but we will reach that stage where we will have to face this.

So networking is developing, but the message that they are carrying is the message that we are responsible for. So we just have to continue doing what we are doing, and I think that's a tipping point with—somewhere would be reached, when people just wake up to the scale of corruption and inefficiency that is prevailing currently in Russia.

Mr. SHVEDOV. Well, I can't address the Ukrainian question, but on the first comment, I would say that from the data I know, the level of mistrust, the level of belief to the Russian press—that was surveys which have been done by Levada Analytic Center, in cooperation with Sarah Mendelson—are showing that Russian media is not something which satisfied Russianers. It's also very much a debate to what do we call the media.

You know, in the United States, a lot about infotainment. I mean, in the United States it's as well an issue. In many other countries.

If we are talking about the Russian TV stations, if we are talking about broader access of the Russianers to the media, I think we are facing the mistrust, misbelief, the Internet, certainly and the high quality few newspapers is a different case. Maybe a couple a magazines. So overall I don't think the Russian population is happy, although that's quite clear that infotainment is very popular. And with this the population is much more happy than we think.

On the issue you raised about networking and the cooperation with local sources, certainly, that's something in our work we do very much use and I think that that's something which is very much needed. The question is, to what extent this is a long-term approach, to what extent it is developing and supporting those who exist there, and independent from any groups of interest, because in the Caucasus, including Karabakh and many other South Caucasian regions, we do have very strange terms, what is independent media.

If media—specifically newspapers or websites—is dependent on opposition, is dependent on some political figures which are in opposition right now, oh, that's independent. I would call independent media those which are professional, those which are not linked to any other political or business frames, and those, I think, are very much lacking the cooperation, and cooperation, in general, is very much needed. But what kind of cooperation? I strongly believe in support and development of media. Not only support, but also professional development, which is addressing the standards which were just right now eliminated.

And the last one, yes, certainly, we have access to the social networks. The question is, to what extent it makes a difference, to what extent it is used as a social engagement tool, or it is used just for spending time, just for communication without any meanings, without any leverage for the society. I strongly think that in Russia, it is not used enough to influence.

I was just in another meeting, giving an example of some articles we published, which came fully from a social network, exchanges and debates which are going on, and then people stopped to sit in this computer-friendly communication but just got off to the streets to say what they wanted to say in Lidi Kavkaz. We have many examples of this kind of things happening, then the social networks are playing the essential role. I think much more should be done by the civil society in Russia and in many other countries in the Southern Caucasus, because that's a challenge to us. Not too many things are done by the civil society to lead in these social networks. That's why other people are leading there. Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Thank you very much. This concludes this briefing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. We definitely appreciate the presence of the experts today, and certainly wish you all the best as you return to the Russian Federation. As I have indicated, a full transcription and other materials related to today's hearing will be posted on our Commission's Web site: www.csce.gov tomorrow within 24 hours. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 12:32 p.m., the briefing ended.]



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