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Lottizzazione Russian style

Russia's two-tier media system

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***Lottizzazione* Russian style:
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Abstract

The restructuring of the Russian mass media system has created a two-tier media system, where some outlets, notably national television, are very tightly controlled, while others, including the Internet, are allowed a substantial degree of freedom. The allocation of media outlets to one or other tier is carried out according to procedures that can be compared to the Italian *lottizzazione*, a method used to allocate political control within the state broadcaster RAI. Recent changes in media usage are now threatening the equilibrium of the system, thus posing a challenge to those responsible for its administration.

Introduction

The period following Vladimir Putin's first election to the Presidency in 2000 has been characterised by a substantial restructuring of the Russian media system, a process which has affected both ownership and content. The aim of the present article is to consider not the process itself, but its outcome, especially in terms of ownership and control. It will be suggested that an ostensibly diffuse structure of ownership none the less allows for a considerable degree of centralised control over both print and electronic media, but that instead of recreating a Soviet-style monolithic system this centralised control has been used to put in place a two-tier system. Within this system the first tier is made up of those outlets that are subject to very strict control, while the second consists of outlets that are allowed a substantial degree of freedom. It will be further suggested that notwithstanding the important differences it is helpful to compare the procedure by which different media outlets are allocated to one or other tier to the Italian process of *lottizzazione*, a system devised in the 1970s to guarantee a degree of pluralism within the state broadcaster RAI. The article will go on to consider possible reasons for adopting this particular structure and will examine some of its implications, particularly its potential for

stability in the light of possible political, economic and technological developments. It should be emphasised that what is being considered here is Russia's national media system; extension of the discussion to regional and local media would introduce issues and complications that go far beyond the scope of a single article.

Oligarchic media

The oligarchic media system that prevailed in Russia in the second half of the 1990s has been well enough described elsewhere, most notably by Ivan Zasurskii (1999; 2001), though see also Dunn (2009), so that only the main points need to be discussed here. During this period a large proportion of Russia's print and electronic media outlets came to be either owned or effectively controlled by one or other of the group of wealthy and well-connected businessmen known collectively as the oligarchs. By far the most powerful of these oligarchs were Boris Berezovskii and Vladimir Gusinskii, since between them they controlled three television channels with extensive nation-wide coverage, and national television, in Russia as elsewhere, has always been seen as the most important and the most influential medium.

One consequence of this was that oligarchic television achieved a limited degree of pluralism during the so-called 'information wars' of the late 1990s, and in particular during the election campaign for the Duma in 1999, when ORT, controlled by Boris Berezovskii, campaigned robustly for Vladimir Putin and his nascent political group and against Yurii Luzhkov and his allies, while NTV, controlled by his (then) rival Vladimir Gusinskii adopted a rather different political line.¹ This was a brief and up to

¹ Giving a precise definition to NTV's political line during the 1999/2000 election campaigns is not entirely straightforward, though the conclusion of the present writer, based on observations made at the time, is that NTV's coverage of the 1999 Duma election was not so much pro-Luzhkov, as anti-

now unique moment in the history of the Russian mass media, when television viewers could choose which national channel to watch according to their political orientation, but it was a partial form of pluralism, in that significant parts of the political spectrum (notably the KPRF and the LDPR) remained excluded. It was, perhaps more importantly, a contingent, rather than a systematic pluralism, in that it depended not on any agreed structure, but on the particular business interests of the oligarchs involved. Indeed, in 1997 the first of the 'information wars', which arose out of a privatisation dispute, had seen Berezovskii and Gusinskii on the same side, with the opponents' viewpoint being represented by the third national channel, RTR, as well as by certain newspapers (Zasurskii 2001, pp. 83-8). And if in 1999/2000 there was contingent pluralism, in 1996 there was no divergence of opinion, but instead oligarchic solidarity in support of the campaign to secure the re-election of Boris Yel'tsin to the Presidency; indeed, NTV received both an extension to its operating hours and the status of a national television channel, with its associated financial privileges, as a reward for its contribution to this particular cause (Belin 2002, p. 26-8).

The reconstruction of the Russian media system after 2000

An essential element of this restructuring was the removal from the scene of Berezovskii and Gusinskii. The fact that these particular oligarchs considered that they had the right independently to determine the political orientation of the television channels they controlled meant that an important and influential part of the media system had slipped away from the control of the Kremlin, and this was a state of affairs that could no longer be tolerated. This was explained by Putin himself at a press-conference that took place in Paris on 15 January 2002:

S tsel'yu sokhranit' svoe vliyanie na obshchestvo, na gosudarstvo te lyudi, kotorye vyzvali

anti-Luzhkov, in so far as ORT's relentless attacks on the Mayor of Moscow were turned into the principal issue of a campaign otherwise devoid of significant political differences. For other interpretations see Zasurskii (2001, p. 118) and Burrett (2009, p. 85).

allergiyu na Zapade, kstati skazat', v techenie mnogikh let i kotorykh s legkoi ruki pressy u nas nazyvayut oligarkhami, podchinili sebe obshchenatsional'nye sredstva massovoi informatsii. I tam, gde eto kasalos' gosudarstva, gosudarstvo pytalos' chto-to sebe vernut'.²

[In order to retain their influence on society and on the state, these people, who, it may be noted in passing, have been producing an allergic reaction in the West for many years and who thanks to the press are known in Russia as oligarchs, took control of the national mass media. And where this concerned the state, the state has tried to take something back]

The final sentence of this extract is a little odd, because while it is clear that the oligarchs have been removed, it is much less apparent what exactly the state has tried to take back ('sebe vernut'). It is true that the private television channels TV-6 (latterly owned by Boris Berezovskii) and its short-lived successor TVS (owned by a consortium of oligarchs) were closed down and the frequency thereby liberated was allocated to the state-owned broadcasting company RTR (Kamoza 2003/2005, p. 213),³ but apart from that there has been no significant expansion of the direct ownership of the national mass media on the part of the state. Instead the restructuring has been effected by a series of take-overs and changes of ownership which have left the media outlets concerned nominally in the private sector or owned by companies that operate at arm's length from the state (see below). The most widely reported of these changes of ownership was that which saw Vladimir Gusinskii's MOST group (including NTV and the radio station *Ekho Moskvyy*) taken over by Gazprom-Media in 2001,⁴ but this process has also

² *Zayavlenie dlya pressy i otvety na voprosy v khode sovместnoi press-konferentsii s Prezidentom Frantsuzskoi Respubliki Zhakom Shirakom.* Available on-line at: http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2002/01/15/0002_type63377type63380_28774.shtml (last accessed 1 September 2011).

³ See also the report 'Minpechati zamenilo TVS na "Sport" "v interesakh zritelei"', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/22Jun2003/sport.html> (last accessed 2 September 2011).

⁴ As described by Laura Belin (2002) and, in an entertaining, if *parti pris*, insider's account, by Viktor Shenderovich (2002, pp. 7-60).

affected the television channel REN-TV,⁵ as well as a number of newspapers and even segments of the Internet. The changes of ownership have not always been friendly: Mikhail Fedotov (2006, p. 37) describes the means used to bring about take-over of MOST media group as 'sredstva zakonnoogo prinuzhdeniya' [means of legal coercion], while Boris Berezovskii claimed that in 2001 he was forced under duress to sell his shares in ORT to Roman Abramovich at an artificially low price, albeit that he was unable to convince an English court of law of the validity of this claim.⁶

For present purposes the processes by which the changes in ownership have been brought about are of less concern than the results that have been obtained. At first sight these results do not seem particularly noteworthy, in that patterns of media ownership are not obviously different in any significant way from those that are found in other European countries or, indeed, from that which existed in Russia at the end of the 1990s: the state has a relatively modest direct holding, concentrated for the most part (though not exclusively) in the broadcasting sphere, while substantial numbers of print and electronic media outlets are owned by media conglomerates. An indication of the principal media groups and their holdings is given in Table 1.

⁵ See, for example, 'Kreml' poluchil polnyi kontrol' nad telekanalom Ren-TV', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/13apr2007/rentv.html> (last accessed 2 September 2011).

⁶ Detailed accounts of the lawsuit between Berezovskii and Abramovich, which was heard at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, were published in the British press and, in Russian, in *Novaya gazeta*. The judgement, delivered on 31 August 2012, found in favour of Abramovich on all points, but Luke Harding, in his report for *The Guardian*, notes that the judge's finding in relation to the sale of the shares in ORT 'prompted seasoned Russian watchers to guffaw'. See 'Humiliation for Boris Berezovsky in battle of the oligarchs', available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/aug/31/humiliation-boris-berezovsky-battle-oligarchs?intcmp=239> (last accessed 7 February 2013).

Table 1⁷

Owner	Television	Radio	Print media	Internet
State	Pervyi kanal (51%) VGTRK: Rossiya-1, Rossiya-2, Rossiia-K RTR-Planeta and others	VGTRK: Radio Rossii Mayak and others	Rossiiskaya gazeta	
Gazprom-Media	NTV NTV-Plyus TNT	Ekho Moskvyy and others	Itogi Sem' dnei Tribuna and others	RuTube (www.rutube.ru)
ProfMedia	TV-3 2 x 2 MTV Rossiya	Avtoradio and others		Rambler lenta.ru
Natsional'naya media grupp	Pervyi kanal (25%) Pyatyi kanal (SPb) REN-TV	Russkaya sluzhba novostei	Izvestiya	
SUP				LiveJournal.com gazeta.ru

⁷ The information for this table is taken from the site <http://www.media-atlas.ru/> and from the sites of the companies concerned: <http://www.vgtrk.com/about>; <http://www.gazprom-media.com/>; <http://www.nm-g.ru/about/>; <http://www.profmedia.ru/actives/>; <http://www.sup.com/> (all sites were last accessed in the period 5-9 September 2011).

This table cannot give a full picture of the complex interlinking of the various groups. For example, the oligarch Alisher Usmanov owns the *Kommersant* newspaper group, but also has significant holdings in SUP, the Mail.Ru group (which owns odnoklassniki.ru and 40% of vkontakte.ru, the two most important social networking sites in Russia) and DST Global, which has holdings in *inter alia* Facebook and Twitter.⁸ A more intriguing figure in some ways is Yurii Koval'chuk, a man who is routinely described as a friend or a even a close friend of Vladimir Putin.⁹ Koval'chuk is chairman of the board of a bank called *AB Rossiya*,¹⁰ which owns *Video Interneshnl*, the dominant company in the television advertising market;¹¹ he is also described variously as the person who set up (*sozdavat'/sozdat'*)¹² or who controls¹³ the *Natsional'naya media grupp*a, though his only official

⁸ See the biography of Usmanov on the lenta.ru site (<http://www.lenta.ru/lib/14164974/full.htm>), as well as <http://www.lenta.ru/lib/14207421/> and <http://www.newsru.com/finance/11jul2011/twitter.html> (all sites last accessed on 12 September 2011).

⁹ See for example <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/data/2011/015/01.html>; <http://www.lenpravda.ru/digest/federal/267944.html>; <http://www.newsru.com/finance/23apr2008/nazmed.html> (all sites last accessed 12 September 2011). A search carried out on 13 September 2011 for the terms Koval'chuk and "drug Putina" using www.google.ru came up with 14,900 responses.

¹⁰ <http://web.abr.ru/sankt-petersburg/about/management/managstructure/boardofdirectors/> (last accessed 13 September 2011). It has been claimed that the true beneficiary of this bank is none other than Vladimir Putin; see the interview with Sergei Kolesnikov published in *Novaya gazeta* on 21 December 2011 and available at: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/inquests/50173.html> (last accessed 29 February 2012).

¹¹ <http://www.newsru.com/finance/26apr2010/vinter.html> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

¹² See for example www.vedomosti.ru/persons/6992/. ©9 •>20; LCC or <http://www.media-atlas.ru/news/?a=view&id=24059> (both sites last accessed 13 September 2011).

¹³ <http://kommersant.ru/doc/1581792> (last accessed 13 September 2011); the phrase used is

position within the company appears to be that of a member of its Lay Supervisory Council (*Obshchestvennyi Sovet*).¹⁴ Koval'chuk also, however, has links to Gazprom-media: the main shareholder in this company is not, as might be thought, Gazprom, but Gazprombank,¹⁵ and the majority shareholder in Gazprombank at the time of writing is not, as might be thought, Gazprom, but the company's pension fund Gazfond;¹⁶ Gazfond's assets are controlled by none other than Yurii Koval'chuk.¹⁷ It is this elaborate concatenation of interests that lead Boris Nemtsov and Vladimir Milov (2010, pp. 3-4) to the conclusion that Gazprom-Media is effectively controlled by Koval'chuk.¹⁸

One might conclude from this account that when Putin talked about the state taking something back from the oligarchs, he was being a shade disingenuous, but in fact, what this re-alignment has allowed the state to take back is control – control over the behaviour and content of the media. Mikhail Fedotov (2006, p. 49), surveying various indicators relating to the Russian media, draws the following conclusion:

Podvodya itog skazannomu, prikhoditsya konstatirovat', chto prakticheski vse indikatory – pri vsei ikh protivorechivosti – pokazyvayut posle 1998 g. yavnyi trend skoree v storonu totalitarno-avtoritarnykh poryadkov, nezheli v storonu demokratii.

'podkontrol'nyi emu [i.e. Koval'chuk] mediakholding'.

¹⁴ <http://www.nm-g.ru/advice/> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

¹⁵ <http://www.mediaatlas.ru/holding/?a=view&id=2> (last accessed 13 September 2011).

¹⁶ www.vedomosti.ru/companies/a-z/37/07?@<10=: (last accessed 13 September 2011).

¹⁷ http://www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/article/266763/akimov_pozval_veb (last accessed 13 September 2011). According to this article, which is dated 5 September 2011, there is a possibility that a share issue may lead to Gazfond's holdings in the bank being diluted. This would appear to have happened, since according to the bank's own web-site the position in April 2013 was that Gazfond was the largest shareholder, but with only 47.38% of the total. See <http://www.gazprombank.ru/about/shareholders/> (last accessed 23 April 2013).

¹⁸ See also <http://grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.133236.html>, where the same authors offer a somewhat more circumstantial version (last accessed 13 September 2011).

[Summing up what has been said, we can but conclude that almost all the indicators, for all their contradictions, demonstrate that since 1998 there has been a clear trend more towards authoritarian-totalitarian practices than towards democracy.]

Ivan Zassoursky (2009, p. 29) discusses state control over the media and its context in the following terms:

In other words, while the state is not yet proficient in regulating the industry, it is quite keen to control the political arena and, as a result, the media system, which is perceived as the golden key to the ballot box and therefore to the stability of the system of governance, to the political elite and to control of the state-owned energy giants and industries.

This obsession with control is, in fact, coherent strategy, quite certainly formulated under the influence of the 'information security' doctrine.

An interesting insight into how control over the Russian media is exercised (or, perhaps more accurately, how some people might wish to see the methods of control depicted) is offered by a curious dialogue that took place between Vladimir Pozner and Vladimir Putin, when the latter met a group of broadcasters and executives during a visit to the studios of the *Pervyi kanal* television channel on 2 February 2011. After asking for the Prime Minister's help in persuading ministers to appear more often on television, Pozner goes on to raise a second point:

V.V. Pozner: . . . I vtoroe. V printsipe kak Vy otnosites' k poyavleniyu v efire «Pervogo kanala» predstavitelei oppozitsii? Nu v printsipe? Potomu chto, kogda Vy skazali, chto oni poyavlyayutsya, mne kazhetsya, chto Vy zabluzhdaetes'. Oni ochen' redko poyavlyayutsya v efire lyubogo federal'nogo kanala. Mne predstavlyaetsya, chto poroi eto bylo by tozhe polezno. Ya khotel by uznat' Vashe mnenie.

. . .

V.V. Putin: Vtoraya chast' – polozhitel'naya. Ya, k sozhaleniyu, ne mogu tak vot vnimatel'no smotret' za tem, chto proiskhodit. No vremya ot vremeni ya vizhu na ekranakh – ne znayu, na vashem kanale, na drugikh kanalakh – predstavitelei oppozitsii: oni vystupayut i dostatochno

ostro kritikuyut.

V.V. Pozner: To est' u Vas eto ne vzyvaet otritsatel'nogo otnosheniya? V printsipe Vy schitaete eto vozmozhnym?

V.V. Putin: Absolyutno. Na nekotorykh radiokanalakh, po-moemu, tol'ko etim i zanimayutsya.

V.V. Pozner: Radio, da. «Ekho Moskvyy».

V.V. Putin: Prichem, znaete, ya dazhe bol'she vam skazhu. Kogda slushayu inogda nekotorye veshchi, ya-to znayu, chto na samom dele v zhizni proiskhodit. Ya i vizhu, i slyshu, chto oni vrut, no dazhe k etomu ya otnoshus' absolyutno spokojno. Dolzhen kto-to i vrat', potomu chto kto-to khochet uslyshat' eto vran'e. Puskai skazhut v kontse kontsov.

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[*V.V. Pozner:* . . . And my second point. How do you react in principle to the appearance on the *Pervyi kanal* of representatives of the opposition? Just in principle. Because when you said that they do appear, you were, I think, wrong. It is very rare that they appear on any of the federal channels. In my view it would be helpful if from time to time they did. I would like to know what your opinion is.

. . .

V.V. Putin: As far as the second point is concerned, my reaction is positive. Unfortunately I can't watch too closely what is going on, but from time to time I do see on screen – I don't know if it's on your channel or on other channels – representatives of the opposition who speak and offer pretty robust criticism.

V.V. Pozner: So you don't react negatively to this? In principle you think it might be possible?

V.V. Putin: Absolutely. I think that on some radio stations that is all they do.

V.V. Pozner: Radio, yes, on *Ekho Moskvyy*.

V.V. Putin: Yes, and you know what, I'll tell you more. Sometimes, when I hear certain things, and remember I know what's happening in real life, I can see and hear that they are lying, but even that doesn't bother me in the slightest. Somebody has to tell lies because there are people who want to hear these lies. Let them have their say, and there's an end to it.]

¹⁹ Taken from the verbatim account of the meeting published on the Prime Minister's official web-site: <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/14024/> (last accessed 15 September 2011).

The ostensible implication of this exchange is that it is Putin who determines who does or does not appear on Russian television, although a more subtle interpretation might be that this is merely an impression that both participants find it advantageous to create – in Pozner's case because it puts pressure on his superiors to allow him more flexibility over who he invites onto his programme, and for Putin, because it makes him look both a powerful and a tolerant figure. At any event one must assume that Putin has no qualms about this exchange appearing in the public domain. Yet if the exchange may not be entirely reliable about who actually does exercise control, it does none the less provide some help towards understanding what sort of media system has been put in place under this regime of centralised control.

Sarah Oates (2007), while acknowledging the differences between the Soviet and the post-Soviet media, talks about a neo-Soviet model of the media. It is indeed possible to demonstrate, as she does, that the Russian media retain (or have reinstated) features that were characteristic of the Soviet period, but one important difference is that the present system does not reproduce the monolithic structure that was a fundamental element of the Soviet mass media, at least until the advent of *glasnost*'. As Messrs Pozner and Putin both accept in the dialogue quoted above, the 'opposition' does have its space in the Russian media; the questions this raises are: what spaces are available to the opposition, how are these spaces allocated and what is meant in this context by the term 'opposition'. Answers to these questions are proposed in the following sections.

Russia's two-tier media system

The answer to the first question is that the structure of the Russian media system is best seen as consisting of two tiers. The first tier within this structure consists of those media outlets which have a political orientation that is tightly controlled; these outlets are required to present to their viewers, readers and listeners the Kremlin's view of the world, or, more precisely, the view of the world that the Kremlin considers appropriate for the aforesaid viewers, readers and listeners, since the two do not

necessarily coincide precisely (see, for example, Shlapentokh 2011, pp. 886-7). To this tier belong first and foremost nearly (but not quite) all of the television channels with national distribution (Hutchings and Rulyova 2009, pp. 9-10). It is perhaps a sign of the times that the political allegiances of radio stations and newspapers receive relatively little attention, but it is probably justified to include the newspapers *Izvestiya* and *Komsomol'skaya pravda* (Shlapentokh 2011, pp. 883-4) and the radio station (and provider of news to other stations) *Russkaya sluzhba novostei* (Levchenko 2007)²⁰ in this first tier.

The second tier of the media is made up of those outlets that are allowed a considerable degree of freedom in their coverage of political events. This tier is made up of one television channel with pretensions to national coverage, i.e. REN-TV (Fedotov 2006, p. 37; Hutchings and Rulyova 2009, p. 10),²¹ the radio station *Ekho Moskvy* (Beumers, Hutchings and Rulyova 2009a, pp. 3, 18; Greene 2009, pp. 60-1), some newspapers, notably *Novaya gazeta* (Greene 2009, pp. 60-1) and probably *Nezavisimaya gazeta* and *Kommersant*", as well as almost the whole of the Internet.

A mere count of media outlets might give the impression that these are distributed more or less evenly across the two tiers, but when influence is taken into account, the picture changes. This is because of what has been until very recently the overwhelming importance of television: a survey undertaken by the *Levada-Tsentr* in 2010 showed that at that time 94% of Russia's population used television as their main source of information about Russia and the world. On the other hand, the same survey showed that while 28-30% of the population were regular users of the Internet, only 9% regarded it as their main source of news.²² It follows from this that the inclusion of almost all the national television

²⁰ See also 'Korrespondenty Russkoi sluzhby novostei uvolilis' v znak protesta protiv tsenzury', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/18may2007/rsn.html> (last accessed 23 November 2011).

²¹ See also the interview with Marianna Maksimovskaya published in *Novaya gazeta* on 2 July 2007 and available at: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/society/35041.html> (last accessed 23 November 2011).

²² See the article 'Televizor blizhe k narodu', published in *Novaya gazeta* on 3 March 2011 and available at: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/6865.html> (last accessed 24 November 2011).

channels in the first tier of media outlets means that it is this tier, i.e. that part of the media system that is tightly controlled, which is by far the more important and the more influential.

What is lottizzazione?

In order to answer the question concerning how the spaces are allocated (i.e. how the different media outlets are allocated to one or other tier) it is necessary to consider the Italian concept of *lottizzazione*. The original meaning of this term was 'the division of a piece of land into individual plots', but in the context of politics the term has come to mean 'the sharing out among different political parties of senior posts in publicly-owned organisations on the basis of political expediency' (see, for example, the definitions in De Mauro 2000, p. 1407). This latter usage, which was apparently coined by the writer and journalist Alberto Ronchey,²³ is particularly associated with the method of making appointments that was adopted for the state broadcaster RAI (*Radiotelevisione italiana*) after 1975.

The reform of RAI that was carried out in that year transferred the control of the broadcaster from the government to parliament with the aim of opening up the organisation to those political parties that did not then and in some cases could not be guaranteed ever to form part for the government, notably the Italian Communist Party (PCI) (Grasso 2000, pp. 272). The consequence of the political 'sharing out' of key posts within RAI was, in effect, the following: during what might be termed the period of 'perfect' *lottizzazione*, which lasted from 1987 to the collapse of the so-called 'first republic' in the early 1990s, each of the television channels of the state broadcaster and, perhaps more importantly, its associated news bulletin (TG) was effectively allocated to a different political party: RAI1 and TG1 'belonged' to

²³ See the obituary for Ronchey published in *La Repubblica* on 8 March 2010, available at: http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2010/03/08/news/morto_ronchey-2554906/ (last accessed 15 July 2011); see also 'Ronchey raccontato da Ronchey', available at: http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2010/maggio/17/Ronchey_raccontato_Ronchey_co_9_100517050.shtml (last accessed 8 February 2013).

the Christian Democrats, RAI2 and TG2 to the Socialists (PSI), RAI3 (which started up in 1979) and TG3 to the PCI (Grasso 2000, pp. 459, 841; Vespa 2002, pp. 171-5; Regourd 1992, pp. 88-9); this last was presumably the only communist-controlled television channel in Western Europe.²⁴

The various political upheavals that led to the demise of the main political parties in the early 1990s inevitably changed the rules of how *lottizzazione* was applied, but the fundamental principles still apply. Appointments within RAI are still made according to political allegiance, and the individual channels, along with their associated news bulletins, still tend to have a marked political colouring.²⁵ To put it somewhat schematically, RAI1 and TG1 tend to go to whoever has won the most recent parliamentary elections, RAI2 and TG2 tend to be close to the centre-right, while RAI3 and TG3 are maintained as 'reservations' for the centre-left.²⁶ The term 'reservation' has had particular resonance during periods when the centre-right has been in office: given Silvio Berlusconi's control of the three main commercial channels, TG3 has been, at least until recently, the only major national news bulletin during such periods not to support the government.

²⁴ In that period TG3 acquired the sobriquet of *Telekabul* (Grasso 2000, p. 780; Vespa 2002, p. 180).

²⁵ The relationship between politics and journalism on RAI is examined in two insiders' accounts, written by representatives of different parts of the political spectrum: Vespa (2002) and Borrelli (2010). It is significant that both authors are punctilious in indicating the political allegiance of almost everyone they mention. It may be noted here that the appointment of a 'non-political' Chairman and Director-General by the Monti government and the inconclusive result of the February 2013 election have not (yet?) significantly changed the picture.

²⁶ See, for example, the article by Giovanni Valentini, 'Terremoto a RaiTre – silurato Ruffini', published in *La Repubblica* on 7 November 2009 and available at: <http://www.repubblica.it/2009/10/sezioni/politica/rai-5/terremoto-rai/terremoto-rai.html> (last accessed 20 July 2011). The term 'riserva indiana' [Indian reservation] is used by Peter Gomez and Marco Travaglio to describe RAI3 and TG3 (Gomez and Travaglio 2004, p. 127).

It would seem to follow from this account that a definition of *lottizzazione* from the point of view of its function is that it is a means whereby a degree of pluralism within a media system or a part thereof is obtained by allocating the space for different political opinions in advance and from above. The prerequisites for it would seem to be (1) a need for guaranteeing a degree of pluralism within the mass media that cannot be satisfied by other means and (2) either a degree of consensus between the different political forces within a country about how the media resources in question should be shared out (as in Italy) or, conceivably, a central state authority that is strong enough to impose a structure of *lottizzazione* regardless of the views of other political actors who might be involved.

Lottizzazione *Russian-style*

The process by which Russian media outlets are allocated to one or other of the two tiers described above can be seen as a form of *lottizzazione*, and if one maps this two-tier system onto the structure of ownership and control described on pp. 3 – 9, it becomes possible to see how Russian-style *lottizzazione* works. Essentially a scheme has been created (though never publicly divulged), according to which the political orientation of individual media outlets, or more precisely, the extent to which the political orientation of a media outlet is subject to close control, is determined from above by a decision or a series of decisions that places each outlet into whichever tier has been deemed appropriate. This can be illustrated more clearly by looking at the ownership and orientation of specific media outlets. In many media systems political orientation (or absence thereof) is determined either by ownership or by general rules applicable to particular forms of media (e.g. television); in Russia, however, there are in practice no general rules and political orientation is not dependent on ownership. For example, both the television channel NTV and the radio station *Ekho Moskvy* belonged to Media-MOST until they were taken over by Gazprom-Media in 2001. Following the take-over NTV was required to change its orientation to a pro-Kremlin position, with the concomitant departure of many of its broadcasters, while *Ekho Moskvy* has been allowed to continue relatively unchanged: it has the same Chief Editor, Aleksei Venediktov, and it continues to offer space to some of the individuals no longer welcome on NTV, such as the satirist Viktor Shenderovich. Similarly, although the television channels REN-TV, *Piatyi*

kanal and, indeed, 25% of *Pervyi kanal* all belong to the *Natsional'naya media grupp*a, only the last two belong to the first tier; REN-TV belongs to the second tier of the media system and includes on its staff journalists associated with NTV in its pre-Gazprom-Media days, such as Marianna Maksimovskaya and Mikhail Osokin.

This means that it is possible to refine the conclusion reached by Samuel A. Greene (2009, pp. 60-1) that:

In contemporary Russia, though, the likes of *Novaia gazeta*, *Ekho Moskv*y and scattered publications and broadcasts in other outlets are not sufficient to create a 'free media space' distinct from the overall Russian media space – which is decidedly not free.

On the basis of this account it would seem more appropriate to describe the Russian media system as being made up of two distinct, but co-existing spaces: a large space that is, as Greene says, 'decidedly not free' and a much smaller space that can be regarded as relatively free. Or, to put it another way, just as TG3 has been a 'reserve' for the centre-left during the years that Silvio Berlusconi has been Prime Minister of Italy (see the previous section), so *Novaya gazeta* and *Ekho Moskv*y can be seen as part of a 'reserve' of relative freedom within a much larger and generally less free media system.

It is, however, important to note the use of the adjective 'relative'. Given that the second space is occupied by media outlets that come within the overall structure of ownership and control described above, their freedom is far from absolute. Those who work within this space may feel more or less free or more or less constrained, but the degree of freedom that they enjoy is that which the system allows them, and which can be increased or reduced according to the needs of the moment. REN-TV may belong to the second tier of the system, but according to Hutchings and Rulyova (2009, p. 10) it has been less willing to criticise since becoming part of the *Natsional'naya media grupp*a. Similarly, Nadezhda Azhgikhina (2007, pp. 1256-7) considers that the range of topics covered by *Novaya gazeta* has narrowed since Aleksandr Lebedev started to finance the paper in 2006. An interesting insight into the conditions in which the media outlets belonging to the second tier are required to operate was provided by the Director General of *Ekho Moskv*y, Yurii Fedutinov, in a frank interview given to *Novaya gazeta* in February 2012, following changes to radio station's Board:

Ya vas uveryayu: esli ponadobitsya snosit' «Ekho», eto budet sdelano ochen' bystro, v techenie trekh-chetyrekh dnei. Predlogov, po kotorym mozhet byt' zakryto «Ekho», — ne men'she sotni. [I can assure you: if it is necessary to bring down *Ekho*, it will be done very quickly, in the space of three or four days. *Ekho* could be closed down on any one of at least a hundred pretexts.]

And later:

[Interviewer:] To est' tsel' ne zakryt', a pokazat', kto glavnyi.

[I.F.:] — Da, chtoby damoklov mech visel i vse ponimali, chto damoklova ruka mozhet ustat'.

['That is, the aim is not to close you down, but to show who is in charge.'

'Yes, the idea is the sword of Damocles should be hanging there and that everyone should understand that the arm of Damocles may get tired.]²⁷

Differences between the Italian and Russian versions of lottizzazione

There are, it must be said, significant differences between the Italian and Russian versions of *lottizzazione*. The first of these relates to the scope of the exercise: in Italy *lottizzazione* is applied only to that part of the media system that comes under the purview of the state, and then only to its most influential component, i.e. the three national television channels operated by the state broadcasting company RAI. In Russia, however, a substantial part of the media system has been brought within the centralised structure of control described above, so that Russian-style *lottizzazione* encompasses most or even all of the national media system; the question whether any part of this system remains outside the two-tier structure created by this process is considered separately below.

A second difference relates to the purpose of the exercise. The original *lottizzazione* of the Italian state

²⁷ The interview, published on 20 February 2012, is available at: <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/51136.html> (last accessed 29 February 2012). Mr Fedutinov appears to have forgotten that in the original story the sword was not being held by Damocles, but was hanging above his head.

broadcaster RAI was concerned not so much with freedom of speech as with pluralism: the aim was to guarantee access to what was then a monopoly television service for the main political forces represented in the parliament. In Russia the aim is not to extend pluralism, but to limit it: the expression of views alternative to those espoused by the Kremlin is confined to a restricted space, while at the same time there is a guarantee of control over that part of the media which serves as the main source of information for the overwhelming majority of the population, namely national television. Perhaps the aims of Russian-style *lottizzazione* were summed up most succinctly by Alisher Usmanov in a comment made shortly after taking over the newspaper *Kommersant* in 2006: 'Ya schitayu, chto v nashei strane svoboda slova uporyadochivaetsya.' [I take the view that in this country freedom of speech is being brought to order.]²⁸

This leads on to a third difference, which provides the answer to the third of the questions asked above, namely what is meant by 'the opposition' in this context. If Russian-style *lottizzazione* were to follow the pattern of the original Italian version, the outcome would be a division of media outlets between the four parties represented in the Duma: *Edinaya Rossiya*, *Spravedlivaya Rossiya*, KPRF and LDPR. This, however, is precisely what does not happen: the three parties other than *Edinaya Rossiya* do not control any significant media outlets nor do they have any special privileges with regard to access. Instead the distinction is between a first tier that is not free and a second tier that is relatively free, and the presence of a particular media outlet in the second tier of the system does not of itself imply any specific political orientation. What tends to characterise many of these outlets, notably *Ekho Moskvy*, *Novaya gazeta*, REN-TV, as well as a large number of Internet resources, is not so much a specific political orientation as an approach to the presentation of information that involves the open discussion of topics that are regarded by the authorities as highly sensitive and best handled with the utmost care or avoided altogether. Such topics can include ethnic conflicts in various parts of Russia, corruption in medium and even high places, the selective application of the law (in particular the trials of Mikhail

²⁸ In an interview published in *Novaya gazeta* on 4 September 2006 and available at: <http://2006.novayagazeta.ru/nomer/2006/67n/n67n-s04.shtml> (last accessed 29 February 2012).

Khodorkovskii and Platon Lebedev), aspects of foreign policy and, especially since December 2011, election malpractices and how to deal with them. It is true that the presentation of these topics in this manner tends to create the perception of an orientation that can be described as broadly liberal and pro-Western, and it is also the case that the views that underlie these discussions tend to be espoused by politicians such as Boris Nemtsov, Vladimir Ryzhkov and Grigorii Yavlinskii, whose parties and movements are not represented in the Russian parliament and who have little or no access to the first tier of the media. It is to politicians such as these that Messrs Pozner and Putin are referring to when in the dialogue quoted earlier they talk about the opposition. It is almost as if there is in place a sort of unspoken arrangement according to which limited access to the media is granted in compensation for exclusion from other (though not necessarily more effective) parts of the political process.

The final difference is one of procedure. The Italian system, though more of an understanding than a formal entity, was effectively put in place by politicians from the different political parties involved; the mechanics of the system and the appointments that underpin it are reasonably transparent and are a matter of public discussion. In Russia, however, neither the structure of the media system nor the details of its workings has ever been described officially; such public discussion of the topic as does take place is based largely on speculation and supposition, even when the participants may be assumed to be well-informed. A striking example of this appeared in February 2013, when this article was in the process of being revised, in the form of an interview given by Vladimir Pozner to the journalist Oleg Kashin and published on the web-site www.colta.ru;²⁹ since this interview touches on a number of issues germane to this question, it is worth examining in some detail.

The first point of interest is a rare, albeit slightly veiled reference to the two-tier system itself:

[O.K.] — Nesmotrya na to chto vas tak vpolsily mocht Gosduma, vse ravno vy — chast' etoi sistemy nashego gosudarstvennogo televideniya, propagandy i vsego prochego. I u vas takaya rol' po faktu, chto vot, u nas est' Pozner, znachit, u nas ne sovsem eshche totalitarizm, u nas

²⁹ 'Vladimir Pozner: "Ernst skazal, chto soglasen s moim slovom"', published on 26 February 2013 and available at: <http://www.colta.ru/docs/14671> (last accessed 19 March 2013).

eshche koe-chto mozhno. Eto igra. Vy soglasny?

[V.P.] — Znaete, naschet totalitarizma davaite budem tochnee. Ya zhil pri totalitarizme, i ya znayu, chto eto takoe, i nichego pokhozhego u nas net. U nas avtoritarizm, eto est', da. Konechno, mozhno vspomnit' tsarskoe vremya, i «lyubimogo evreya general-gubernatora», i vse takoe prochee. No vse-taki mne ne kazhetsya, chto ya igrayu etu rol'. Ya somnevayus', chto Ernst v otvet na obvinenie, chto na Pervom kanale net svobody slova, govorit: a vot, vidite, u nas Pozner. Chto-to ya ne predstavlyayu eto sebe. A nalichie «Ekha Moskvyy», povashemu, o chem govorit?

[O.K.] — O tom zhe.

[V.P.] — Esli tak, to, naverno, soglashus'.

[O.K.: In spite of the fact that the State Duma has been attacking you in a somewhat half-hearted fashion, you are none the less part of the system of our state television, propaganda and all the rest of it. And in essence your role is [so that they can say that] look, we have Pozner, which means that we don't have totalitarianism and that some things are still possible. It's a game. Do you agree?

V.P.: Look, let's be clear about totalitarianism. I lived under totalitarianism, and I know all about it: what we have now is nothing like that. What we do have is an authoritarian system. Of course, you can hark back to Tsarist times and 'the Governor-General's favourite Jew' and all that kind of thing, but I don't think that's the role I play. I doubt if [Konstantin] Ernst would answer the accusation that there is no freedom of speech on the First Channel by saying: there you are, we've got Pozner. I somehow can't see that happening. What would you say the existence of *Ekho Moskvyy* indicates?

O.K.: The same thing.

V.P.: In that case I would probably have to agree with you.]

Pozner refers back to the conversation with Putin that was discussed earlier in this article and, noting that in spite of what the latter said on that occasion he has still not been able to invite figures from the opposition onto his programme, goes on to bemoan the lack of transparency within the system. This leads to speculation about who might be responsible for making decisions concerning the media.

[O.K.] — A pochemu ne poyavlyayutsya?

[V.P.] — Vidimo, potomu, chto etogo ne khotyat kakie-to drugie lyudi... Prichem, k sozhaleniyu, ya ne mogu tochno kogo-to nazvat', potomu chto net takogo cheloveka, kotoryi by mne skazal v glaza, chto mne zapreshcheno zvat' v efir takogo-to ili takogo-to. Mne kto-to govoril, chto eti resheniya iskhodyat ot [pervogo zamestitelya rukovoditelya Administratsii prezidenta] Alekseya Alekseevicha Gromova. Mozhet byt', eto tak, a mozhet, i net, ya etogo ne znayu.

[O.K.] — No s Gromovym vy znakomy?

[V.P.] — Znakom.

[O.K.] — Govoryat, chto imenno etot chelovek opredelyaet vsyu informatsionnyu politiku..

[V.P.] — Poslushajte, govoryat, chto kur doyat, a korovy yaitsa nesut. Ya voobshche s nim esli razgovarival za vse eti gody tri raza ili chetyre, tak eto maksimum. No kogda ya odnazhdy emu zvonil i zadaval podobnyi vopros, on skazal: «Vy zrya ko mne obrashchaetes', eto ne ko mne».

[O.K.: Why don't they appear?

V.P.: Evidently because there are some other people who don't want that to happen. But I can't name any names unfortunately, because there isn't anybody who will tell me face-to-face that I am forbidden to invite such-and-such a person onto my programme. Someone told me that these decisions are taken by Aleksei Alekseevich Gromov [First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration]. That may or may not be true; I don't know.

O.K.: But you know Gromov, don't you?

V.P.: Yes, I do.

O.K.: People say that he is the person responsible for deciding the whole of media policy.

V.P.: Listen, people say the moon is made of green cheese, but it doesn't mean it's true. If in all these years I've spoken to him three or four times, that's the most it is. But when I did once phone him and ask him about it, he said I was wasting my time and was asking the wrong person.]

The evasiveness is interesting: it may simply be that Mr Gromov merely wants a quiet life; it may even

be that he is telling the truth, but the fact that an insider such as Vladimir Pozner is unable to identify who is responsible for making decisions relating to the media suggests that some effort is made to keep this information out of the public domain. Throughout this paper the term 'Kremlin' has been used a sort of shorthand to encompass the President, the Prime Minister and those who answer directly to them, but it is recognised that the term is imprecise. It would be logical to assume that the present structure of the Russian media has the approval of the incumbent president and his predecessor, but that does not mean that they are personally responsible for its creation or for its operation. Indeed, the metonymy may be geographically imprecise, since such indications as there are tend to apportion the credit (or the blame) to the Presidential Administration, which is located on *Staraya ploshchad'*, rather than in the Kremlin. Before the *rokirovka* of 2011-12 responsibility for the mass media tended to be ascribed to Vladislav Surkov, the long-standing deputy head of that body (Svetova 2011), but he has now been transferred to other duties within the Council of Ministers (Kolesnikov 2012)³⁰. As suggested in the interview, this responsibility may now have now passed to Aleksei Gromov, who was blamed both by the victim of the incident and by Boris Nemtsov for securing the dismissal of the journalist Vladimir Kara-Murza from the television station RTVi.³¹

A similar veil of obscurity covers the system of appointments (or even whether such a system exists).

Here too the Pozner interview is interesting:

[V.P.] Byli sluchai, kogda Ernst byl v apparatnoi, no eto skoree isklyuchenie iz pravil, chashche vsego v apparatnoi nakhoditsya chelovek, vozglavlyayushchii etu chast'

³⁰ In September 2013 Surkov was appointed an aide to the President, but there is no indication that his new responsibilities extend to the mass media. See 'SMI uznali, s kem Surkov budet delit' zony vliyaniya v Kreml'e', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/21sep2013/surkov.html> (last accessed 4 November 2013).

³¹ 'Kara-Murza rasskazal, kto v administratsii prezidenta uvol'nyaet zhurnalistov', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/15jul2012/kara.html>; the relevant section of Boris Nemtsov's blog is available at: http://www.echo.msk.ru/blog/nemtsov_boris/908852-echo/ (both sites last accessed 28 March 2013).

veshchaniya, kotoraya nazyvaetsya obshchestvenno-politicheskoi, Andrei Andreevich Pisarev.
[O.K.] Eto izvestnyi chelovek, byl v «Edinoi Rossii» bol'shim nachal'nikom, delegirovan na kanal po partiinoi linii.

[V.P.: There have been occasions when Ernst was in the control room, but these are really exceptions to the rule. The man who is most usually in the control room is the head of that section of broadcasting known as social and political, Andrei Andreevich Pisarev.

O.K.: He's a well-known figure who was a big boss in United Russia and who was sent to [your television] channel by the party.]

Mr Pisarev is, however, a rare, albeit not a unique example of someone who has moved between the media and the ruling political party and who can be identified as a party political appointment. Other examples are given in Borodina, Nagornykh and Khamraev (2007), where it is noted that such appointments tend to be made in advance of parliamentary and presidential elections. In the same article it is also noted that Mr Pisarev, perhaps characteristically, denied being a member of United Russia and claimed to have no knowledge of any Kremlin involvement in his appointment to the *Pervyi kanal*. It is interesting to contrast Mr Pisarev with his boss, Konstantin Ernst, who has held senior appointments in what is now the *Pervyi kanal* more or less since the company was formed in 1995 and who has been its Director-General since 1999; at that time he was considered close to Boris Berezovskii.³² By the same token both Oleg Dobrodeev and Vladimir Kulistikov, respectively the Directors-General of VGTRK (owner of the *Rossiia* channels) and NTV, held senior posts in NTV during the 1990s, when the company was owned by the oligarch Vladimir Gusinskii.³³ All this suggests that a successful career at the top of a first-tier media outlet requires not so much a fixed political identity as an ability to detect which way the political wind is blowing and to make the

³² A detailed and referenced account of Konstantin Ernst's career is available at: <http://www.lenta.ru/lib/14160488/full.htm> (last accessed 2 April 2013).

³³ See <http://www.lenta.ru/lib/14160547/> (for Dobrodeev) and <http://www.mediaatlas.ru/whoiswho/?a=view&id=1143> (for Kulistikov); both sites last accessed 2 April 2013.

necessary adjustments. There is perhaps another essential qualification: Svetlana Svetitskaya (2000) suggested that Konstantin Ernst was appointed 'daby ne «rulil» bez sprosu' [that he shouldn't try to 'steer the ship' using his own initiative]; managers of media outlets need to understand that they should consult regularly and take instructions from the real bosses, which in the 1990s meant the relevant oligarchs and now presumably means the Presidential Administration.

Some questions

The two-tier structure that has been described here raises some questions, of which perhaps the most important is what Stephen Cosgrove (2011, p. 901) calls 'the fascinating question of why certain media outlets, such as the newspaper *Novaya gazeta* or Ekho Moskvy radio station, have maintained some degree of independence', or, in other words, given that there exist conditions which allow the Kremlin to exercise total control over the political orientation of the media, why has the result not been the recreation of a Soviet-style monolithic structure, but instead something that leaves an albeit limited space for alternative points of view? Answering that question is not easy: unfortunately, neither those who put the system in place nor those who work within it have chosen to discuss the matter publicly, and therefore any attempt can but be founded on speculation. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify three factors that might add up to a possible answer.

The first of these is what might be called the 'safety-valve' effect. The second tier opens up a space for those individuals whose presence is not welcome in the more mainstream media. Journalists such as Yuliya Latynina, who from time to time published in *Novaya gazeta* enthusiastic articles about Georgia under Mikheil Saakashvili, satirists such as Viktor Shenderovich, who wrote most of the scripts for NTV's *Kukly* and politicians such Boris Nemtsov are given the opportunity to address a small, but like-minded audience, without, however, there being the danger of their having any significant influence on the main political processes taking place within the country. With a Soviet-type monolithic media structure they might have had no alternative but to become dissidents; this keeps them at least to a degree within the system: to adapt the elegant formulation concerning J. Edgar Hoover that is attributed

to Lyndon Johnson, they are not forced into a position where they would be 'outside the tent pissing inwards'. The same principle applies to consumers of the media: the second tier of the structure provides a small, highly-educated, intellectually important, but politically insignificant community with access to sufficient content to ensure that any dissatisfaction that they may feel remains confined within bounds that do not threaten the overall stability of the system.

The second factor relates to the amount and type of access to different media needed to ensure the efficient functioning of a complex modern society. Even the Soviet Union found that a very small minority of strategically placed persons and institutions had to be granted access to some publications that had not been through the normal censorship system, albeit that this took place under tightly controlled conditions.³⁴ Post-Soviet Russia is a much more complex society, which for all its proclaimed distinctiveness is much more closely integrated with the outside world. In these circumstances it is easy to appreciate the need that academic, business and government circles have for information that is both accurate and complete. Dmitrii Medvedev rather gave the game away when he met members of the Internet community on 9 November 2011:

O tom, chto takoe internet, ya vam rasskazyvat' ne budu, vy luchshe, chem kto by to ni bylo, eto znaete. Ya skazhu lish' tol'ko ob odnoi teme, kotoruyu schitayu deistvitel'no ochen' vazhnoi. Internet, mne kazhetsya, pomogaet lyubomu cheloveku, i politiku v tom chisle, byt' sovremennym chelovekom, vliyat' na situatsiyu, poluchat' informatsiyu, prichem informatsiyu ne oretushirovannuyu, ne prevrashchennuyu v kakie-to svodki, daidzhesty v sootvetstvii so vkusom tekhniki ili inykh lyudei ili dazhe v spetsial'nye doklady razlichnogo roda pravookhranitel'nykh struktur, spetssluzhb.

Eto vsegda fil'tr, mogu vam skazat' kak chelovek, kotoryi davno uzhe v gosudarstvennykh strukturakh nakhoditsya i kotoryi rabotaet na vysshei pozitsii v strane, eto vsegda ch'ya-to ot del'naya pozitsiya. Internet interesen dlya menya kak dlya Prezidenta i dlya ogromnogo

³⁴ See, for example, the documents published in Volkov, Pugacheva and Yarmolyuk (eds) (2000, pp. 460-70).

kolichestva drugikh lyudei — ya vse ottuda poluchayu bez fil'tra. Inogda eto nepriyatno, inogda eto ochen' interesno, no v lyubom sluchae eto ochen' pokazatel'no.³⁵

[I am not going to tell you what the Internet is: you know that better than anyone else. I just want to talk about one topic, which I consider genuinely to be very important. I think that the Internet can help anybody, including politicians, to be up to date, to influence situations, to receive information, information, moreover, that has not been re-touched, not been reduced to summaries or digests in accordance with some individual's fancies or even to special reports of one sort or another prepared by the forces of law and order or the secret services.

There is always a filter; I can tell you that as someone who has been working for some time in the state apparatus and who now occupies the highest position in the land; there is always someone's distinct point of view. The Internet is interesting for me as the President and for an enormous quantity of other people, because I can get everything there without a filter. Sometimes it is unpleasant, sometimes it is very interesting, but in any event it is very revealing.]

The third factor that favours the existence of the second tier of the media structure is that of Russia's image and the way the country chooses to position itself in the world. Russia is very concerned about its image in the world and in recent years has undertaken a number of activities aimed at maintaining and improving this image. These include setting up the television news channel Russia Today (which, interestingly, now prefers to be known as RT) and launching journals such as *Russia Profile*; creating the Valdai Discussion Club, which provides an opportunity for foreign academics and journalists to meet selected high-ranking officials and politicians; hiring the U.S. public relations company Ketchum (Feklyunina 2008, p. 606; Robinson 2006).³⁶ Moreover, Russia positions itself as a democracy: it may qualify the term with unconventional adjectives such as *upravlyaemaya* ['guided' or 'managed'] and *suverennaya* ['sovereign'], but the operative word is *demokratiya*. Indeed, Russia, unlike, say, China, is

³⁵ 'Dmitrii Medvedev vstretilsya so svoimi storonnikami – predstavatelyami setevykh obshchestv', available at: <http://kremlin.ru/news/13443> (last accessed 2 December 2011).

³⁶ See also <http://valdaiclub.com/> (last accessed 5 December 2011).

a member of the G8, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, all of which organisations pre-suppose a commitment to democratic values. It would be very difficult to make even a pretence of demonstrating this commitment if it were not possible to point to at least part of the media as being free.

The second question is whether it is possible for Russian media outlets to exist outside the structure described here. It might be felt that the whole of the Internet falls into this category: the Internet is a special case in that control over its content has technical, as well as political and financial implications, and in any event it belongs only in part to the mass media system; indeed, its varied nature makes it legitimate to ask whether it continues to be appropriate to consider the Internet as a single entity. Nevertheless, public statements on the topic indicate that the Russian authorities do perceive the Internet as a single entity and that the freedom of the Internet is seen as a constituent part of the overall media system. This is the sense of the statement by Dmitrii Medvedev quoted above, as well as of the periodic statements made by senior Russian officials stressing the freedom of the Russian Internet.³⁷ In any case the freedom even here is relative: various devices, including the use of the wide-ranging Law on Extremism, the employment of 'trolls' and hackers, have been deployed to disrupt or even to close down 'undesirable' web-sites, albeit not on a systematic basis (Harding 2009).³⁸

A more interesting case in some ways is that of *Dozhd'*, a television channel available on the Internet

³⁷ See, for example, 'Putin v Germanii v ocherednoi raz poobeshchal svobodu rossiiskim SMI i nakazanie ubiitsam Politkovskoi', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/world/11oct2006/putiningermany.html> and the interview with Dmitrii Medvedev published in *Novaya gazeta* on 15 April 2009 and available at <http://www.novayagazeta.ru/politics/45402.html> (both sites last accessed 7 December 2011).

³⁸ See also 'Blokirovany saity s oppozitsionnymi materialami', available at <http://www.newsru.com/russia/30nov2007/hackerry.html> and 'LiveJournal and "Ekho Moskvyy" podnyalis' posle ataki khakerov', available at http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/04dec2011/lj_live.html (both sites last accessed 7 December 2011).

and on cable platforms.³⁹ This curiously named channel started broadcasting in 2010 and acquired a reputation for being liberal, a reputation enhanced by a series called *Poet i grazhdanin [Poet and Citizen]*, which consisted of satirical adaptations of well-known Russian poems written by Dmitrii Bykov and performed by Mikhail Efremov. Five of these were broadcast, but the sixth was withdrawn by the Director-General of the station, Natal'ya Sindeeva on the grounds that it could cause personal offence to the then President Medvedev.⁴⁰ Coincidentally or otherwise, less than a month after this incident President Medvedev paid a visit to the *Dozhd'* studios to help the channel celebrate its first anniversary,⁴¹ an event which produced the following response from Dmitrii Bykov:

Smushchaet menya tot fakt, chto telekanalu, printsipial'no pozitsioniruyushchemu sebya kak al'ternativu gosudarstvennomu televideniyu, nuzhno prodelyvat' vse te telodvizheniya, chto i gosudarstvennomu televideniyu. Bez vizita prezidenta, bez ego sanktsii, bez proiznesennykh im odobritel'nykh slov v Rossii ne mozhet sushchestvovat' ni odin proekt. I eto menya nastorazhivaet uzhe po-nastoyashchemu. (Bykov 2011)

[What I find disturbing is that a television channel that has as a matter of principle positioned itself as being different from state television still has to perform the same ritual actions as state television. Without a visit from the President, without his agreement, without his words of approval no project can exist in Russia. And that is something I really find worrying.]

³⁹ The web-site is <http://tvrain.ru/>

⁴⁰ See 'Programma "Poet i grazhdanin" namerena uiti s "Dozhdya". VIDEO s obidnymi dlya tandema stikhami vylozhili v Set', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/05apr2011/rain.html>, as well as the interview with Sindeeva given to Oleg Kashin on 4 April 2011 and available at: <http://www.afisha.ru/article/9001/>. The offending video is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAF5o6PZQi4> (all sites last accessed 9 December 2011).

⁴¹ See the article 'Na telekanal "Dozhd"', gde reshili ne obizhat' prezidenta, zaglyanul sam Medvedev. Emu dali "povertet' mirom", available at: <http://www.newsru.com/arch/russia/25apr2011/raintv.html> (last accessed 12 December 2011). The article contains a video of *Dozhd'-TV's* own report of the visit.

Bykov is a man with a grievance, but his comment is interesting, in that it recognises that the structure of the type described in this article does exist and also puts forward the proposition that no media outlet, and certainly not a television station, can exist outside it. There does, however, remain an element of ambiguity, since it is not entirely clear to what extent *Dozhd'* was required to join the structure or to what extent it placed itself therein of its own accord.

Perhaps the most imponderable question is that which concerns the stability of the system. *Stabil'nost'* ['stability'] has been very much the watchword of the Putin–Medvedev years, and it would seem reasonable to assume that this concept is intended to apply to the mass media system that has been constructed during this period. If so, then there are three aspects to the question: political stability, financial stability and the stability of the media system itself.

As to the first, there would seem to be no problem: a system has been put in place that is designed to last until 2024 and which can easily be extended thereafter. And though there are hurdles such as elections and constitutional limitations on terms of office, the evidence suggests, notwithstanding the events of 4 December 2011, that the rules of *upravlyaemaya demokratiya* are such that these can be overcome without too much difficulty. In any event, just as Italian *lottizzazione* survived the upheavals of the early 1990s and the transition from the First to the Second Republic, there is no particular reason why the Russian media system, with all the benefits that accrue to those who find themselves in power, could not survive the transition to a different political dispensation.

The question of financial stability would also seem to be resolved. It may be remembered that the original Putinian reconstruction of the television system was at least partly facilitated by the financial difficulties experienced by the companies that owned by NTV and TV-6 (Belin 2002, pp. 32-40). Now, however, the overall economic situation in Russia is rather different, so that, for example, in 2008 the *Pervyi kanal* is supposed to have made a profit of 3.6 billion roubles, while at the same time making a substantial contribution to the income of those who supply its programmes or sell its advertising space (Sagdiev and Boletskaya 2010). Moreover, the elaborate system which splits control (effected by 'the Kremlin') from ownership (in the hands of house-trained oligarchs) and which allows for more or less

friendly take-overs when the occasion arises would seem to have been constructed at least in part with the aim of making it as near as possible immune from any foreseeable economic upheaval.

Surprisingly perhaps, it is the media themselves that may pose the greatest threat to the stability of the structure that has been described here. This structure is predicated on the existence of a static media system, in which a small number of national television channels serve as the main source of information for the overwhelming majority of the population, while the Internet remains the preserve of a small minority. This is essentially the system that was described above (p. 12 and Note 22) and which still existed in 2010. The media system is not, however, static. In the first place there is a steady increase in the number of people who make regular use of the Internet: according to a survey carried out by VTsIOM in 2011 the proportion of the population using the Internet on a daily basis increased between 2006 and 2011 from 5% to 30%, with a further 13% claiming to use the Internet several times a week;⁴² a year later the figure for daily users had increased to 40%, with 47% of those surveyed stating that they used the Internet to obtain information about what is going on in Russia and elsewhere.⁴³ Furthermore, although the impending switch-over to digital television is still at an early stage, there are already technological developments that are creating new platforms for traditional media: *Dozhd'*, distributed via Internet, cable and satellite, is good example of this process.

Though this is clearly an area that requires continued monitoring, it would seem that during 2011 the first signs started to appear that these changes to the mass media were starting to affect the equilibrium that had been carefully constructed over the previous few years. It is perhaps not surprising that certain aspects of politics and of public affairs more generally that have been effectively excluded from the tightly-controlled national television channels have found an alternative home on the Internet, but what has changed is that since 2010 they have started to be aired in a way that penetrates from the 'virtual' into the 'real' world and thus has a perceptible effect on the conduct of public life. Early examples

⁴² See the article 'Polovina rossiyan regul'arno pol'zuetsya Internetom', published on 11 October 2011 and available at: <http://gazetasaratov.ru/social/voxpathuli/93> (last accessed 20 December 2011).

⁴³ See the web-site <http://wciom.ru/index.php?id=459&uid=113106> (last accessed 15 April 2013).

Wiktionary),⁵⁰ though in terms of on-line communications with off-line consequences perhaps the most significant occurrence is the fact that the phrase was picked up and used in a televised election debate by Aleksandr Khinshtein, who was standing as a candidate for *Edinaya Rossiya*.⁵¹

The potential threat to the existing equilibrium of the mass media system has not gone unnoticed, though it is the nature of the problem that comments can be expected only from those who are not in agreement with the *status quo*. The issue is formulated in particularly stark terms by the journalist Yuliya Latynina (2010; 2011) in two articles published just over a year apart, both of which have in their titles the apocalyptic prediction: 'Libo rezhim unichtozhit Internet, libo Internet unichtozhit rezhim<' [Either the regime will destroy the Internet or the Internet will destroy the regime]. Latynina's contention is that there has been a recent change: for most of the Putin–Medvedev years the news agenda was dictated by television; now it is determined by the Internet. As she puts it in the 2011 article:

... odinnadtsat' let Novost'yu bylo to, chto bylo pokazano po televideniyu. Pravilo bylo prostoe: Chto Ne Pokazano Po Televideniyu, Togo Ne Proizoshlo .

Teper' pravilo pomenyalos'. Chto Ne Obsuzhdaetsya v Internete, Togo Ne Proizoshlo.

[... for eleven years News was what was shown on television. The rule was simple: If It Wasn't Shown On Television, It Didn't Happen.

Now the rule has changed. If It Isn't Being discussed On The Internet, It Didn't Happen].

⁵⁰ <http://ru.wiktionary.org/wiki/••8•> (last accessed 22 February 2012).

⁵¹ The relevant incident can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Y-ivmZQgN0> (last accessed 22 February 2012). The same phrase was used by at least one other candidate for *Edinaya Rossiya* in his election materials; see <http://www.newsru.com/russia/02dec2011/pgiv.html> (last accessed 22 February 2012). Perhaps even more surprisingly the web address <http://?0@8Q6C8:>2-8-2>@2.0/> leads to the home page of *Edinaya Rossiya* (accessed 22 February 2012)!

The problem is that the regime, as Latynina calls it, controls television, but does not control the Internet.

Latynina does not predict the outcome of the conflict she foresees, and in any case not everyone will share her dramatic view of the situation. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the Kremlin is faced with a problem, and it is indeed by no means easy (at least at the time of writing) to predict how it will respond. One logical possibility would be to establish some sort of control over the Internet (or parts of it), while perhaps compensating by making a few concessions over national television, and some indications about how this might be conceived have been provided in separate statements made recently by Vladimir Putin and Dmitrii Medvedev. The comments of the former concerned the Internet and associated technologies:

«Arabskaya vesna» takzhe yarko prodemonstrovala, chto mirovye obshchestvennoye mneniye v nyneshnee vremya formiruetsya putem samogo aktivnogo zadeistvovaniya prodvinytykh informatsionnykh i kommunikatsionnykh tekhnologii. Mozhno skazat', chto internet, sotsial'nye seti, mobil'nye telefony i t.p. prevratilis' — naryadu s televideniem — v effektivnyi instrument kak vnutrennei, tak i mezhdunarodnoi politiki. Eto novyi faktor, trebuyushchii osmysleniya, v chastnosti dlya togo, chtoby, prodvigaya i dal'she unikal'nyuyu svobodu obshcheniya v internete, umen'shit' risk ego ispol'zovaniya terroristami i prestupnikami.

V khodu vse chashche i takoe ponyatie, kak «myagkaya sila» — kompleks instrumentov i metodov dostizheniya vneshnepoliticheskikh tselei bez primeneniya oruzhiya, a za schet informatsionnykh i drugikh ryuchagov vozdeistviya. K sozhaleniyu, neredko eti metody ispol'zuyutsya dlya vzrashchivaniya i provotsirovaniya ekstremizma, separatizma, natsionalizma, manipulirovaniya obshchestvennym soznaniem, pryamogo vmeshatel'stva vo vnutrennyuyu politiku suverennykh gosudarstv.

Sleduet chetko razlichat' — gde svoboda slova i normal'naya politicheskaya aktivnost', a gde zadeistvuyutsya protivopravnye instrumenty «myagkoi sily». (Putin 2012)

[The 'Arab Spring' has also clearly demonstrated that at the present time world public opinion is formed by the extremely active use of advanced information and communication technologies. It could be said that the internet, social networks, mobile telephones and the like have – alongside television – become an effective instrument of both internal and international politics. This is a new factor which requires to be properly understood, especially if we want, while continuing to promote the unique freedom of speech available on the internet, to reduce the risk of its use by terrorists and criminals.

There is an increasingly widespread concept known as 'soft power', a set of instruments for achieving foreign policy goals using not weapons, but instead information and other levers of influence. Unfortunately these methods are frequently used for nurturing and provoking extremism, separatism, nationalism, the manipulation of public consciousness and the direct interference in the internal politics of sovereign states.

We need to make a clear distinction between on the one hand freedom of speech and normal political activity and on the other the use of illegitimate instruments of 'soft power']

Mr Medvedev's comments refer to television and do indeed appear to offer a degree of liberalisation:

Nuzhno ispol'zovat' vse, chto est', i sozdavat' to, chego net. Poetomu ya predlagayu v blizhaishee vremya reshit' vopros o sozdanii obshchestvennogo televideniya — vozmozhno, na baze odnogo iz sushchestvuyushchikh federal'nykh kanalov. V etom sluchae ni odin iz vladel'tsev etogo novogo sredstva massovoi informatsii ne dolzhen imet' opredelyayushchego vliyaniya na prinyatie lyubykh reshenii: ni gosudarstvo, ni chastnyi vladelets. Uveren, chto takoe obshchestvennoe televidenie mozhet sdelat' nashu informatsionnyu sredu bolee konkurentnoi i sootvetstvenno bolee interesnoi. (Medvedev 2011)

[We have to use everything we have and create what we don't have. That is why I am proposing that we should move quickly to resolve the problem of creating a public television service, possibly on the basis of one of the existing federal channels. If we do this, neither of the owners

of this new mass media outlet should be able to have a determining influence on what decisions are taken: neither the state or a private owner. I am sure that a public television service along these lines may serve to make our information environment more competitive⁵² and consequently more interesting.]

It is difficult to know what to make of these statements. Mr Putin, playing his customary role of 'hard cop', sounds vaguely threatening, but his comments are imprecise and a little confused, betraying perhaps a certain lack of familiarity with the technologies he is referring to. They do not offer any clear indication of how precisely the political and technological problems associated with distinguishing between the 'good' and the 'bad' use of the Internet are to be overcome. Medvedev's comments are ostensibly more precise and may seem to offer some promise of change, but an initial response at the time might well have been that here too some scepticism is in order: there has been talk off and on of creating a public television service in Russia since the early 1990s, and indeed the President himself seems temporarily to have lost sight of the fact that what is now known as the *Pervyi kanal* was originally created in 1995 as *Obshchestvennoe rossiiskoe televidenie* [Russian Public Television] (Mickiewicz 1999, pp. 231-2).

What one must assume to be an authoritative statement on Russia's policy towards the Internet as it stood in early 2013 was provided in an interview given by the Head of the Presidential Administration, Sergei Ivanov, to *Komsomol'skaya pravda* on 5 March of that year. Here he says the following:

KP: — Mozhet, nam nado kak-to reformirovat' nash sektor interneta?

Sergei Ivanov: — Ya ne schitayu nuzhnym kak-to pytat'sya reglamentirovat' internet.

KP: — Vy boites' liberal'nogo voia?

Sergei Ivanov: — Delo ne v boyazni. Ya uzhe davno nichego ne boyus' v svoei zhizni. Prosto ya ne veryu, chto eto prineset nuzhnyi rezul'tat. Libo eto privedet k tsenzure, chto na moi vzglyad, sovershenno nepravil'no. Libo k kakim-to zloupotrebleniyam dazhe.

⁵² It is to be assumed that this is what the President meant, though the adjective he uses here (*konkurentnyi*) is not customarily used in this sort of context.

[. . .]

KP: — No vse-taki khotelos' by utochnit' Vashu lichnuyu pozitsiyu po internetu.

Sergei Ivanov: — Otvechayu. V takikh veshchakh, kak pedofiliya, rastlenie maloletnikh, konechno, ya schitayu, chto nuzhno prinimat' mery. Prezhde vsego, prinimat' ikh k provaideru. No ne tol'ko eto. Nam nado dumat' o tom, kak postavit' zaslon tomu, chto sposobstvuet debilizatsii, moral'nomu odichaniyu naseleniya. Kogda lyudi sidyat sutkami i smotryat takoi «kontent», u nikh golova stanovitsya ne v poryadke...⁵³

[K.P.: Do we perhaps need to reform our sector of the internet in some way?

S.I.: I don't think we should try in any way to regulate the internet.

K.P.: Are you afraid of the howls of protests that will come from the liberals?

S.I.: It's not a matter of being afraid. It's a long time since I was afraid of anything in my life. I just don't think it will have the desired effect. Either it will lead to censorship, which in my view is totally wrong, or else even it will be used improperly.

[. . .]

K.P.: But we would still like to clarify your personal position regarding the internet.

S.I.: I will answer that. On such matters as paedophilia and the corruption of minors, I believe, of course, that we have to take action. Above all, in relation to the provider. But that's not all. We have to think about how we can erect a barrier against the things that help to turn the population into idiots and moral savages. When people sit for days on end looking at 'content' of that type, something goes wrong in their heads.]

Mr Ivanov spent much of his career serving in the KGB and then the SVR, and perhaps for that reason a significant proportion of his comments relate to information security and are thus irrelevant for present purposes. What seems clear from this interview is that the Head of the Presidential Administration, notwithstanding a certain ambiguity concerning the word *debilizatsiya* (a word that he

⁵³ See the interview 'Sergei Ivanov: "My s Putinyem poznakomilis' v razvedke..."', *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 5 March 2013, available at: <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26041/2955749/> (last accessed 17 April 2013).

has used on at least two other occasions in relation to the mass media),⁵⁴ sees the Internet as remaining within the second tier of the system.

If one turns from words to deeds, the picture does not become much clearer. On 1 November 2012 a law came into force which did introduce a measure of control over the Internet and which under certain circumstances could be used to block access to sites failing to remove what was deemed to be forbidden content. This law, however, is explicitly aimed at protecting children from information which could damage their health and development and is principally concerned with web-sites that contain child pornography, information relating to drugs or material that might encourage young children to commit suicide, and although there were concerns expressed at the outset that this law might be a back-door means of introducing censorship, there is so far no clear evidence that it has been applied in relation to content outside the categories indicated. Nor, after some initial over-enthusiasm on the part of the authorities, does there seem to have been any abuse of the provision which allows for the blocking of access to blacklisted web-sites; instead administrators of web-sites (including some, such as Facebook, that are based outside Russia) have shown a readiness to remove content that has been deemed to be in breach of the law. One curious consequence of this law has been the appearance of an 18+ sign on many web-sites and links, though more careful consideration might have suggested that this might not be a particularly effective way of preventing under-eighteens from gaining access to unsuitable content (Revich 2012).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ See 'Sergei Ivanov napomnil o "debilizatsii naseleniya" Rossii', available at: <http://lenta.ru/news/2012/12/09/reminder/> (accessed 17 April 2013). It is suggested here that one of Mr Ivanov's targets is the robustly apolitical comedy programme 'Anshlag', which has been shown on Russian television since the 1980s.

⁵⁵ See also: 'Edinyi reestr zapreshchennykh internet-stranits zarabotal na radost' khakerov and stukachei', available at: <http://hitech.newsru.com/article/01nov2012/runetcnsrshp3>; 'Roskomnadzor udalil iz "chernogo spiska" 21 zakonoposlushnyi sait', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/14nov2012/rkn.html>; 'Facebook pod ugrozoi zakrytiya v Rossii soglasilsya na tsenzuru – udalil opasnuyu informatsiyu', available at:

There is, however, a second new law which can be applied to the Internet. In April 2013 there came into force an amendment to the law on the Mass Media, forbidding the use of obscene language (*mat*, though the term used in the amendment is the undefined *netsenzurnaya bran'*).⁵⁶ This law has proved to have unexpectedly sharp teeth: in October 2013 a court deprived the Rosbalt news agency of its mass media licence because it was deemed to have repeatedly infringed the law by placing video materials allegedly containing obscene language on its web-site, albeit that this decision, if upheld on appeal, would not necessarily prevent Rosbalt from continuing to function as a news agency.⁵⁷ A further complication is provided by a draft document produced by the Ministry of Mass Communications of the Russian Federation in the summer of 2013. This document is entitled *Tezisy kontseptsii razvitiya mul'tiservisnykh setei svyazi obshchego pol'zovaniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii [A Draft Concept for the Development of Multi-Service Public Communication Networks in the Russian Federation]*, and according to at least one observer the proposals contained therein, if ever they were to be implemented, would, intentionally or otherwise, create a structure that is likely to put the Internet links between Russia and the outside world into the hands of a monopoly, thereby making it easier to control the flow of data into and out of the country (Revich 2013).⁵⁸

If one were to attempt a conclusion, it might be that slowly and not necessarily in a systematic fashion the Sword of Damocles, referred to earlier by Yurii Fedutinov, is being put in place above the head of the Russian Internet. As, however, was demonstrated by the case of *Ekho Moskvy* the presence of this

<http://www.newsru.com/russia/29mar2013/facebook.html> (all sites last accessed 16 April 2013).

⁵⁶ See 'Putin podpisal zakon, zapreshchayushchii materit'sya v SMI', available at http://www.newsru.com/russia/08apr2013/mat_smi.html (last accessed 6 November 2013).

⁵⁷ See "'Rosbalt' ne prekratit rabotu iz-za otzyva litsenzii SMI', available at <http://www.newsru.com/russia/31oct2013/rosbalt2.html> (last accessed 6 November 2013).

⁵⁸ See also the blog by A. Kipchatov entitled 'Magistral'nyi kollektor', available at <http://www.kipchatov.ru/blog/?p=1151>. The text of the draft document is available at <http://minsvyaz.ru/ru/discussions/index.php?id=41> (both sites last accessed 6 November 2013).

particular instrument is not in itself incompatible with belonging to the second tier of media outlets.

Meanwhile the public television service promised by Dmitrii Medvedev did get up and running, though its start was less than auspicious. The main problem, concerned the extent to which the channel can be considered to be independent from state structures. The Director-General, Anatolii Lysenko, is a distinguished television professional who played a significant role in the liberalisation of Soviet television during the Perestroika period, but he was appointed to the post by the President, and it was the President who also had the last word in selecting the 25 members of the board.⁵⁹ Then the service was beset by problems over finding suitable frequencies and by financial difficulties, with the result that the launch was postponed from 1 January to 19 May 2013 (Borodina and Safronov 2012; Epifanova 2013).⁶⁰ When the channel did start broadcasting, it received a distinctly cool reception from one of Russia's leading television critics, and after two months Mr Lysenko was complaining that the channel had run out of money (Petrovskaya 2013a, 2013b).⁶¹ Yet by the autumn of 2013 the position was showing signs of improving: the financial situation seemed in some mysterious fashion to have been resolved, if only for the time being, and the station was developing a potentially more interesting range of programmes; whether there can be long-term financial security and whether the channel can succeed in carving out for itself a niche between state television on the one hand and the more politically committed *Dozhd'-TV* on the other remains to be seen.⁶² It is certainly unclear to what

⁵⁹ See 'U Obshchestvennogo televideniya poyavilsya gendirektor', available at: <http://lenta.ru/news/2012/07/18/lysenko/>; 'Prezident naznachil glavu Obshchestvennogo televideniya. Ono nachnet rabotu v novom godu', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/18jul2012/otv.html> (both sites last accessed 17 April 2013).

⁶⁰ See also 'Lysenko povedal, kogda vyjdet v efir OTV, i yarkoi frazoi pozhalovalsya na otsutstvie deneg', available at <http://www.newsru.com/russia/04mar2013/otv.html> (last accessed 17 April 2013).

⁶¹ See also 'U obshchestvennogo TV zakonchilis' den'gi — rossiyane ne khotyat za nego platit', available at: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/23jul2013/otr.html> (last accessed 8 November 2013).

⁶² Live streaming and recordings of past programmes are available on OTR's website: <http://www.otr->

extent there is any awareness among the powers that be that the present structure of the mass media may be in need of some adjustment and, if so, to what extent there exists any clear plan for how this might be achieved.

Conclusion

Assessing the state of the media system of a semi-closed society is never easy and attempting to predict its future is a particularly thankless task. Some conclusions may, however, be attempted. Since 2000 those who have held power in Russia have painstakingly established a system whereby they have effective control over most, if not all of the mass media system. They have used this control not to recreate a Soviet-style monolithic structure, where all the media essentially proclaim the same message, but to put in place something best described by the Italian term *lottizzazione*: different parts of the media system are assigned different degrees of freedom in such a way as to create a two-tier system. Those in the first tier, which includes most of national television, are kept under strict control, while those belonging to the second tier, including most of the Internet, have been permitted a significant degree of freedom. This structure, at least until the end of 2011, contributed to the maintenance of political stability and predictability, while avoiding some of the disadvantages of a system that is too tightly-controlled, such as the absence of a safety-valve, inefficiencies caused by the lack of access to accurate and up-to-date information and excessive damage to the country's image in the outside world. There is now, however, a danger that developments in the media themselves may lead to this carefully assembled structure becoming no longer fit for purpose, but that changing this structure while retaining intact its essential features may prove to be extremely difficult or even downright impossible.

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