
LAST MONTH IN REVIEW – MARCH 2001

TAJIKISTAN

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TAJIK INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM IS 10 YEARS OLD

A round-table meeting, held in Dushanbe on March 12 discussed assessments of the domestic mass media activities during the 10 years of independence. The meeting was initiated by the Dushanbe Media Centre and supported by Tajikistan's National Commission for UNESCO. Representatives of state-run, non-governmental and private media participated. Speaking at the conference Vladimir Vorobyev, *Narodnaya Gazeta* (People's Newspaper) editor-in-chief, assessed the state-run print media. In his words, it is the budget-supported state-run media whose situation is the most difficult. He believed that the quarterly coverage of the newspapers' expenses and low salaries, particularly in *Narodnaya Gazeta*, had resulted in the loss of almost all qualified staff journalists. The other round table participants believed the low professional level of the journalism to be the stumbling-block in the domestic media development, including those which are independent.

Sociological data presented by the Zerkalo (Mirror) Centre for Sociological Research also, indirectly, confirmed the journalists' opinion on the necessity to improve the quality of the work of the journalists and that of the periodicals. For example, a recent research carried out by the Centre has shown that some 37 per cent are dissatisfied with the information quality in the Tajik media. That is why Zerkalo has particularly worked out a project to facilitate the quality improvement of Tajikistan's journalism. Summing up the results, the round-table participants suggested an unofficial information centre for journalists' skill improvement and mutual support. // *By Hiromon Bakozoda, journalist, Zerkalo CSR*

KILLED JOURNALISTS' FAMILIES RECEIVED AID

The first joint charity action by the Dushanbe Media Centre and Childhood and Prosperity NGO was held in Dushanbe on March 10. Aid in the form of flour and children's wear has been given to more than 30 families of the Tajik journalists killed while on professional duty. The most needy have also received financial aid. This action has been carried out through support from German Agroaction, Red Cross International Committee, Red Cross Tajikistan, Russia's Interfax news agency, diplomatic representative offices of the Russian Federation and the US and Sharqi Ozod publishing house directors. // *By Hiromon Bakozoda, journalist, Zerkalo CSR*

KYRGYZSTAN

OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER WARNED

Melis Eshimkanov, the owner of the *Asaba* opposition newspaper, told an Azattyk radio correspondent that, on March 28, he had received an official warning from the Bishkek Prosecutor, Tolegen Albanov, indicating that Eshimkanov and the newspaper editorial staff would be held fully responsible for the would-be disturbances in Bishkek on March 30. Earlier, *Asaba* had announced that, that day, it planned to hold protest demonstrations against the newspaper's close-down.

The Uchkun publishing house stopped printing the newspaper on March 6. The newspaper has failed to pay back the loan borrowed from the Kyrgyz-Canadian JV Kumtor Operating Company in 1994 for the publishing of a book about Kyrgyz president, Askar Akayev. The loan now totalled more than 1 million soms (about 22,000 USD), including interest.

Res Publica, another opposition newspaper, had decided to help *Asaba* by publishing the *Asaba* journalists' materials. However, the Justice Minister, Jakyp Abdrakmanov, seized publication of this newspaper on March 27. According to Melis Eshimkanov, the Justice Minister had sent a letter to the Uchkun Publishing House forbidding the printing of *Res Publica* in Kyrgyz because of its illegal way of publishing materials prepared by *Asaba* journalists. At the same time, the Minister did not cite any article or law position breached.

Despite the closure, *Asaba's* troubles have not ended. On March 28, Melis Eshimkanov was summoned to the Prosecutor General's Office where he was shown a new charge against the newspaper, lodged by MP Turdukun Usubaliev. Usubaliev requested that Eshimkanov be sued for insult and that his property be confiscated. Last year, Usubaliev had sued Eshimkanov and Bishkek's Leninsky district court sentenced *Asaba* to pay 5 million soms (about 105,000 USD) in compensation to Usubaliev. The newspaper filed an appeal, which is now under consideration at the Bishkek city court. 82-Year-old Usubaliev was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of Kyrgyzstan's Communist Party between 1961-1985, and has been a parliament member since 1995. // *March 28, 2001. Based on RFE/RL reports.*

CENTRAL ASIAN FORUM OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES ESTABLISHED

On March 28, opposition politicians, human rights crusaders and free-lance journalists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan established a Forum of Democratic Forces of Central Asia in London. On March 27-28 they met with British Parliament members and journalists to discuss the current situation in their region. Akezhan Kazhegeldin of Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan's ex-premier), Ramazan Dyrlydaev of Kyrgyzstan (chairman of the Kyrgyz Human Rights Committee) and Dodojon Atavullo of Tajikistan (editor-in-chief of *Charogi Rooz* opposition newspaper) were elected to co-chair the Forum. All three currently have to live and work as émigrés. Opposition politicians and journalists of the three countries were also in London. // *March 29, 2001. Based on RFE/RL reports.*

UZBEKISTAN

RADIO IN UIGHUR

On March 1, the radio channels of Uzbekistan's TV and Radio Company began broadcasting in the Uighur language. Now the Uighur living in different areas of Uzbekistan can listen to news and other information in their mother tongue for 30 minutes a day. During the Soviet era, the Uighur service of the Tashkent International radio was the largest one and broadcast three hours a day. This was because the Soviet leadership sought to influence sentiments among Uighurs in China where the Uighur separatism threat existed and still exists. However, this task lost its relevance after the USSR decay and the Uighur broadcasting was stopped. It has been re-started now, but in less volume. // *By Iskandar Hamrokh, Uzbekistan*