
IN SOUTHERN KIRGIZSTAN JOURNALISTS THINK TWICE BEFORE TO INVESTIGATE

By Kamil Satkanbaev, journalist, Kyrgyzstan

Journalists in the South of Kyrgyzstan do not initiate themselves investigations, on one hand because of their lack of professionalism, on the other hand, because of lack of incentives and material resources.

In Southern Kirgizstan, one would hardly find a journalist presently conducting an investigation. Many young journalists do not even know what this journalism' genre is. "As there is no demand for journalistic investigations, so there is no offer," – said the newspaper *Vecherny Bishkek* correspondent in Osh region, Mr. Makhammadjan Khamidov. "Currently, journalists just give short news. To be engaged in a journalistic investigation one has to be a competent journalist. Unfortunately, the majority of local journalists cannot meet this requirement. Many of them, to be honest, are also afraid of investigating any case." The director of the *DDD* information-commercial Centre, Mr. Mamir Shakirov is of the same opinion. "Journalists are afraid of being prosecuted," – he said,- "And sometimes it can prove to be a rather risky business, on the example of the case of the Jalal-Abad journalist, Samagan Orozaliev. He collected information on a deputy of the parliament and wanted to publish it. The result is known." (Last July, Mr. Orozaliev was convicted of racket and jailed, ed.). About a month ago, in Osh, Mrs. Toktokan Djoldarova, a Kerme-Too café-bar owner, went on a hunger-strike. Her aim was to protest against actions of the Head of the OshInvest company and the Osh mayor, who, in her opinion, outraged her right of property on a parcel adjacent to the café. "We could not make a telecast about her," – said a correspondent of a local TV-station asking not to give her name. – "The TV-channel management put the telecast under a ban. They told we should not let it on the air. If such usual reports are prohibited, what one should say about journalistic investigations?" Mr. Bakyt Sadirov, journalist, agrees: "Really, why should I risk? I'd like I never begin to dig and get engaged in any investigation. One cannot say for sure what may happen."

MONEY AND TIME NEEDED

"I'd be happy to devote myself to this activity," - the newspaper *DDD* Deputy Chief Editor, Mr. Alisher Saipov told. – "This activity requires much money and, certainly, much time." Now, when some local newspapers are on the verge of disappearance due to indebtedness to the printing-house, and when some local TV-stations cannot pay wages to their employees, it is impossible to be engaged in journalistic investigations for financial reasons. In the opinion of the director of the *Alliance Press* information-advertising agency, grants are necessary to develop journalism investigation: "Only grants can allow us to freely engage in investigative journalism.". But even if the IAA *Alliance Press* already subsists on account of some OCSE grants, it has presently no journalist engaged in investigation. "I think, journalists have no incentive of being engaged in journalistic investigations," – said the executive editor of the newspaper *Press Park*, Mr. Bakyt Ibraimov. – "If they pay, say, 200-300 US dollars, then some journalists would with pleasure devote themselves to any investigation. This money may be not enough, as an investigation can take several months, or even years. Also, probability of subornation of the source of information does also exists. Many journalists are rather good professionals. Newspapers or TV-

stations of some countries have special investigation departments. This, certainly, requires not only money resources, but time as well."

PROBLEMS OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION

"It is not question of money," – said Mr. Pavel Gromsky, Head of the radio *Almaz* information service. – "Sometimes, the problem for journalists is to get access to information. It is difficult to get any information out of governmental officials or other persons even for a usual reporting." According to Mr. Makhammadjan Khamidov, there is no clear restriction for getting information. "Usually they give no answer,"- he said. – "Sometimes, however, they do not refuse to give information, but simply refer to their management, say they should receive a permission or consult with them. To my mind, it is normal. From a juridical point of view, such a stand is right. Sometimes they promise to give the answer lately. In such a case it is necessary to search for contacts, or personal acquaintances among the officials for help." Mrs. Bakhtygul Nadyralieva, the press-secretary of the Osh governor assures that journalists have no problems in getting information. But besides the lack of a comprehensive system of access to information for journalist, the lack of professionalism of the media representatives also plays a negative role. "I do not know the professional background of journalists in the region, but in our university yet nobody teaches methods of journalistic investigation," said Mr. Nikolai Muradymov, Head of the Russian literature department of the Institute of languages and world culture of the Osh State university. – "The Department of journalism was opened some time ago, and still lacks teachers." "In general there is a necessity for journalistic investigation," – said Mr. Makhmud Kazakbaev. – "For example, there is an important topic: persons detained with hundreds kilograms of heroin have been freed from restraint. In spite of the fact that according to the law they were convicted for several years. There are lots of such examples..." "How to improve the situation and bring journalistic investigations into practice? I think, it is necessary to write and develop projects,"- considers Bakyt Ibraimov. Mr. Makhammadjan Khamidov considers, that journalists need also other incentives. "We should organise competitions and establish prizes, like that of Pulitzer Prize in the West. Then, maybe, we'd awake this interest in journalists," – said Makhammadjan Khamidov.