

Communications Law and Policy in Transition

Russian Media Law and Policy in the Yeltsin Decade

Essays and Documents

**Monroe E. Price, Andrei Richter,
and Peter K. Yu**

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KLUWER LAW INTERNATIONAL
THE HAGUE / LONDON / NEW YORK

Published by:

Kluwer Law International

P.O. Box 85889, 2508 CN The Hague, The Netherlands

sales@kli.wkap.nl

<http://www.kluwerlaw.com>

Sold and Distributed in North, Central and South America by:

Kluwer Law International

101 Philip Drive, Norwell, MA 02061, USA

kluwerlaw@wkap.com

Sold and Distributed in all other countries by:

Kluwer Law International

Distribution Centre, P.O. Box 322, 3300 AH Dordrecht, The Netherlands

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Russian media law and policy in the Yeltsin decade: essays and documents/edited by

Monroe E. Price, Andrei Richter, and Peter K. Yu.

p. cm.—(Communications law and policy in transition; v. 1)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 9041188770 (alk. paper)

1. Mass media—Law and legislation—Russia (Federation)—History. 2. Press law—Russia (Federation)—History. 3. Freedom of the press—Russia (Federation)—History. 4. Mass media policy—Russia (Federation) I. Price, Monroe Edwin, 1938– II. Richter, Andrei. III. Yu, Peter K. IV. Series.

KLB3482 .R87 2002

343.4709'9—dc21

2002022235

Printed on acid-free paper

ISBN 90 411 8877 0

© 2002 Kluwer Law International

Kluwer Law International incorporates the imprint of Martinus Nijhoff Publishers

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**Volume 1. Russian Media Law and Policy in the Yeltsin Decade:
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**Edited by Monroe E. Price, Andrei Richter,
and Peter K. Yu**

Programme in Comparative Media Law & Policy
Center for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford

Preface

This book is tied to the history of the *Post-Soviet Media Law and Policy Newsletter*. The *Newsletter* came into being in 1993 after one of the editors, Monroe Price, had been appointed as a public interest member of the Commission on Radio and Television Policy, an unusual entity co-chaired—for most of its existence—by former President Jimmy Carter and Eduard Sagalaev, a Russian broadcasting executive. The purpose of the Commission was, ostensibly, to exchange views between the U.S. and (at first) Soviet policymakers and executives in the broadcasting field. The Commission was established in the late days of Glasnost and Gorbachev and sought to assist Gorbachev's policy of openness and change. By the time the Commission was operative, Gorbachev was almost part of history—as was, of course, the Soviet Union.

The *Newsletter* came into being because there was then a thirst for more complete information about changes in the administration of Russian (and other post-Soviet) media policy, shifting directives, alterations in President Yeltsin's modes of dealing with television. Sources were little known, nor was it clear how issues should be defined.

For six years, the *Newsletter* was published almost monthly. It was circulated to a hardy band of subscribers and, through the miracle of still-new technology, was put on the Internet. The *Newsletter* had helped develop a community, provide material for scholars, and assist in building or enriching a discipline of comparative media law and policy studies.

In 1999, the *Newsletter*, for all practical purposes, was transmuted into *Communications Law in Transition Newsletter*, partly because of the existence, through the Internet, of a wide variety of sources for information about media policy in the post-Soviet world. One of the editors, Andrei Richter, invented what became a widely-read Russian-language version of the *Newsletter*, wholly separate in editorial content and in audience. The Russian counterpart remains vital, at the time of this publication, and has a number of regional editions.

Among those who must be thanked or acknowledged are the following. Wade Greene of the Rockefeller Family Fund, who saw the need for supporting the *Newsletter*; Edith Bjornson, then of the Markle Foundation, who was responsible for placing one of the editors, Professor Price, as a member of the Carter Commission; Peter Krug, who, from the beginning, was Associate Editor of the *Newsletter* and a frequent contributor; Aleksei Simonov of the Glasnost Defence Foundation, who was an architect of a number of enterprises that contributed to a strong critical culture in Moscow (including the *Newsletter*). Eric Johnson of Internews brought a muscular legal perspective to post-Soviet media developments that only an intelligent and committed non-lawyer can bring. Stefaan Verhulst, the former director of the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy at the University of Oxford, provided intellectual and moral support and was a constant source of useful suggestions. Helen Darbishire of the Open Society Institute

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provided a small grant that would ensure circulation of the book to a broad audience. Bethany Davis was responsible for taking the project in hand at a critical point in its development and ensuring that the manuscript would be crisper, more pointed, and within the publisher's guidelines.

The Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law of Yeshiva University, and its Howard M. Squadron Program in Law, Media and Society, was the home of the *Newsletter* and allowed it to be published, nourished, and distributed. The Jacob Burns Institute for Advanced Legal Studies provided generous support of the *Newsletter* as well as other related projects conducted under the auspices of the Squadron Program.

Under the direction of one of the editors, Peter Yu, students at the Law School were able to assist in the preparation and production of the periodical. Karen Underwood, as an assistant to Professor Price, also helped to ensure that the *Newsletter* was published. And Timothy Hamilton and Michael Kassner have made invaluable contribution for making the *Newsletter* available online.

The *Newsletter* could not have been published without the existence of BBC Worldwide Monitoring. This invaluable tool is too little known, but it provides a chronicle of important political and economic decisions that affect media all over the world. *The Moscow Times*, ITAR-TASS, and Interfax also are reliable sources of information.

This volume does not capture the way in which the *Newsletter* sought to provide information on breaking events. Rather, it tries to furnish a broad overview of media during the Yeltsin years. Those who wish to look at the *Newsletter* archives should visit <http://www.vii.org/monroe/>. The Russian-language Newsletter is available at <http://www.medialaw.ru/>.

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PART I

ESSAYS

