MASS MEDIA

TRAINING CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNALISTS: SOVIET LEGACIES MEET LESSONS FROM U.S. MEDIA HISTORY

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Introduction

Western governments, international development agencies, foundations, and donor organizations regard "democratic journalism" as a tool to liberalize authoritarian regimes and contain religious fundamentalism and anti-Western sentiments abroad. It has become synonymous with Western-style journalism and is regarded as dedicated to extending democracy

and free market economics. Since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, democratic journalism has been exported to its former republics through seminars and workshops that generally emphasize traditional U.S. news values such as impact, conflict, novelty, prominence, proximity, and timeliness.[1] As journalism educators and trainers, we have participated in this process. These values are often touted as alternatives to values connected to Soviet-era news conventions, policies, and underlying ideology.

There is no generally accepted definition of "democratic journalism," but commonly accepted elements are drawn from the libertarian press model of Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm. Although the relevance of their Cold War-era categorization may be outdated, as critics[2] argue, their model includes identifiable attributes of "democratic journalism:" "The press is conceived of as a partner in the search for truth… The press is not an instrument of government, but rather a device for presenting evidence and arguments on the basis of which the people can check on government and make up their minds as to policy. Therefore, it is imperative that the press be free from government control and influence… There must be a 'free market place' of ideas and information."[3]

"Western-style journalism has been acclaimed a model for global journalism, but for the most part by Western-style journalists and scholars," Brislin wrote. He warned of the "futility of attempting to fit indigenous values into a procrustean bed of Western economic or political design. Multiple models of citizen-press-government relations grow legitimately out of indigenous value systems and are endurable within the forces of globalization."[4] Yet Western trainers too rarely consider the relevance of pre-existing, Soviet-shaped news values and conventions. The Soviets regarded the press as a propaganda—"education"—weapon for the communist party. Schlesinger observed that Marxist governments "treat the news of the day as the basis on which to propagate the ideas they stand for; informing their readers about current events is treated as part of an educational activity."[5] Simultaneously, trainers push for uncritical adoption of Western conventions, such as those inherent in the "inverted pyramid" reporting and writing style that remains dominant in American journalism**,** although Western publications now supplement that traditional structure with alternatives.

Practical, cultural, and historical problems mesh, including the fact that most training programs last only a few days or weeks. Thus theories and reporting methods, such as those related to development communication or public journalism, get little attention.[6]

"Democratic journalism" trainers generally convey practical content such as skills related to interviewing; generating story ideas, lead writing, source identification, and use of quotes. We and our colleagues teach effective transitions, attribution, balance of sources, alternative lead styles, editing techniques, and other skills standard in U.S. reporting courses and textbooks.[7]

According to Miller, "The notion seems to be that these occupational practices embody qualities like objectivity, facticity, and disinterestedness, that add up to professionalism, which itself contributes to a watchdog relationship to state institutions that, in the end, produces a

[1] See: Missouri Group, *Telling the Story*, Bedford/St. Martin's, Boston, 2004.

[2] See: J.C. Merrill, J.C. Nerone, "The Four Theories of the Press Four and a Half Decades Later: A Retrospective," *Journalism Studies*, No. 3 (1), 2002, pp. 133-136.

[3] F.S. Siebert, T. Peterson, and W. Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 1956, pp. 4-5.

[4] T. Brislin, "Empowerment as a Universal Ethic in Global Journalism," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics,* No. 19 (2), 2004, pp. 130-131.

[5] R. Schlesinger, "Problems of the Soviet Press as Illustrated by the Soviet Journalists' Monthly *Sovetskaia Pechat*," *Soviet Studies,* No. 9 (2), 1957, pp. 223.

[6] See: R. Shafer, "Comparing Development Journalism and Public Journalism as Interventionist Press Models," *Asian Journal of Communication,* No. 8 (1), 1998, pp. 31-52.

[7] See: C. Rich, *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method*, Thompson Wadsworth, Belmont, California, 2005; B. Itule, D.A. Anderson, *News Writing and Reporting for Today's Media*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1997; A.L. Lorenz, J. Vivian, *News Reporting and Writing*, Allyn & Bacon, Needham Heights, Massachusetts, 1996.

knowledgeable citizenry able to govern itself."[8] Thus seminars and workshops in Central Asia have been primarily concerned with news gathering based on the journalistic conventions of U.S. mainstream and commercial newspapers and broadcasters. Of course, variations of these conventions are found in the presses of other democratic nations and in emerging democracies, but the United States government and American-funded foundations are the largest sponsors of trainings in Central Asia.

Since the United States was itself once an emerging democracy, examining its media history illuminates how even under the best of economic and political conditions the press must struggle to establish and maintain its freedom. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are just emerging from long colonial subjugation by the Russians under the tsars and then under the Soviets; their press systems are adapting to independence, just as the U.S. press system began adapting to independence from Britain in the late 1780s.

[8] J. Miller, "Research Report, IREX Short-Term Travel Grant," available at [http://www.irex.org/programs/research/02/index.asp, 2002].

Replacing the Soviet Press Model in Central Asia

What Jones describes as "the flowering of glasnost," or openness, during Mikhail Gorbachev's rule inspired new publications and elimination of most governmental restrictions on journalists' activities,[9] but the Soviet Union's collapse, starting in 1989, and the ensuing independence of its Central Asian republics immediately produced dictatorial regimes there. Under those circumstances and coupled with the end of the Cold War, Western nations rushed to encourage "free press" systems as essential to a "civil society" and encouraged free, market-oriented press systems.

In addition to the U.S. government, funders of journalism trainings include the Civic Education Project (Soros Foundation); Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (Fulbright); the British Broadcasting Corporation; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); World Christian Communicators Association; International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX); Cable News Network; Freedom House; Internews; and the International Center for Journalists.

All five governments remain strongly authoritarian and exert a high level of direct or indirect press censorship, including prohibitive libel laws, unjustified arrests and imprisonment, tax audits, canceled licenses, and pressure on advertisers and printing houses. Juraev divided them into three models: "authoritarian-democratic" in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, with despotic administrations but some signs of freedom; "post-conflict," in post-civil war Tajikistan, where journalists practice self-censored out of fear the media may spark another conflict; and "total control" in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, where governments fully control printing and broadcasting.[10] The March 2005 Tulip Revolution that ousted the Kyrgyz president has already led to a freer and more diverse mass media; if that trend continues, the country's press system would need reclassification.

Most of these regimes, however, recognize some advantages to modernizing media content by permitting journalists to learn about Western practices even if on a practical level their journalists cannot

[9] See: A. Jones, "The Russian Press in the Post-Soviet Era: A Case Study of *Izvestia*," *Journalism Studies,* No. 3 (3), 2002, pp. 359-575.

[10] See: A. Juraev, "The Uzbek Mass Media Model: Analysis, Opinions, Problems," *Central Asia and the Caucasus,* No. 1 (13), 2002, pp. 130-138.

implement what they learn without risking sanctions. Another reason they allow Western trainers into tightly controlled newsrooms and universities is that Western donors pressure those governments to democratize their press systems. Allowing "democratic journalism" trainings gives at least the appearance of a commitment to developing free press systems.

Meanwhile, it remains relatively easy for governments to censor content that is too reflective of Western news values and reporting conventions, particularly if the content criticizes the regime or other powerful interests. Journalists are often punished for their stories, as frequent reports from the OSCE, Committee to Protect Journalists, U.S. State Department, Freedom House, Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, Human Rights Watch, and other press monitors verify. Self-censorship is rife too.[11] The deputy director of the Kazakhstan National Press Club said the imprisonment of an opposition journalist in 2003 put media workers on their guard: "There are no longer any guarantees that journalists will not find themselves in a similar position if they criticize the authorities. As a result, the press no longer discusses controversial issues."[12]

For Western funders, a kind of consulting and education industry has evolved, directed at filling a demand for journalism trainings in nations moving from Marxist-based economies and Soviet-style press systems. Demand is based on the desire of Western nations to extend their own ideologies and political systems, and to further their economic and strategic objectives. That demand also relates to the desire of Central Asian governments to modernize press systems and at least appear to support democratic institutions.

Rationale for Teaching about U.S. Journalism History

This article outlines our experience as journalism professors, as well as former reporters and editors, who have led trainings in Central Asia. We found that incorporating U.S. media history into these trainings is one effective way to temper the appearance of cultural or ideological imperialism that seems inherent in the "democratic journalism" concept.

American press history offers insights into the emergence of the dominant, international commercial journalism models. Presented objectively, it helps journalists in other nations form a more critical perspective on Western journalism, allowing them to more effectively accept or reject any constituent parts of the basic American model and its underlying ideology. On a practical level, understanding the historical roots of American journalism can help Central Asian journalists to better adapt its conventions and values to working in their own societies.

Of course, this approach assumes cultural sensitivity, historical consciousness, and empathy on the part of the Western trainers. We have observed ideologues among foreign consultants who presume that all aspects of the Western model are inherently better than those practiced in the host nation. Westerners teaching journalism in an authoritarian country, of course, should avoid appearing condescending; they must recognize that promoting a free press system in a society where those elements cannot be practiced might endanger trainees who adopt them as working journalists. It is easy for a trainer to convey disdain for the press in a country with heavy government controls and

[11] See: R. Shafer, E. Freedman, "Obstacles to the Professionalization of Mass Media in Post-Soviet Central Asia: A Case Study of Uzbekistan," *Journalism Studies,* No. 4 (1), 2003, pp. 91-103; E. Freedman, R. Shafer, "Policing Press Freedom in Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Monitoring Role of Press Rights Activists and Their Web Sites," paper presented to Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication Kansas City, Missouri, 2003.

[12] V. Abisheva, "Self-Censorship Rife in Kazakh Media," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, RCA 207, 27 May, 2003.

overt censorship. Merrill noted: Western—especially American—academics and practicing journalists travel increasingly to the Third World preaching the benefits of capitalistic and pluralistic media structures. This perspective is arrogant and ethnocentric, reflecting a "stultified intellectual view of reality."[13]

If the remaining veteran Soviet-era journalists still are among the most capable available professionals with regard to their skills, then training them to adapt to Western models is a productive investment for funders. Understanding the factors of economic determinism in media development is also critical to bridging from the Soviet model to more democratic ones.

A good start is an objective and informed overview of the development of the U.S. commercial press, beginning in New York with the first Penny Press newspaper, *The Sun,* in 1833. Familiarity with the evolution of the commercial press might also serve as a reality check for trainers and make them more tolerant of existing conditions in the nations where they serve, especially in those nations that lack a functioning market-based economy. That evolution in 1830s America included increasing literacy, industrialization, the emergence of a middle class, mass production and mass consumption, expanding democracy, a two-party system, and pervasive advertising, as well as other factors that don't yet exist in Central Asia.

Many people inside and outside the United States assume that U.S. press freedom emerged without difficulty. However, development of an independent press was not without obstacles, so media history can show journalists how the road to a free press is often serpentine, with detours and potholes. At the same time, trainers must explain there is no rigid, linear progression that begins with colonial prior restraints, passes through a Penny Press-type era, survives censorship efforts, and culminates in press freedom.

Meanwhile, knowledge of Soviet media history is also essential for effective "democratic journalism" trainings. That history since the 1917 Revolution sharply contrasts with the evolution of the commercial press in the United States and other long-time democratic nations.

Applications of U.S. Press History to Central Asia

Before the early 1990s, Central Asian journalists were privileged professionals, well rewarded for acquiring an education that emphasized socialist economic theory, and reporting in a manner consistent with Marxist-Leninist theory. That system favored interpretive writing and reporting that furthered Communist Party goals and advancement of socialism. Successful journalists acquired power and self-esteem from interpreting events within the parameters of government policies and accepted interpretation of Marxism-Leninism. If participants in these trainings had been journalists under the Soviet system, then they likely experienced material rewards and social status before independence. The primary challenge was to internalize those parameters. This was particularly difficult under Joseph Stalin because those parameters were never fixed, and much depended on the whims of those in power. Journalists adapted to survive under subsequent leaders and changing conditions.

Although the writing in the best of Soviet mass media was high in quality, content tended to be long and ponderous; journalists paid less attention to the constraints of dominant Western news values such as impact, conflict, novelty, prominence, proximity, and timeliness. These values were sec-

[13] J. Merrill, "Chaos and Order: Sacrificing the Individual for the Sake of Social Harmony," in: *The Mission Journalism, Ethics, and the World*, ed. by J. B. Atkins, Iowa University Press, Ames, Iowa, 2000, p. 18.

ondary to the state's goals. Thus the wreck of an Aeroflot airliner might not be immediately reported, and when it was, the story might be buried with facts obscured, particularly facts deemed to reflect negatively on the government and its airline. Commenting on such lack of objectivity, Vartanova quoted a Soviet journalism textbook as saying: "Press, radio journalism, TV journalism, and documentary films are means to realize the process of dissemination of ideas, theories, socially significant information, and education of social sentiments, habits, motivations, intentions, etc. It is important that different mass media and propaganda function as integral parts of a unified system, not substituting, but complementing each other."[14]

Western-style journalism with its often-adversarial approach and emphasis on sensation, crime, deviance, entertainment, and tragedy, was anathema to dedicated Soviet journalists. As self-perceived agents of social and economic change, they took seriously their role in promoting policies and programs inspired by Marxism-Leninism. Also anathema was the seemingly heedless devotion of Western journalists to the inverted pyramid style, to the attention on speed, concision, simplicity, and scoops, and to its relative absence of analysis or depth. Balanced reporting tended to be ignored in favor of furthering social consensus and providing the authorized ideological spin.

Since the meltdown of the Soviet Union, journalists have suffered declining ideological motivation, prestige, and income. This is especially true for many ethnic Russian professionals who failed to adapt to the nationalistic press systems controlled by newly established authoritarian governments. Central Asian journalists learned to modify what were the familiar, if repressive, demands of the Soviet system and to abandon the theoretical framework of communism. Familiar ideology was replaced with tenuous, emerging new national and often esoteric ideologies and revisionist histories. Central Asian regimes regard the press as a tool of nation-building and national identity,[15] and they work to create unique national identities based on regional ethnic traditions, histories, and myths. As a result, ethnic Russian journalists often feel more alienated than their non-Russian colleagues do. Many saw their best options as leaving the profession or country, or finding employment with foreign organizations or media. To work for domestic media, they usually had to accept the new national ideology and promote it in their work. Such conditions are not unusual, as evidenced by the prevalence of authoritarian press models worldwide.

Kulikova and Ibraeva sound critical of the domination of the "commercial stance" as an alternative to the Soviet model. Yet the commercially-supported democratic system that emerged during the Penny Press era of the 1830s and 1840s is the essence of the American model. As for immediate reforms in journalism in Central Asia, their seeming aversion to commercialism is probably well-founded, but is also reflective of the Russian tradition of resisting the most extreme forms of capitalism in favor of collectivism. Such resistance to Western institutions and ideologies goes back to Tsar Peter the Great and his "Great Reforms," policies aimed at forcing Westernization on Russians beginning in the 18th century.[16]

Despite its economic success and the freedom it exhibited, the early commercial press in the United States produced content that was sensational and often inaccurate and unethical. Content focused on crime, prostitution, the bizarre, immorality, and other popular fare in a newly industrialized society. Such content and practices are understandably repellent to those in other nations seeking to preserve cultures that do not uphold unbridled individualism and the freedom to be profane, critical, exploitive and adversarial.

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[14] E. Vartanova, «Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged,» in: *Russian Media Challenge*, ed. by K. Nordenstreng, E. Vartanova, and Y. Zassoursky, Kikimora Publications, Helsinki, 2002, pp. 21-22.

[15] See: F. Muminova, "National Identity, National Mentality, and the Media," *Central Asia and the Caucasus,* No. 5 (17), 2002, pp. 132-139.

[16] See: L. McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1991.

Lessons from America's Colonial Press History

Virginia's colonial governor prayed in 1671 for God to block creation of free schools and newspapers, lest heresy, disobedience, and libel spread. He and other politicians feared a free press would rile the masses and destabilize public order. America's first newspaper had a short life. Benjamin Harrison's *Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick*, printed in Boston in 1690, was shut down after only one issue. Colonial officials did not like its candid reporting on Indian-related atrocities and a sex scandal involving the French king. The effect of the shutdown was chilling: Fourteen years passed before another newspaper started in the colonies.[17]

Colonial journalists not only reported crime news but sometimes ended up in jail. In 1722, authorities arrested Benjamin Franklin's older brother James for criticizing and insulting the government and censored his paper.[18] Since the incarceration or removal of reporters and editors still happens on an occasional to semi-regular basis in many countries with a developing free media, the colonial experience has particular relevance. For too many Central Asian journalists, that issue is more current events than history, as evidenced by prosecutions of independent journalists.

In many countries, expansion and modernization of the judicial system accompanies development of a free press. The John Peter Zenger case provides bountiful fodder to study the intersection between press freedom and the courts. In 1734, the publisher of the *New York Weekly Journal* was charged with seditious libel—a crime in British America—for articles attacking the colonial governor. The case is not only factually significant but makes a colorful story that many foreign journalists identify with, particularly those who may face jail because of their own work.[19]

The case marked the beginning of two important precedents in libel law: truth as a defense and a jury's right to decide whether an article is defamatory. The practical impact was far from immediate, and it was not until well into the 20th century that these principles became firmly established in U.S. law.[20] Critical articles about government and the press's right to print them were at the heart of the Zenger case. Central Asian journalists work under the same shadow of imprisonment and repression, and they know their outcome may be far less favorable than Zenger's.

Therefore, the case can stimulate insights about the definition of truth and the role of the press. Is truth based on facts, or is truth what government says it is? Just as the case planted in many colonists' minds the revolutionary concept that individuals have a right to criticize government and its leaders, that concept remains elusive in countries where even truthful criticism may lead to imprisonment and civil libel suits that can bankrupt a news organization. Freedom to criticize a regime may be long in coming, and journalists find it less risky to be truthful about sports, art, or music than politics, politicians, or bureaucrats.

Discussion of the role of journalism during the revolutionary period should explain pamphleteering, letters to the editor, political cartoons, advocacy, and media outlets as propaganda organs. The written word played an important part in rallying civilians and troops, with Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* providing the best example. Similarly, early war correspondent Isaiah Thomas was far from objective, and his *Massachusetts Spy* was a strong backer of the Revolution. Journalists

[17] See: V.E. Edwards Jr., *Journalism in a Free Society,* William C. Brown Company, Dubuque, Indiana, 1970.
[18] Ibidem.
[19] See: D.R. Pember, C. Calvert, *Mass Media Law*, 2005/2006 Edition, McGraw Hill, Boston, 2005; *The Media in America: A History*, ed. by W.D. Sloan, Fifth Edition, Vision Press, Northport Alabama, 2002.
[20] See: *The Media in America: A History.*

who attempted to be objective during the emotional run-up to the war were attacked and hanged in effigy by either Patriots or Tories. Some editors changed politics depending on which side had the upper hand at the moment. One Philadelphia publisher was vehemently nationalistic and printed the Declaration of Independence, but changed his professed allegiance when British troops occupied his city.

Lessons from Post-Independence Press History

The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 illuminate how press freedoms can be taken away faster than they are established. As Federalists and Republicans battled for political power in the new nation, editors were caught in the crossfire. The Sedition Act was intended to punish anti-Federalists editors; it established fines and imprisonment for publishing false, scandalous, or malicious writing against the government, Congress, or the president. Most of the ten people convicted were editors. While the statute was aimed at silencing Republican editors, most historians deem it a failure in that regard since the anti-Federalists continued their attacks. This "stain on the First Amendment" was removed when the acts expired in 1801, three years after enactment.[21]

That controversy can be viewed in the context of growing pains as the newly independent country divided itself into political parties. Some historians have noted that once the realignment of Federalists and Republicans was clearly delineated, every newspaper of importance became a party organ. This bitter partisanship manifested itself in gutter journalism in the early 1800s. One historian labeled newspapers of the period as "viewspapers." U.S. icons were routinely derided in the press. For example, George Washington was accused of seeking to become king; Thomas Jefferson was condemned as an atheist; Alexander Hamilton was accused of being paid off by the British; and Andrew Jackson was accused of having a mulatto mother. Even strong advocates of press freedom like Jefferson bristled when they became targets of false reporting.[22]

Since 1991, similar patterns emerged in ex-Soviet republics where "independent" newspapers started as or evolved into organs of opposition parties rather than truly independent. Both official and opposition news organs face a lack of credibility. Journalists, therefore, confront the issue of whether independent media can stay independent, or whether they too will drift into a comfortable political camp, as 19th century U.S. newspapers did.

Day's *New York Sun* was the first truly commercial newspaper representing the Penny Press era. Its initial content was heavily sensational and emphasized crime news and immoral behavior, particularly stories highlighting folly by the rich and famous. In the first issue, Day announced: «The object of this paper is to lay before the public, at a price within the means of everyone, all the news of the day, and at the same time afford an advantageous medium for advertising. The sheet will be enlarged as soon as the increase of advertisement requires it—the price remaining the same."[23]

Elements of that early commercial press system, with its focus on the sensational, might be expected to emerge in developing nations. Since Central Asia's economic growth is not similarly vigorous, a commercial press—even if permitted—may lack the economic base necessary for the kind of

[21] See: V.E. Edwards Jr., op. cit.
[22] Ibidem.
[23] J. Folkerts, D. Teeter Jr., *Voices of a Nation: A History of Mass Media in the U.S.* Fourth Edition, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, 2002, p. 121.

stable and independent system the United States enjoys. The publisher of the independent English-language weekly *Times of Central Asia* based in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, said: "There is no market solution to the present financial problem. The market is too small. Companies do not advertise on a regular basis and consequently the only source of income for independent media is very limited. A possible solution may be contribution from public funding based on distribution and other parameters but given the red budget of the various countries of Central Asia this does not seem realistic. A support from foreign organizations may help with training and equipment but this will not be enough."[24]

Also, governmental constraints and censorship, with a mind toward the sensibilities of conservative Muslims and tradition-oriented people, especially in rural areas, is likely to tone down the kind of sensational fare that might otherwise prove profitable.

Other themes that can be presented from 19th century journalism history include the Yellow Press decade that began in the late 1880s. This period highlights the problems that competitive media face when they become highly successful enterprises and, as a result, must continually increase circulation or broadcast audiences. Since large segments of Central Asian populations are alienated from the mainstream press in their nations—with high levels of mistrust of the media[25]—journalists should be prepared for consequences when conditions change and audiences increase dramatically. The Yellow Press era provides insights into the results of attracting newly literate ethnic and religious minorities to mass circulation media with advertising, sensational content, and other commercial enticements. Particularly in large nations with diverse ethnic groups such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, journalists are likely to benefit from understanding this period.

Another lesson regarding periods of highly sensationalized news content, such as the Penny Press, Yellow Journalism, and Jazz Journalism eras, is that they are cyclical and that sensationalism draws new and perhaps less sophisticated readers. Those readers' tastes are likely to evolve as they become more educated and politically enfranchised, and as they raise their demands related to media content beyond the entertainment function that sensationalism generally serves. With improved economic circumstances, Central Asians are also likely to increasingly use the media for consumer information. As with American newspapers, this information is likely to vary in its reliability, and readers will have to adapt by evolving into more effectively critical consumers of their media.

As U.S. newspapers severed their traditional partisan political dependency and shifted to advertising dependency, the tail end of the 19th century and the early 20th century was marred by what Rodgers described as the growth of advertising's influence over the news side of the press. He described how the liquor industry, which was then fighting proposals to outlaw alcohol, blatantly bought favorable "news" coverage and editorials, and he told how advertising by the fraud-ridden patent medicine industry influenced news coverage and commentary.[26]

Still, today's enlightened media planners and democratic media supporters might be more tolerant of sensational content in an emerging commercial press if they understand that the first stage of success is building mass readership with popular content. Advocates of the Western model assert that only a mass audience of consumers will attract necessary advertising, subscriptions, and other commercial revenue, and that profits accumulated by economically successful independent media result in the ability to pay journalists high enough salaries to promote a sufficient com-

[24] G. Fiacconi, E-mail to lead author, 17 November, 2002.

[25] See: C.Y. Wei, B.E. Kolko, and J.H. Spyridakis, *The Effect of the Internet on Society in Uzbekistan*, paper presented at the Association of Internet Researchers, Toronto, Ontario, 2003.

[26] See: R.R. Rodgers, *Tainting of the Stream of Pure News: Collier's Criticism of the Newspaper Press During the Norman Hapgood Years, 1902 to 1913*, paper presented to Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, Toronto, Ontario, 2004.

mitment to professionalism, ethics, and social responsibility. Journalists are vulnerable to intimidation and bribes when their salaries are low, as in Tajikistan where most earn only U.S. $20-$30 a month, "but even that sum is not guaranteed since most of the private companies do not offer contracts to staff."[27]

Lessons from Prior Restraint in U.S. Press History

Prior restraint means the power of government to prevent publication or broadcast, as differentiated from punishing the press after publication or broadcast. U.S. courts generally strike down governmental efforts to block publication of truthful information that the press obtains legally. That happened, for example, in *Smith v. Daily Mail Publishing Company*,[28] when the Supreme Court threw out a West Virginia statute that made it a crime to accurately publish the names of accused juvenile offenders.

The most famous example of post-World War II censorship came during the Vietnam War when the federal government tried to stop the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* from publishing a voluminous Defense Department historical study of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. The documents, which contained no military secrets, had been leaked to the newspapers. However, the Nixon administration worried about the potential for "highly explosive" political and diplomatic ramifications if the documents became public.[29] In the Pentagon Papers case—*New York Times v. United States* and *United States. v. Washington Post*[30]—the Supreme Court let the papers resume publication and ruled that there is a "heavy presumption" that prior restraints are unconstitutional.

The Pentagon Papers case articulated the principle that the government bears a heavy legal burden of justifying any prior restraint, and few judges have upheld censorship since then. An exception came in 1979 when a federal judge in *United States v. The Progressive, Inc*.[31] enjoined a liberal-oriented magazine, from printing an article describing how to build a hydrogen bomb. The information came from public documents, interviews, and sources, including encyclopedias, but the judge held that national security concerns about nuclear power during the Cold War outweighed First Amendment guarantees. Only after the same type of information appeared in other publications was the magazine free to publish its article.

Coverage of criminal and civil litigation is a significant public affairs reporting, and the Supreme Court has made it increasingly difficult for trial judges to impose gag orders on media coverage of judicial proceedings. In *Nebraska Press Association v. Stuart,*[32] a landmark case that pitted fair trial and free press rights against each other, the court found gag orders justified only under extremely limited conditions; in practice, the decision made it virtually impossible for judges to gag journalists.

Trainers must acknowledge, however, that U.S. news organizations voluntarily self-censor themselves, even when the government lacks constitutional authority to impose prior restraints. In

[27] N. Zokirova, *Tough Life for Tajik Journalists*, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, RCA 206, 23 May, 2003.
[28] 443 U.S. 97 (1979).
[29] See: M. Emery, E. Emery, and N.L. Roberts, *The Press in America*, 9th Edition, Allyn & Bacon, Boston, 2002.
[30] 713 U.S. 403 (1971).
[31] 467 F. Supp. 990 (1979).
[32] 427 U.S. 539 (1976).

John F. Kennedy's presidency, the Central Intelligence Agency was preparing to use Cuban exiles trained in Guatemala to invade Cuba and oust Fidel Castro. At the White House's request, the *New York Times* watered down a scheduled front-page story about the planned operation. The Bay of Pigs invasion proved a military, diplomatic, and political debacle and an embarrassment for the President. Kennedy later told *New York Times* managing editor Turner Catledge, "Maybe if you had printed more about the operation you would have saved us from a colossal mistake."[33]

Lessons from Recent Press History

U.S. journalism since World War II can be presented through interwoven themes that, when combined, reflect the press's self-defined role as a watchdog willing to push the limits of First Amendment guarantees. Those six decades have been marked by an escalating commitment to investigative reporting about government, business, and the nonprofit sector—most famously the Watergate investigation led by the *Washington Post* that ultimately led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon.[34] Many news organizations now assign journalists to investigative beats; an organization called Investigative Reporters and Editors was established in 1975, and other professional groups such as the Society of Environmental Journalists conduct trainings about investigative methods.

Another theme of the period is increased access to government and public institutions, a concept known internationally as transparency, although the federal and state governments have tightened access to public information and meetings in the aftermath of the 11 September, 2001 attacks and the advent of the War on Terrorism.[35]

A major reform push known as the Right to Know movement began during the Cold War but did not come to fruition until the Watergate era produced freedom of information and open meetings statutes.[36] Although not rooted in the First Amendment, these laws rest philosophically on the presumption that records of governmental agencies belong to the public and that public entities should make decisions in public. Such statutes are essential tools for journalists. Pember and Calvert cited examples of how reporters have used the federal Freedom of Information Act to obtain documents about defective cars, environmental crises at nuclear power plants, illnesses suffered by Gulf War veterans, automotive safety, and sexual assaults on women in the military.

To do their jobs, journalists also need access to governmental facilities and operations. In decisions beginning in 1980, courts have upheld the right of the press to attend virtually all civil and criminal trials and hearings, recognizing a presumption that such proceedings are open.[37] However, courts uphold some limits on press access to prisons, public schools, war zones, military bases, and executions. Also, since 11 September, 2001 attacks, governments have taken measures to reduce press ac-

[33] H.S. Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy*, Dial Press, New York, 1983, p.163.

[34] See: C. Bernstein, B. Woodward, *All the President's Men*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1974; *The Media in America: A History.*

[35] See: M. Kim, *More Likely to Withhold Information? Comparison of Implementation of FOIA Policies under the Clinton and Bush Administrations*, paper presented to Association for Journalism & Mass Communication, Toronto, Ontario, 2004); N. Laughner, *Secrecy or Security: Identifying Trends in State Access Law Legislation*, paper presented to Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, Toronto, Ontario, 2004; Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, "Homefront Confidential: How the War on Terrorism Affects Access to Information and the Public"s Right to Know," 2003.

[36] See: K. Uhm, *The Communication Crisis During the Cold War: The Right to Know Movement*, paper presented to Association for Journalism & Mass Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, 2003.

[37] For example, *Richmond Newspapers v. Virginia*, 448 U.S. 555 (1980); *Publicker Industries v. Cohen*, 733 F. 2d 1059 (1984); *Press-Enterprise v. Riverside Superior Court*, 478 U.S. 1 (1986).

cess to certain places and events, such as immigration deportation hearings.[38] And journalists who cross police lines or enter private or governmental property without permission can be criminally charged with trespass or disobeying police orders.[39]

In Central Asia, most governmental decisions are made by small groups of people in secret. Bakhriev described "absolute dominance of the executive branch over courts, Parliament, and mass media aggravated by capricious, self-interested bureaucrats, rampant corruption, and a powerful clan patronage system"[40] in Uzbekistan and decried how statutes are enacted "by bureaucrats behind hermetically sealed doors" rather than being subjected to parliamentary debate. Most journalists based in the capital have never been inside the Oly Majlis (Parliament) building, let alone covered parliamentary meetings or deliberations. Journalists in the region often find it impossible to examine governmental records or attend trials. The rationale appears to be that government information belongs to government. Officials and bureaucrats are reluctant to subject themselves to interviews and when they do, sometimes insist on anonymity.[41] Lack of access to information also impacts journalists indirectly by preventing potential sources from obtaining information.

Yet another interwoven themes—evolving since Zenger's case—involves libel. History shows that civil suits, criminal prosecutions—and even the mere threat of suits or prosecutions—create an intimidating potential weapon against press freedom. In Central Asia, criminal libel laws put journalists at risk of prison and heavy fines for reporting accurate information that is deemed critical of government agencies and officials; libel fines and civil damages bankrupt media organizations.[42] Today in the U.S., virtually all sedition and criminal libel statutes have been repealed or struck down as unconstitutional.[43]

Conclusions

There are obstacles to teaching "democratic journalism in" Central Asia. Some Western trainers are absolutist in advocating the complete rejection of existing press models; they actively promote wholesale transfer of Western journalism values and traditions. Such imperialistic and paternalistic attitudes have been recognized as archaic and ineffective in other disciplines related to national development, where Western advisors and instructors have become more sensitive to cultural, historical, religious, social, and other factors that influence the adoption of Western paradigms and ideologies. Elliott drew this distinction between patriotic and nationalist journalism in new nations: "Patriotic journalism is journalism that keeps in mind what citizens need to know to make educated decisions for self-governance. Nationalistic journalism, on the other hand, is journalism that echoes what authorities want to say or what citizens want to hear. The difference between patriotic and nationalistic journalism is the difference between 'reporting' and 'repeating.'"[44]

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[38] See: D.L. Edwards, *Can the Effect of* Richmond Newspapers *Stretch Even Further? An Analysis of the Right of the Press to Cover Immigration Hearings*, paper presented to Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, 2003.

[39] For example, *United States v. Maldonado-Norat*, 122 F. Supp. 2d 264 (2000).

[40] K. Bakhriev, *Slovo o svobode slova*, R. Elinin Publishing House, Moscow, 2003.

[41] See: E. Freedman, M. Walton, "Independent News Web Sites' Coverage of Religion in Central Asia," *Central Asia and the* Caucasus, No. 1 (37), 2006; E. Freedman, "Coverage of Environmental and Environmental Health News of Central Asia by Independent News Web Sites," in: *History and Society in Central and Inner Asia*, University of Toronto Asian Institute, Toronto, 2005.

[42] See: U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," 2006.

[43] See: K. Paulson, "Jailed for Speech: Criminal Libel is an Old—and Bad—Idea," First Amendment Center, 18 January, 2004.

[44] D. Elliott, "Terrorism, Global Journalism, and the Myth of the Nation State," *Journal of Mass Media Ethics,* No. 19 (1), 2004, pp. 30.

As Brislin observed, even journalists in highly restrictive and oppressive systems have a sense of professionalism, even if their news organizations behave as agents of the state. Western trainers can promote professionalism, public responsibility, and ethics in the context and realities of Central Asian nation-building, cultural values, and history without attempting to impose their own models. And incorporating precedents from U.S. media history into journalism instruction is valuable in mitigating content that otherwise is wholly uncritical of Western media practices. Historical content can help professional journalists, instructors, and students understand the imperfections of the dominant Western model. Another benefit of historical content is that trainers are likely to become more self-reflective, critical, and perhaps more tolerant of other models. We do not advocate that trainers draw false analogies or stress artificial similarities between U.S. media history and that of Central Asian republics. However, conveying these precedents may help the region's working journalists and journalism academics recognize that "democratic journalism" is an imperfect model and an evolutionary one in all nations where it has been adopted. This recognition will allow engagement in the important process of determining which aspects of the model are relevant to conditions, cultural expectations, political and economic realities, and social acceptance levels in Central Asia.