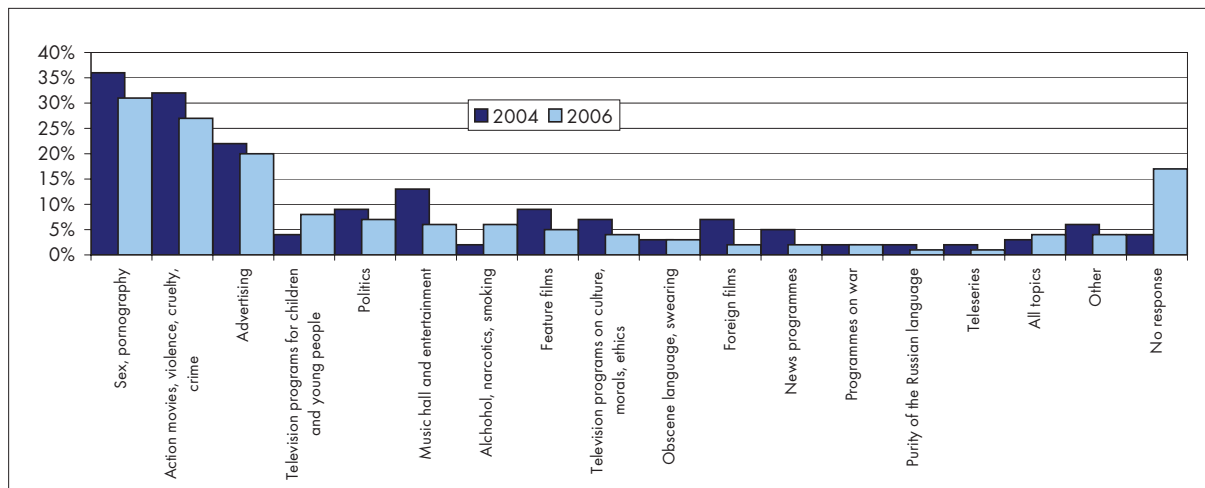


**If You Are of the Opinion that Censorship is Necessary, Could You Indicate for which Topics? (Up to Three Answers Possible; Percentage of Those Who Believe Censorship is Necessary)**



**Commentary**

**On the death of Anna Politkovskaya**

Elfie Siegl, Berlin/Moscow

The October 7 murder of Moscow journalist Anna Politkovskaya, which was presumably politically motivated, coincided with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s birthday. This convergence gave rise to rumors that the murderer had tried to damage the president’s reputation. Politkovskaya’s death has left Muscovites shaken – not least because it was the second spectacular murder in less than a month. In mid-September, the first deputy director of the national bank, Andrei Kozlov, was shot dead. He was regarded as an incorruptible expert who revoked the licenses of banks involved in money laundering.

Anna Politkovskaya, 48, a diplomat’s daughter and the mother of two, had worked for six years as a special correspondent in the Northern Caucasus for *Novaya gazeta*, one of the few independent Russian newspapers. With almost fanatical dedication and little regard for her own well-being, she wrote about the lives of ordinary people in the street or in the countryside. The more she adopted their concerns and hardship as her own, and the more she tried to help them, the more nervous, agitated, and depressed she became. She took on military and intelligence officers and received death threats, prompting her to move to Vienna temporarily. However, unable to bear the life of an exile, she returned to Moscow and for a while was protected by bodyguards.

During the hostage crisis at the Moscow Dubrovka theater four years ago, when Chechen rebels stormed a performance of the musical “Nord-Ost”, she attempted in vain to act as a negotiator to prevent a bloody outcome. She was prevented from covering the Beslan school hostage crisis in 2004 because she was poisoned during her flight to North Ossetia.

She also investigated corruption and organized crime in Russia. She blamed the Kremlin chief for misguided policies – but found no publisher at home with the courage to print her book *Putin’s Russia*.

The editors of *Novaya gazeta* regard the murder as a contract killing and assume that it was connected to a series of articles



Photo: Novaya Gazeta

Politkovskaya wrote about Moscow-appointed Chechen prime minister Ramzan Kadyrov. Most recently, she had been conducting research on torture and abductions in Chechnya allegedly involving Kadyrov's military units - research that may have been fatal.

Russia is among the most dangerous countries for journalists. While reporters who do not convey the image of Russia that the Kremlin desires are not necessarily killed, they do experience hardships and harassment. From official warnings, anonymous telephone calls, and subtle threats by the intelligence service to prosecution in court, the methods of intimidation are manifold.

*Translation from the German by Christopher Findlay*

## Black Mark for Journalists

Grigorii Pasko, Moscow

*Grigory Pasko is a former Russian naval captain and military journalist for the newspaper Battle Watch. In 1993 he filmed a Russian navy tanker dumping radioactive waste and ammunition into the Sea of Japan. He also exposed the environmental threat posed by the decaying Pacific Fleet and its nuclear submarines. In 1997, the FSB arrested him and charged him with treason for allegedly intending to pass sensitive information to a foreign journalist. Pasko spent 20 months in jail for pre-trial detention and was then acquitted. But then the prosecution reopened his case, this time charging him with abuse of office. He received four years in a forced labor camp. In 2002, he rejected a presidential pardon because it would have required him to admit guilt. He served two-thirds of his sentence and then was released on parole. All but one of the treason charges were dismissed.*

### Farce of the “Clowns”

Once, I drew up a project for a publication that would have been something new for Russia: an ecological magazine, in color, with a lot of illustrations, published in large print runs, with a lot of columns that in my opinion would have been interesting to a broad readership... As everyone knows, the publication of a magazine is expensive, which is why, when sounding out possible participants in such a project, I consulted mainly with a member of the State Duma. After he had listened closely to my plans, he said: “This is a good idea. However, if it is going to be realized, your name must not be mentioned anywhere; potential sponsors will be frightened off if the editor of such a publication is someone who is out of favor with the present authorities.”

We left it at that.

Of course, I am upset that at the age of forty-five I have not even earned the right to my own name in present-day Russia. It does not even matter that for some people my name provides cause for cowardice and for others, irritation. (There are, after all, also other people—I hope...)

In Russia journalists have for a long time been divided—into those who are close to the authorities (it is not important of which level—federal, regional or small town), and those who are in opposition to the authorities. Opposition journalists are not liked, and sometimes they are pitied as if they were lepers, although their only “fault” is that their point of view concerning the events happening around them is dif-

ferent from the point of view of the powers-that-be. The authorities do not like journalists who have their own point of view. The authorities like journalists who listen spellbound to them and write favorably about them.

Sometimes, court journalists remember (apparently at a subconscious level) that their mission is to inform their readers. Then, they spill the beans, write the truth, and provide literal quotes of the authorities' statements. Then, everybody sees that both the emperor and his retinue are “naked.”

Answering questions from Russian citizens on October 25, Russian President Vladimir Putin had this to say about such journalists: “They were sent to spy, and they eavesdrop. This is dirty.” The journalist Yevgenia Albats reacted to the president's statement thus: “If the servant was sent to clean golden toilets, then she cannot EAVESDROP on what men of state have to say to each other in between using the urinals. This is dirty. Really dirty.”

The Russian authorities today act as if “The only good journalist is a dead journalist.” Vladimir Vysotskii comes to mind as well: “Along the way there is a dense forest full of witches, and at the end of the way there is a scaffold with axes.”

In one of Anna Politkovskaya's articles, published after her death, there is the following passage: “Almost the entire present generation of Russian journalists and the existing mass media are ‘clowns’. Taken together, they are a farce of ‘clowns’. Their mission is to entertain the public; if they do write about serious