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**The use of media opportunities during the presidential elections
in Russia in 1996 and 2000**

Abstract. The study of the processes that took place during the elections of the President of the Russian Federation in 1996 and 2000 is relevant today, when our country is on the verge of new elections in 2018. With the election of the country's leader, not only the new political reality is determined, but also the trajectory and algorithm of socio-political and socio-economic development of the country are formed, considering the many challenges and threats that arise today and will arise in the world tomorrow. The author of this article analyzes the use of media opportunities as an important resource for influencing the public opinion during the presidential elections in 1996 and 2000. Comparing features of the elections, the author concludes that in 1996 the nature of the relationship between the authorities and the mass media was complicated, since the media at that time was largely an independent institution of the political system that influenced the formation of the public opinion. However, the representatives of the political and economic elite supported the incumbent President Boris Yeltsin in his decision to be re-elected for a second term and managed to attract the media resources to achieve this goal. By the time of the election in 2000, the Russian media were already under the control of the authorities as well as financial and industrial groups, and therefore the use of effective technologies allowed Vladimir Putin to construct the image of a determined politician and ensure his victory within a short time.

Keywords: Russian presidential election, electorate, political technologies, mass media, politics

Introduction

The presidential elections, which took place in 1996 and 2000 are described in a lot of analytical materials. These were crucial years for the country. The first presidential term of Boris Yeltsin (1992–96) was filled with serious problems: a drop in the level of production in Russia, unpaid wages and pensions, storming of the White House, the plight in the army, an unpopular war in Chechnya. At the end of 1995, in the elections to the State Duma, most of the mandates were received by the Commun-

ist Party. And if in 1991, Boris Yeltsin, the hero of the August coup, did not have equal rivals; in 1996 the authority of the President reached a critical level of 5-6%. This meant that the decision to start the election campaign had to take place in the face of considerable uncertainty in achieving the desired result.

The rating of the young politician Vladimir Putin, whose candidacy was unexpectedly proposed by Yeltsin to the State Duma in August 1999 for approval as prime minister, also amounted to an insignificant 1 % in September 1999, which was even less than a statistical error. However afterwards it began to grow rapidly and by the middle of September amounted to 4 %. In November 1999, 54.3 % of citizens trusted him. Vladimir Putin won the approval of the citizens by his decisive action during the second Chechen war and the fight against the terrorists who carried out the destruction of apartment buildings in several Russian cities. In short, the starting positions of the candidates at the beginning of their election campaigns were almost the same, and therefore it is appropriate, in our opinion, to compare the features of holding the presidential elections in 1996 and 2000 and to identify the ways and methods for achieving the victorious results, in which a significant role was played by the traditional media.

Background and scope

It should be noted that in general, the degree of scientific research of the Russian presidential elections of 1996 and 2000 is quite profound. This is evidenced by the publication of several collective monographs, collections of scientific papers, as well as dissertations devoted to this topic. As an example, the most comprehensive scientific analysis of the presidential elections in 1996 was carried out by a group of authors representing academic scientific organizations, as they say, on fresh tracks¹. The authors of the publication argue that the first presidential election in the Russian Federation, per the plan, popular, free and democratic, in fact often took place with violations of genuinely democratic procedures. The opponents were under unequal conditions and, above all, in terms of access to the media. The confession of A. Oslon, head of the Public Opinion Foundation, who uncovered the mechanism of using sociological surveys as a way of influencing voters' opinions is quite interesting².

¹ From Yeltsin to ... Yeltsin: presidential election-96, comp., the author of the preface L.N. Dobrokhotov, Eds. M.K. Gorshkov, L.N. Dobrokhotov, V.V. Zhuravlev. Moscow, 1997.

²Oslon A. As in 1996, the analytical group made surveys a social fact. *Sociological reality. Journal of Sociological Observations and Communications*, 2006, no. 6. URL: <http://socreal.fom.ru/?link=ARTICLE&aid=182>

The components of Boris Yeltsin's success were assessed in the work of L.F. Shevtsova³, who named the main reason for the victory of the first President of Russia: the Russians who supported Yeltsin voted most likely against Zyuganov, rather than for Yeltsin, that is, 'for the lesser of two evils'. The publication of V.M. Yuryeva and D.G. Seltzer is devoted to the analysis of the results in the elections of 1996⁴. The opportunities for free expression of citizens' will in the elections of 1996 were assessed in the thesis of N. V. Kapranov⁵. The federal and regional aspects of conducting the elections in Russia are analyzed in the thesis for the academic degree of Doctor of Political Sciences by A.Kh. Khalitova⁶.

The range of publications and the doctoral thesis of L.N. Dobrokhotova⁷ are devoted to the analysis of historical experience and the relationship between the government and the society in Russia under the conditions of systemic transformation. E.A. Ordonskaya describes the political processes that took place during the presidential elections of 1996 and 2000, using the methodology of comparative historical analysis⁸. A.A. Filinsky performed an analysis of the state of political discourse during the election campaigns of 1999 and 2000 in his thesis⁹. A.N. Nurutdinova devoted her dissertation to the study of the selective media discourse under the conditions of institutionalization of democratic elections in modern Russia¹⁰. A.V. Postrikanova examined the procedure for holding elections in terms of legitimizing the formation of government bodies in contemporary Russia¹¹.

A large body of scientific publications is devoted to the study of transformational processes in modern Russia, which formed the new political reality. Everything that

³ Shevtsova L.F. The regime of Boris Yeltsin. *The Carnegie Moscow Center*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1999. Listing – the main components of success of B.N. Yeltsin, she formulates the main thesis, per which – the Russians, who supported him in the election, voted, most likely, against Zyuganov, rather than for Yeltsin – 'the lesser of two evils'.

⁴ Yuryev V.M., Seltzer D.G. The presidential elections in Russia: Dynamics of general and private characteristics. *Bulletin of Tambov University*. Ser.: Humanities, 2008, Issue 4.

⁵ Kapranov N.V. *Choice as a factor in the democratization of the political process of modern Russia: Political analysis of the presidential elections of 1991 and 1996*: Doc. Dis. Moscow, 1998.

⁶ Khalitova A.Kh. *Elections as an Institution of Political Democracy in the Transforming of Russian Society: Federal and Regional Aspects*: Doc. Dis. Moscow, 2004.

⁷ Dobrokhotova L.N. *The Power and the Society in Russia under the Conditions of Systemic Transformation (1985–1998)*: Doc. Dis. Moscow, 1999.

⁸ Ordonskaya E.A. *Presidential Elections in Russia in 1996 and 2000: A Comparative-historical Analysis*: Doc. Dis. Moscow, 2011. URL: <http://www.dissercat.com/content/>

⁹ Filinsky A.A. *A Critical Analysis of the Political Discourse of the Election Campaigns of 1999–2000*: Author's Abstract. Doc. Dis. Tver, 2002.

¹⁰ Nurutdinova A.N. *Electoral Media Discourse under Conditions of Institutionalization of Democratic Elections in Modern Russia*: Doc. Dis. Kazan, 2007.

¹¹ Postrikanova A.V. *Elections as a Mechanism for the Legitimization of State Power in Modern Russia*: Doc. Dis. Moscow, 2005.

related to the elections: the alignment of political forces, the technology of forming the public opinion, changing sentiments in the society, socio-economic processes – has become the subject for research by Russian scientists. One can cite the work of S.K. Pestsov and A.V. Smirnov¹², E. Popov¹³, R.F. Turovsky¹⁴, A. Shvidunova¹⁵, O.V. Popova¹⁶, V. Avchenko¹⁷ and O.N. Bykova¹⁸.

The processes of formation of the electoral system in the Russian Federation, its improvement and the results of influence on the transformation of the country are examined in the studies of well-known foreign political scientists and specialists such as: M. McFaul, D. Simon, E. Schneider¹⁹. The ways of discovering the ideological content of mass-media messages during the elections are considered in the work by the English sociologist J.B. Thompson²⁰. The observation of the voting process and the voters during the elections in 1996 in the capital of Tatarstan – Kazan by the American researcher John Lavenherdt²¹ is also worthwhile mentioning.

The periodical scientific publications did not ignore the elections held in Russia either, as well as the peculiarities associated with their conduct. In the media space, one can find a significant number of journalistic materials. Quite interesting are the confessions of the former head of the presidential guard service A. Korzhakov²².

¹² Pestsov S.K., Smirnov A.V. Russian elections – 2000: Characteristic features and procedures. *Vlast* [The Power], 2000, no. 9, pp. 17–23.

¹³ Popov E. Russian political elite at the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries. *The Construction of the Social Order with the Help of Communication Technologies*. Vladivostok, 2001.

¹⁴ Turovsky R.F. Regional features of the presidential elections of 2000. *Bulletin of the Moscow University*. Ser. 12: Political Science, 2000, no. 4, pp. 38–54.

¹⁵ Shvidunova A. *Mass media as a subject of political process and an instrument of political technologies. Russian media in the presidential campaign of 2000*. URL: http://society.polbu.ru/shvidunova_smi/ch05_all.html

¹⁶ Popova O.V. Models of identification of the main candidates for the post of the President. *Political image: The Secrets of Manipulation of Mass Consciousness*: Collection of scientific articles. St Petersburg, 2000, pp. 145–156.

¹⁷ Avchenko V. Theory and practice of political manipulation in modern Russia. *Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Speech Communication*. Issue. 1(8). Krasnoyarsk, 1999.

¹⁸ Bykova O.N. *Language manipulation. Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Speech Communication*. Issue. 1(8). Krasnoyarsk, 1999.

¹⁹ McFaul M. *Russia's 1996 presidential election: the end of polarized politics*. Stanford, 1997; Simon G. *Präsidentenschaftswahlen in Russland: Jelzin oder Sjunganow. Aktuelle Analysen des BIOst* (Köln), 1996, no. 39; Schneider E. Die russische Präsidentenschaftswahl 1996. *Bericht des BIOst*. Köln, 1996, no. 50.

²⁰ Thompson J.B. *Ideology and Modern Culture. Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Cambridge, 1992.

²¹ Lovenhardt J. Elections of the President of Russia in 1996. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 1997, no. 1, March, pp. 127–139.

²² Korzhakov A.V. *Boris Yeltsin: From Dawn to Dusk*. Moscow, 1997, p. 319.

A.E. Lyubarev²³ shares his observations on the twenty-year experience of holding elections in Moscow with the readers. V.V. Sogrin²⁴ considers the political processes that took place in modern Russia for 15 years, including the conduct of elections.

A considerable number of scientific works relate to the study of the features of the presidential elections of 2000. The efficiency of the use of V.V. Putin's administrative resource is emphasized in the studies of such authors as R.F. Avramchenko, R. Brim, L.B. Kosova²⁵, A. Zudin and A. Ryabov²⁶.

And, nevertheless, in our opinion, the phenomenon of holding elections in 1996 and 2000 is not fully investigated. It seems to us that many domestic as well as foreign researchers will turn to this topic. Moreover, not all the active participants of the events studied and shared their observations and assessments with the readers. We must assume that such work will appear in the future. In the proposed article, we will try to address the aspect of the two electoral campaigns so poorly studied, related to the use and capabilities of the Russian mass media by the main participants in the said elections – the candidates (and their teams) that won.

Materials and methodology

Elections of the President of the Russian Federation in 1996

It was a difficult decision for Boris Yeltsin to participate in the election of the President of the Russian Federation in 1996, and he pondered for a long time about his prospects for victory. The reasons for such uncertainty were quite serious. Firstly, the state leader's health left much to be desired. Both Yeltsin himself and his entourage assumed that the campaign would be very difficult, it would require a lot of strength and vitality, and the incumbent President had serious health problems at the time. On the eve of the new year of 1996, Yeltsin had another heart attack, and for a long time he did not appear in public. Here is what the former close associate of Boris Yeltsin, Aleksandr Korzhakov, head of the president's guard, said in his memoirs about this period, "Everyone was overcome with doubts: what to do with the elections, can Yeltsin be nominated having such a condition? After all, after his heart at-

²³ Lyubarev A.E. *Elections in Moscow: The experience of twelve years. 1989–2000*. URL: <http://lyubarev.narod.ru/elect/book/soderzh.html>

²⁴ Sogrin V.V. *Political History of Modern Russia. 1985–2001: From Gorbachev to Putin*. Moscow, 2001.

²⁵ Avramchenko R.F. *Putin's Way: To the President or Reformer? A new Concept of Russia's Development*. Moscow, 2000; Brim R., Kosova L.B. V. Putin's phenomenon: morphology and semantics of mass popularity. *Monitoring of Public Opinion: Economic and Social Changes*, 2000, no. 3, pp. 18–22.

²⁶ Zudin A., Ryabov A. Campaign- 2000 features and their influence on the configuration of the ruling elite. *Russia in the Electoral Cycle of 1999–2000*. Moscow, 2000.

tack, the doctors recommended a complete rest, especially if the patient was far from being young. However, elections are anything but rest”²⁷.

In December 1995, when asked “Who would you vote for if elections were held today?” 5 % of respondents preferred the candidacy of Boris Yeltsin, while Gennady Zyuganov was voted for by 13 %, Alexander Lebed gained 10 %, Grigory Yavlinsky – 9 % and Viktor Chernomyrdin – 7 %. In January 1996, many were confident that under such conditions Boris Yeltsin would not run for a second term, and in February, when he nevertheless announced his participation in the future elections, his defeat seemed inevitable. Then, on the eve of the impending presidential election, 30% of the population expressed their complete agreement with the saying “under the Communists everything was better, I would like everything to become the same,” and another 33 % expressed their partial agreement with such a statement²⁸. At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland held in February 1996, Zyuganov was greeted as an obvious favorite of the elections and the future President of Russia.

Only one serious argument prompted by the political technologists acted in favor of Boris Yeltsin: the fear of the population of the restoration of the communist ideology in case of victory of the leader of the Russian Communist Party Gennady Zyuganov, formed by the Yeltsin-backed media and constantly cultivated by them. Before the elections, incredible circulation of ten million copies were issued by the free weekly newspaper ‘God forbid!’, which printed mostly negative material about Zyuganov, the main rival of the incumbent President Boris Yeltsin. The main theses of the newspaper were as follows: the inevitability of the outbreak of a civil war in the event of Zyuganov's victory, start of mass arrests, executions and famine. Zyuganov was repeatedly compared with Hitler on the pages of the newspaper²⁹.

What happened next, would have been called a miracle by many Russian media. If in February in Ekaterinburg a sick man, located far from the people and surrounded by a crowd of officials, announced his decision to run for the highest position in the country again, then in May he was seen as an active, confident and victorious ‘people's’ politician³⁰.

²⁷ Korzhakov A.V. *Boris Yeltsin: From Dawn to Dusk*. Moscow, 1997, p. 319.

²⁸ Oslon A. As in 1996, the analytical group made surveys a social fact. *Sociological reality. Journal of Sociological Observations and Communications*, 2006, no. 6. URL: <http://socreal.fom.ru/?link=ARTICLE&aid=182>

²⁹ Avchenko V. Theory and practice of political manipulation in modern Russia. *Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Speech Communication*. Issue. 1(8). Krasnoyarsk, 1999; Bykova O.N. Language manipulation. *Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Speech Communication*. Issue. 1(8). Krasnoyarsk, 1999.

³⁰ Markov E.A. Towards elections: we draw lessons from the past. *Quarterly Scientific and Methodical Journal*, no. 1. Cherepovets, 2011, pp. 54–59. URL: [http://chereng.ru/nauka/jurnal/files/ENMG_1\(1\).pdf](http://chereng.ru/nauka/jurnal/files/ENMG_1(1).pdf) (Call Date May 28, 2017).

The director of NTV television company Igor Malashenko was appointed an adviser to the election campaign of Boris Yeltsin. This decision allowed to achieve two different and simultaneously very important goals. First, one of the main creators of the image of Yeltsin was a young specialist who was familiar with the West, and above all with the American experience in conducting election campaigns, who could develop an effective strategy and build interaction between the diverse team of the incumbent President of the Russian Federation and the media. Secondly, although I. Malashenko for the time of the campaign departed from the leadership of NTV, it was obvious that the broadcaster was, at least, neutral in relation to B.N. Yeltsin, and by and large, set the tone of the campaign and indicated to the other TV channels the necessary reference point for building strategically important relationships with the authorities (and its most promising presidential candidate). The struggle for the voters was conducted by the team of B.N. Yeltsin thoughtfully and aggressively. Boris Yeltsin visited large cities, national republics, using his personal charm and the star image of artists and stars of the Russian show business related to the campaign under the slogan ‘Vote – or lose!’ Until now, on television, they sometimes show everyone the memorable plot when Yeltsin danced on the stage, copying the young artists, thus attracting to their side the sympathy of the representatives of the younger generation. He began and finished the pre-election tour in his small homeland, in Yekaterinburg, surrounded by relatives (which reminded of the American methods of conducting similar campaigns). All President’s actions were covered in the media in the most detailed way, especially in the three national TV channels: ORT (Channel One Russia), RTR and NTV. In addition, before the elections, in TV news it was reported on the constructive moments associated with the end of the war in the Chechen Republic (truce, the arrival of the Chechen leader Z. Yandarbiyev to Moscow to participate in the negotiations, and, as an apotheosis, Boris Yeltsin's visit to Mozdok – no candidate could afford such a pre-election action. Thus, the main problem (the war in Chechnya) connected with the re-election of the incumbent President was partly neutralized with the help of television³¹.

Boris Yeltsin managed to win this election by defeating his main rival, the Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, only in the second round. The results of the first round were almost equal for both candidates. Boris Yeltsin received 35.38 % of the vote, whereas Gennady Zyuganov received 32.03 %. The results of the elections were determined during the second round, and then it turned out that B. Yeltsin

³¹ Ibid.

received 53.82 %, and Gennady Zyuganov – 40.31 %. The voters' turnout in both rounds was high and amounted to just under 70 %³².

The politicians of the incumbent President did everything possible and impossible to raise Yeltsin's rating that was so low before the start of the campaign. It is true though that his main rival, the leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation Gennady Zyuganov and his participation in the pre-election race greatly facilitated the task of 'team' B.N. Yeltsin. The media did not accidentally increase the sense of confrontation between the two candidates. "To be perceived as a political figure, you need a contrasting background. The following can serve as such a background: another political figure / community endowed with totally negative properties. We need a pair of antipodes: a hero and a villain. The struggle between the hero and the villain, the good and evil forces, the influence on the mass consciousness, disorganizing it in reality and some really important problems". The results of the 'team' of Yeltsin at the elections were summed up by 'Obshchaya Gazeta', which reported in those days: "The president, constantly attending the media, performing actively in the information space ... has created a kind of 'virtual reality'. Within its framework, the problems that were inherently insoluble seemed completely surmountable. He managed to convince the different layers of the population that it was possible to stop inflation and simultaneously carry out the large-scale social programs The immersion of millions of Russians in this 'reality' made them forget about their real problems for some time and thereby helped the President to avoid an unpleasant report on the situation. "The virtual reality, to which we refer hereby, is nothing more than 'false reality', in which there is no presence of manipulation, or barrage – distracting the viewer from the real problems"³³.

Today, the humankind lives in the information world, and if it is possible to manage the information flows and influence them with public consciousness, it would be possible to achieve the desired action." Such an opportunity for managing the information flows in the 1996 elections was possessed by the team of the incumbent President at the time. This possibility was called an administrative resource.

"The strongest administrative resource was working for Yeltsin, in addition, the hidden 'advertising' was present literally everywhere – it became possible due to the fact that truly incredible amounts and opportunities were in the hands of Yeltsin and his team. In his memoirs 'The Presidential Marathon', Yeltsin frankly wrote out how the most influential bankers came to him on the eve of the 1996 elections: Friedman,

³² Elections of the President of the Russian Federation of 1996 on June 16, 1996. Protocol of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation on the results of the election of the President of the Russian Federation. URL: http://cikrf.ru/banners/vib_arhiv/president/1996/index.html

³³ Ibid

Khodorkovsky, Smolensky, Potanin and others: “Boris Nikolayevich, use all our resources, so long as the election ends with your victory! And then the Communists will come – they will hang us all on the lamp-posts ...”³⁴.

Boris Yeltsin's victory in the 1996 elections would have been impossible if all the major Russian media had not supported him. Some of them supported him ‘unselfishly’, since the President, by his actions, guaranteed the media freedom of any action and did not pay attention to their criticism. Others, like NTV channel, for example, received after the election success at their full disposal the television frequency broadcasted by the federal channel ‘Russian Universities’, whereby NTV broadcasts were held on it for six hours a day. In addition, as acting President, B. Yeltsin issued decrees, enacted laws and regulations that enabled him to win support in a wide variety of circles. Thus, the Federal Law ‘On introducing amendments and addenda to the law on taxes of the Russian Federation’, introduced on 1 January 1996, improved the financial situation of the media.

“The frank propaganda nature of the overwhelming majority of these decrees and decisions was successfully confirmed after the presidential elections, when Boris Yeltsin, reelected for a second term, signed the decree ‘On urgent measures to ensure the economy in the process of preparing the federal budget in the second half of 1996,” E. Popov writes. “This document suspended, and in some cases cancelled 47 presidential decrees and government decrees, as well as some laws issued and adopted during the election campaign-96”³⁵.

Elections of 2000

A few months before the election of the President of the Russian Federation in 2000, the elections to the State Duma were held on 19 December 1999. If we talk about the peculiarities of using the original political technologies during these elections, the results showed that with the help of instruments of manipulative influence on the voters it was quite possible to ‘construct’ not only the ‘virtual social movement’ (that was the unity movement formed literally on the eve of the elections) but also the new president. That is, the elections of 1999 have become a kind of testing ground for working out the technological tools that could bring victory to the 2000 presidential election.

These techniques were used with a high degree of efficiency in the election campaign which was conducted by the acting President of the Russian Federation V. Pu-

³⁴ Avchenko V. Election of the President of the Russian Federation in 1996. *‘Family’: Victory at any cost. Elections of the President of the Russian Federation in 1996*. URL: <http://psyfactor.org/polman3.htm> (Date of circulation 04/27/2017).

³⁵ Popov E. Russian political elite at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries. *The Construction of the Social Order with the Help of Communication Technologies*. Vladivostok, 2001.

tin. The Kremlin achieved maximum success in the parliamentary elections, which allowed ‘preparing the ground’ for a successful speech during the presidential campaign. Therefore, the presidential election of Vladimir Putin, in effect carried out by the same individuals that carried out the promotion of Boris Yeltsin in 1996, were not an easier example. And this means that the political process in Russia has become manageable, comparatively easy to fit into the right direction for the ruling elite.

The director of the Federal Security Service and at the same time the Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, to the surprise of many, was elected by Boris Yeltsin as his successor and on 9 August 1999 he was first appointed as acting head of the government and later, on 19 August he was approved as prime minister by the deputies of the State Duma. On 31 December 1999, Boris Yeltsin, who experienced health problems, announced his voluntary resignation and the prime minister Vladimir Putin became acting president of the Russian Federation, in accordance with the Constitution of Russia.

Early presidential elections were scheduled for 26 March 2000. Vladimir Putin had to compete with ten contenders – the candidates included in the ballots, however serving as acting officials. The president was by that time already unattainable leader for the other participants, although he had strong competitors too, who had huge political experience as well – such as the Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, the leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and the leader of the Yabloko (Apple) bloc Grigory Yavlinsky.

Based on the results, Vladimir Putin won in the first round, receiving 52.9 % of the votes. The second competitor was significantly behind the winner – Gennady Zyuganov who received 29.2 %. The third place was taken by Grigory Yavlinsky gaining 5.8 %.

What was the secret of the success in the election of Vladimir Putin?

The appearance of V. Putin as the prime minister of the government, and then the acting President of Russia, coincided, first, with the expectations of the population of the country about the need for reforms. The people had long been waiting for a new, younger, stronger and self-confident leader who will strengthen the power vertically, stop the disintegration processes in the country, ensure sustainable economic development and finally stop the rampage of political bacchanalia in the country, during which the oligarchs and officials shamelessly stole the national wealth. Because of this coincidence of expectations of the population and the emergence of a new ambitious leader, the support rating for V. Putin began to grow rapidly. In November 1999, 54.3 % of citizens trusted him, and in May 2000 (after the elections) 64.1 % of respondents expressed their positive opinions about Putin. Thus, the secret of success was in a successfully chosen strategy of public activity with an emphasis on patriotic

and social themes and a well-chosen image of an energetic, tough, practical ‘business policy’ as V. Putin saw it.

The second factor explaining the rapid growth of V. Putin's popularity was the value-emotional state of the public consciousness.

“The actions of V. Putin during the crisis successfully played up to the public expectations: the prime minister became the conductor and spokesman of what is called ‘the people's aspirations’”: he actually assumed the responsibility to protect the population from the tyranny of terrorists and, moreover, supporting a collective ‘sense of revenge’, he actually started a counterattack against terrorists and led a campaign to ‘destroy the crap in its lair’ in Chechnya, while washing away the disgrace of the disastrous Chechen campaign of the 1996 federal troops”³⁶.

And, finally, the third statement to consider. “The sharpened relations with the West and rather sharp (mainly populist) actions and statements of the authorities on international relations made it possible for the population (who have been feeling humiliated by the West for a number of years) to feel the restoration of Russia’s role in the world politics. From the point of view of the philistine, Putin was the one who returned this opportunity to Russia. Obviously, the trust of the philistine in politics, which gave him the opportunity to feel his own importance, will remain high enough”³⁷.

The direct increase in publications and materials in the media has also influenced Vladimir Putin’s rapid growth in popularity. It is known that the rapid growth of the popularity of one’s policy is directly related to the frequency of references to it in the media. Many positive publications on the activities of the prime minister and acting President of the Russian Federation provided him with such fame.

One cannot ignore the support extended to Vladimir Putin by Boris Yeltsin, who called him his successor, which already gave certain guarantees for the success of his further political career, as well as support for the ‘Unity’ movement, which named V. Putin as their leader.

Results and discussion

Evaluation of the activities of the Russian media during the 1996 and 2000 elections allows us to draw up the following conclusions.

Yeltsin's victory in the 1996 elections was the result of a powerful propaganda machine that managed to persuade the public opinion of Boris Yeltsin's team. Not the least role in the manipulative impact on public consciousness was played by the Rus-

³⁶ *Elections of the President of the Russian Federation in 2000. Archive of political advertising.* URL: <http://www.33333.ru/public/2000.php>

³⁷ Ibid

sian media. However, at the same time, having agreed to work on the side of one of the candidates (albeit the most influential one), the Russian media have predetermined their future destiny. By signing an unspoken agreement with the acting authorities, they, without being aware of it, have since lost the opportunity to fulfill at least several of their main functions: 1) to be an objective, reliable and effective source of information for the society; 2) to be the controller of the public on part of the authorities; 3) to be an arbitrator in the relationship between the power and the society. Henceforth Russian media began to act in alliance with the authorities, once again under its control and lost its independence, which was won in the early 1990s. Yet, in fact, there was virtually no other choice for the Russian media, after the victory of the Yeltsin team in the presidential election. After all, "... the election financed a clique of tycoons who took state assets for billions of dollars as a reward <...>. The Russians laid the blame for this on Chubais, which is entirely justified if we use it as evidence. "If I were once again in such a situation," he says, "I would have made absolutely the same decision." This was a 'fundamental historical decision'. The ensuing looting of assets was "the price we paid to prevent the Communists from returning to the country"³⁸.

Thus, the leaders of the Russian media exchanged the professional freedom of their work for a full, serene and prosperous life in the future. But such expectations for most of the mass media turned out to be a phantom, because the fate of a significant part of various media was not as cloudless as it was supposed to be to their owners and leaders.

The victory of Vladimir Putin in the first round of the presidential elections in 2000 was the result of using a powerful administrative resource, which already at that time was owned by the acting President of Russia.

Let us list the factors that provided V. Putin with victory in the elections.

First, the use of the image of a young, active, tough leader of the country, who declared a merciless war on terrorism, separatism and corruption. The appearance of a politician with such traits coincided with the value orientations of the society.

Secondly, Vladimir Putin announced an independent foreign policy aimed at restoring Russia's authority and influence in the international community, and in the domestic policy – ensuring the country's social and economic development and real growth in the well-being of its citizens. These actions coincided with the emotional mood of the population, tired of the long humiliation of their country by the most developed countries and cherishing the hope of restoring the former power and greatness of Russia.

³⁸ *Dinner of Anatoly Chubais with 'FT'* (Financial Times as of 18.02.02, translation by Inopressa.ru). URL: <http://psyfactor.org/polman3.htm>

Thirdly, thanks to his active statements and actions, Vladimir Putin won the attention of the media, became the most frequently mentioned media person, which was also promoted using administrative resources, since the activities of the country's leader are undoubtedly actively covered in the media. Media attention formed fame and strengthened the effect of using the personality of the new leader, which allowed him to gain sympathy of a significant part of the population and quickly increase his rating.

Fourthly, an impressive starting capital to his follower was passed by Boris Yeltsin, who elected his successor six months before his voluntary resignation from the post of President and provided Vladimir Putin with a fast and successful career.

Fifthly, one of the success factors was the political support of the promising policy from the 'Unity' movement, which provided him with the voices of their activists and supporters and declared V. Putin their leader.

Some general conclusions can be drawn by analyzing the technologies used during the two presidential elections. First, the results of the election campaigns we examined were highly dependent on manipulation of public consciousness initiated by the authorities and conducted through the media. Unfortunately, as we have already noted, the media had in this case the role of the government-controlled instrument in the process of manipulation, neglecting the fulfillment of their main function – providing the society with complete and reliable information.

Secondly, the Russian media (by the time of the elections to the State Duma in 1999 and presidential elections in 2000) were in an extremely dependent position from their owners (founders), be it government bodies or financial and industrial groups. During the conduct of these election campaigns, this dependence of the media was particularly clear. (A sad example was the story with the newspaper 'Izvestia', which changed its position in the elections in 1999 because the owner, Vladimir Potanin had business interests that could not be implemented without the support of the Kremlin).

Thus, the domestic media did not try to give the population of the country an accurate and complete picture of what was happening, reflecting the events in such a way that it lacked the most important fragments of the Russian reality. The Russian mass media neglected, and, most likely, already did not have the opportunity to disseminate the diverse opinions, assessments and judgments with which the best representatives of the Russian society, interested in successful social and economic transformations, could turn to their fellow citizens.

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