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The paper analyzes newspaper articles from 2009 to 2014 focusing on Russian business. The research aims at the way how American mass media present famous Russian businessmen. Having analyzed materials from NYT and USA Today, the authors come to the conclusion that the most frequent representatives of business in Russia in the American press are Roman Abramovich, Mikhail Prokhorov, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and Boris Berezovsky, while other billionaires are often overlooked. The research also examines the topics of the articles, the general tone, and some linguistic means of featuring the businessmen. The paper concludes that despite the scandalous and sensational news about the above-mentioned tycoons, the journalists pay attention to both negative and positive features and are very reserved in their judgments. Discussing the oligarchs' roles in Russian economy, politics, and social life, they portray the businessmen rather objectively providing the readers mainly with factual information and strong arguments.

*Ключевые слова:* Russian oligarchs, American media, objective reporting, tycoons, business.

The aim of the research was to examine the articles published in American newspapers and magazines for 5 years from 2009 to 2014 and find out how they present Russian businessmen. The initial stage showed that almost the only businessmen American journalists write about are Roman Abramovich, Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and Mikhail Prokhorov. However, these names don't appear frequently in the American media, but rather after certain events which involved the oligarchs. American journalists often call them "oligarchs" or tycoons rather than businessmen. It is interesting to note that newer Russian billionaires, such as Alisher Usmanov, Mikhail Fridman, Leonid Mikhelson, Viktor Vekselberg, and others who became the richest Russian businessmen according to Forbes, are rarely if ever are mentioned in the American media. It is more common for British newspapers and magazines to write about them. American journalists seem to be more interested in more famous oligarchs whose names are often associated with scandals or sensations.

#### **Russian tycoons in USA mass media**

The data we collected show that the above-mentioned people are usually shown very objectively; the journalists try to present them without much bias mentioning both their achievements and their illegal affairs. Let us now have a look at the character sketches that newspa-

pers and magazines give each of them and discuss when their names were mentioned in the media.

We would like to start with Roman Abramovich. He is a 48 year-old Russian businessman who built his business on natural resources such as oil or gas. Now he is the owner of a millhouse company and football club "Chelsea". American mass media mostly wrote about Abramovich in connection with Berezovsky and their court hearings in London from the beginning in 2008 till the end of 2012. The New York Times (NYT) discusses the event very objectively without supporting anyone:

"The case had been billed as the world's largest private lawsuit since it began more than four years ago. It culminated on Friday with a stunning victory for Mr. Abramovich, 45, and a harsh repudiation for Mr. Berezovsky, 65, who was characterized by the judge in the case, Elizabeth Gloster, as an "unimpressive and inherently unreliable witness," and at times a dishonest one, during the four months of testimony that ended in January." [1]

Abramovich is also often mentioned as the owner of "Chelsea" football team. The NYT writes that "While Mr. Berezovsky was in court for the ruling, Mr. Abramovich was in Monaco to watch a game involving Chelsea, which rode his billion-dollar investment in the club to victory this spring in Europe's Champions League, the most coveted club trophy in soccer" [1].

The second Russian oligarch widely discussed in the American media is Berezovsky. When he was found dead in his bathtub, American media wrote a lot of articles speculating on his life and the role he played in Russia. For example, The NYT in the article "The Oligarch Who Dug His Own Grave" calls him "the original oligarch" who "almost single-handedly created Russia." He "first pioneered the country's crony capitalism, masterminded its first managed elections, blurred the line between the media and the government, and even helped install Vladimir Putin into the presidency. The journalist even somewhat feels sorry for him as Berezovsky was later crushed by Putin whom they describe as a gravedigger even though later in the article the author admits that he had become rich "through cunning, ruthlessness and insider connections" [2].

In general, the question How did Russian oligarchs earn their money so quickly? is very common. Some articles state that at the end of the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was easy for Russian oligarchs to start their businesses thanks to the corruption in power. For instance, writes that "they were, in fact, chosen by the KGB. According to Preobrazhenskiy, 'In the early 1990s Berezovsky became one of the first Russian oligarchs. How? Nobody knows. As far as I know, the oligarchs were mostly reliable KGB agents to whom the KGB gave Communist Party money in order to turn them into KGB milk cows" [3].

Recent articles about Khodorkovsky focus on his release from prison offering very reserved comments about imprisonment and his reunion with his family in Berlin although earlier articles right before Putin's second elections supported his opposition to Putin.

Mikhail Prokhorov is another Russian billionaire whose activities are sometimes discussed in the American media. He is mentioned because of his president campaign in Russia, his New Jersey Nets, and his sponsorship of the Russian biathlon Olympic team.

Regarding the election campaign, the journalists obviously looked for some information about the battle between Putin and Prokhorov: "In his speech on Saturday, Mr. Prokhorov clarified that he is opposed to the political party (Vladimir) Putin founded, called United Russia, and that Right Cause will take on his party in the elections. But at a subsequent news conference, he suggested that he may not openly criticize Mr. Putin personally" [4].

As for New Jersey Nets, the articles are mainly positive describing his efforts to make this team better. From time to time he gives an interview about his team in some newspaper: "What I'm doing here, I don't go half-way in anything. I'll go all the way" [5, 6].

Concerning Prokhorov's biathlon activities, the journalists dwell upon his lavish sponsorship of the team ("Mr. Prokhorov is paying for the biathlon team to travel to Sochi on three private jets") and seem envious of the amount of money he spends on it. In the article in NYT "Russians with Deep Pockets Adopt Teams Going for Gold," Sam Dolnick also wonders if Russian billionaires volunteer for Olympic service, or they were enlisted. The author goes on to say that "as always, the relationships

between the Kremlin and the business world are murky at best, and political analysts can only speculate on precisely how the billionaires ended up working with the sports federations" [7].

### Conclusion

Summing up, it is necessary to note that Russian billionaires are presented rather objectively without much bias. The articles about them show both positive and negative features and are more factual than opinionated. They contain a lot of quotes proving the journalists' points of view without distorting information. ■

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1.URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/01/world/europe/russian-tycoon-loses-5-8-billion-case-against-ex-partner.html?pagewanted=all>.

2.URL: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/26/opinion/global/Boris-Berezovsky-the-oligarch-who-dug-his-own-grave.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/26/opinion/global/Boris-Berezovsky-the-oligarch-who-dug-his-own-grave.html?_r=0).

3.URL: <http://www.financialsense.com/contributors/jr-nyquist/russian-capitalism-death-boris-berezovsky>.

4. URL: <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/gameon/post/2011/06/nets-owner-mikhail-prokhorov-steps-up-in-russian-politics/1#.UyaThqh5MZM>.

5.URL: <http://www.newsday.com/sports/basketball/nets/mikhail-prokhorov-i-don-t-go-halfway-in-anything-1.6365323>.

6.URL: <http://www.forbes.com/profile/mikhail-prokhorov/>.

7.URL: <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/basketball/nba/story/2012-04-10/Nets-Prokhorov-in-the-hunt-to-keep-Deron-Williams/54159072/1>.

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## Российские бизнесмены и медиа США

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Проанализированы американские газетные статьи (2009–2014) на тему российского бизнеса и известных бизнесменов. Проанализировав материалы с «Нью-Йорк таймс» и «USA Today», авторы пришли к выводу, что в американской прессе наиболее часто упоминаются имена представителей российского бизнеса: Романа Абрамовича, Михаила Прохорова, Михаила Ходорковского, Бориса

Березовского, в то время как другие миллиардеры часто упускается из виду. В исследование также рассматриваются темы статей, общий тон и некоторые лингвистические средства при описании этих бизнесменов. Авторы пришли к выводу, что, несмотря на скандальные и сенсационные новости о вышеупомянутых магнатах, журналисты, ссылаясь на отрицательные и положительные черты, очень сдержаны в суждениях. Обсуждая, какую роль олигархи

играют в российской экономике, политике и общественной жизни, они изображают бизнесменов достаточно точно и в основном обеспечивают читателей фактической информацией и убедительными аргументами.

*Ключевые слова:* Российские олигархи, американские СМИ, точное сообщение, магнаты, бизнес.

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