

# the Journalist

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## The First Casualty

Putin's war takes its toll on media

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**A**s we were anticipating a return to some normality after the worst of the pandemic, something happens that should have been unimaginable in 2022 – war in Europe.

The scenes from Ukraine have been dreadful: families killed while fleeing the bombardment from Russia; civilian shelters and hospitals targeted; millions forced to leave their country; railway stations completely overwhelmed.

The fightback by Ukraine and the courage of its people has been astounding. There has been bravery from many journalists too – from those on the ground reporting the war to those Russian journalists who have taken a stand against the draconian crackdown on the media by the Russian government. In Putin's Russia, the media has never enjoyed much freedom to report in a fair and balanced way, but now journalists face 15 years in jail for calling a war a war. At one point even the BBC stopped reporting from Moscow because of fears over what they could actually say.

By contrast, Ukraine's President Zelensky has played a very media savvy game alongside his great personal bravery and refusal of the US's offer of a safe passage. He has zoomed his way into many parliaments and given many media interviews.

The war, among other things, has shown how crucial the media is in democracies. We should be very grateful for the freedoms we take for granted.

**Christine Buckley**

**Editor**

[@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley)



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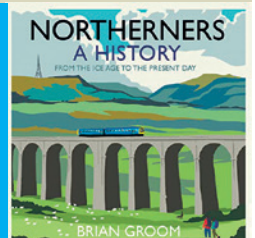


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# Media under fire amid Ukraine invasion

**JOURNALISTS** and media freedom have come under attack following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

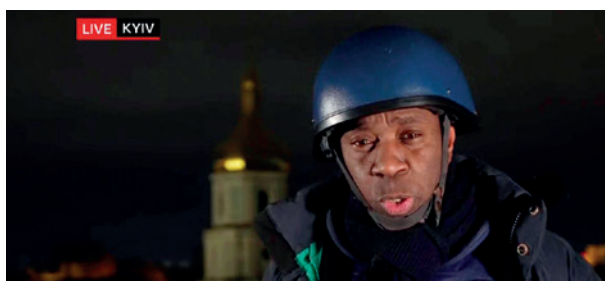
Some journalists have been killed during the reporting of the war and the Russian media, which was already restricted by tight state controls, was hit by a harsh new law which threatens journalists with 15 years in jail if they deviate from the Kremlin's version of events in Ukraine.

A number of Russian journalists have resigned from their jobs because they can't in conscience follow the Kremlin's line that the war is a 'special military operation'

to protect Russian-speaking enclaves in eastern Ukraine. One editor at Channel 1 in Russia – Marina Ovsyannikova - mounted a brave live protest during the evening news holding up a handwritten card telling viewers not to believe the government's propaganda and that they were being lied to.

There has also been widespread praise for the on the ground reporting from broadcasters including the BBC's chief international correspondent Lyse Doucet and Clive Myrie who presented the 10 o'clock news live from Kyiv.

As The Journalist went to



BBC

provide safety advice and guides to what employers should be doing to protect journalists in war zones. There is also support available for desk-based journalists who may be harmed psychologically because of dealing with distressing images and news.

There has also been a jump in demand for news. In the first three weeks of the war, the BBC's Ukraine live page recorded nearly 400 million views. The Times said it gained an average of 1,000 new digital subscribers a day during the first two weeks of the invasion.

**Analysis, pages 9-13**

press, eight journalists have been reported killed in Ukraine – five in the line of duty, two while not working and one while working.

Sky's special correspondent Alex Crawford and the BBC's Jeremy Bowen have come under Russian gun and artillery fire despite wearing flak jackets bearing the word

Press which usually afford protection to the media.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the National Union of Journalists in Ukraine have stepped up efforts to protect journalists covering the war and those fleeing from the invasion. The IFJ and its affiliates including the NUJ

## The journalists killed

**ACCORDING** to the National Union of Journalists in Ukraine (NUJU), these media workers have been killed in the Ukrainian invasion:

Yevhenii Sakun, a photojournalist for the Ukrainian TV channel Live who was killed by a strike on the Kyiv TV tower on March 1st.

Brent Renaud, who worked for the New York Times, was shot dead at a

checkpoint in Irpin. He had been filming evacuating refugees.

Pierre 'Zak' Zakrzewski, an Irish photojournalist for Fox News and Oleksandra Kuvshynova, a Ukrainian freelance working with Fox, were killed on March 14th when their vehicle came under fire in Horenka.

Oksana Baulina, a Russian journalist for the independent

website The Insider, was killed in Kyiv on March 23rd by Russian shells. She had been filming a shopping centre hit by a rocket.

Journalists reported killed outside the line of duty are:

Dilerbek Shakirov, a freelance for the newspaper Around You, who was shot with an automatic weapon on February 26th in Zelenivka. The Prosecutor General of Ukraine said that he had been a member of the 'House of Hope' charity.

The NUJU reported that Viktor Dedov, a camera operator with Sigma, had been killed on March 11th when his apartment in Mariupol was shelled.

A journalist killed while serving in the military is Viktor Dudar, the defence correspondent for the Lviv-based newspaper Expres and a volunteer paratrooper. He was shot by Russian soldiers while fighting in Mykolaiv. His death was announced on March 7th.

## Help Ukrainian media and refugees

### THE INTERNATIONAL

Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists have set up a special safety fund for Ukraine.

You can donate to it here: <https://donorbox.org/donation-to-the-ifj-safety-fund-for-journalists-in-ukraine>. All donations go directly towards providing emergency assistance.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, has written to NUJ members asking them to support the fund.

If you want to help the Ukrainian people, there are a number of ways. Useful organisations include The British-Ukrainian Aid charity: [british-ukrainianaid.org](http://british-ukrainianaid.org); The Red Cross, UNHCR and the Disasters Emergency Committee.

At a local level you can find many community groups and charity shops which are collecting clothing, blankets, toys and other items for Ukrainian people who have fled the war to neighbouring countries.



### RT loses its UK broadcast licence

Ofcom has revoked RT's UK broadcast licence. However, the Russian state-funded channel, which used to be known as Russia Today, is continuing coverage online. The telecoms regulator said the channel's licensee, ANO TV Novosti, was not "fit and proper to hold a UK broadcast licence". Ofcom is mounting 29 investigations into RT since the war started. RT's formation was part of a public relations drive in 2005 to improve Russia's image abroad. It was shaped by former media minister Mikhail Lesin and Aleksei Gromov, press spokesperson for Putin.

# 'Chilling effect' sparks plans to curb court action against journalists

**THE NUJ** has welcomed government plans to limit the ability of wealthy people and businesses to intimidate journalists using strategic lawsuit against public participation (SLAPP) actions.

The proposals include strengthening the public interest defence in the Defamation Act 2013, capping the costs that claimants can recover and bringing in a requirement for claimants to prove 'actual malice' in libel cases.

Courts could also gain the ability to throw out SLAPP cases earlier in proceedings and use civil restraint orders to stop people from bringing repeated cases.

The announcement came shortly after two investigative journalists, sued by Russian oligarchs, warned MPs on the Foreign Affairs Committee that the legal actions were having a 'chilling effect' on reporting.

Catherine Belton and Harper Collins, the publisher of her book *Putin's People*, recently settled five claims that cost the publisher £1.5 million, including one from now-sanctioned Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich.

After a High Court judge ruled that nine statements about Abramovich in the book were defamatory but threw out one of his claims, the oligarch agreed that most of the main claims he had attacked in the book could remain as long as some of the language was softened and more was added to his previous denials.

Belton, a former FT Moscow correspondent, said she did not

HEADLINEPHOTO LIMITED / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



want to make all the changes, but if the publisher had not agreed to the settlement, the case would have ended up costing £2.5 million in the UK and at least the same amount in Australia where Abramovich had also filed a claim.

She told MPs: "My cases are now pretty well known, but they're just the tip of an iceberg. There are journalists who've been censoring themselves, particularly about the activities of Russian oligarchs, for a very, very long time."

She named several law firms involved in her case and similar ones: Carter-Ruck, Schillings, Harbottle and Lewis and CMS.

Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, said: "For too long, the super-rich have got away with abusing the law to bully journalists and undermine media freedom."



**Journalists have been censoring themselves, particularly about the activities of Russian oligarchs, for a very, very long time**

**Catherine Belton**

## NUJ talks pay and equality at TUC's women's event

NUJ delegates to the Women's TUC, which was held online in March, spoke on a range of issues including protecting journalists from online attacks, women's health in the workplace, equal pay and domestic abuse.

Raj Ford told delegates: "Employers have come a long way in bringing in family-friendly policies for both men and women with caring responsibilities but have largely ignored the health needs of the older female workforce."

Cristina Lago considered the plight of women media workers "badly affected by the lack of equal pay" as seconder to Unison's motion on equal pay. She referred to the case of BBC presenter Samira Ahmed who, in January 2020,

supported by the NUJ, won a case against the BBC for being paid six times less than a male counterpart. Natasha Hirst, NUJ vice-president, spoke on composite motions on "solidarity with women and girls in Afghanistan".

She said: "I am immensely proud of my union for our response to the crisis in Afghanistan. We dedicated staff resources liaising with the IFJ to provide practical support, assistance and solidarity, and will continue to do so."

# Scan here if you care about journalism.



**Journalists' Charity**  
Supporting journalists nationwide

# Victory for Chris Mullin in legal challenge to protect sources

1991 ANDREW WARD



L-r: William Power, Gerry Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, Chris Mullin MP, Hugh Callaghan, Paddy Hill and John Walker

Mullin investigated the bombings for his book *Error of Judgement* and several documentaries in the 1980s. His work was instrumental in leading to the release of the Birmingham Six, who had been wrongfully imprisoned and whose convictions were quashed in 1991.

Outside the Old Bailey, Mullin, who has been an NUJ member for 50 years, said: "I am grateful to Judge Lucraft for his decision. The right of a journalist to protect his or her sources is fundamental to a free press in a democracy.

"My actions in this case were overwhelmingly in the public interest. They led to the release of six innocent men after 17 years in prison, the winding-up of the notorious West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad and the quashing of a further 30 or so wrongful convictions.

"This case also resulted in the setting up a Royal Commission which, among other reforms, led to the setting up of the Criminal Cases Review Commission and the quashing of another 500 or more wrongful convictions. My investigation is also the main reason why the identity of three of the four bombers is known.

"Finally, I am grateful to the National Union of Journalists for their unwavering support and also to my legal representatives, Louis Charalambous and Gavin Millar QC."

**CHRIS MULLIN**, a journalist and former MP, has won his legal battle against an attempt by West Midlands Police to force him to hand over material that would identify confidential sources relating to his investigations into the 1974 IRA Birmingham pub bombings.

Judge Mark Lucraft, the recorder of London, ruled at the Old Bailey that Mullin would not have to disclose his notes dating back to 1985 and 1986 despite West Midlands Police's application for a production order under the Terrorism Act.

## inbrief...

### WELCOME FOR IRISH LIBEL LAW REFORMS

The union has welcomed measures approved by the Irish Cabinet for reform of Ireland's 'draconian' libel laws. Séamus Dooley, Irish secretary, said the publication of the proposals was "a welcome step in freeing the Irish media from the shackles of draconian defamation laws which have gravely undermined the rights of the media and by extension, Irish citizens".

### BARONESS CHAPMAN RECEIVES DAMAGES

Baroness Chapman, a shadow Cabinet Office minister, has received an apology and substantial damages from Tim Shipman, the Sunday Times' chief political commentator. She took legal action over a tweet in May 2021 that falsely suggested she had a 'secret adulterous relationship' with Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer.

### THE JOURNALIST: MISSING YOUR COPY?

Some members who opted to receive The Journalist in print have not received it because of a data problem at our mailing house. The cause of this was found. The last edition marked the magazine's return to print after two years of being digital only. If you have not received your print copy, please email [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)

## Newsquest takeover amid bonus fears

**NEWSQUEST**, the UK's second biggest regional publisher, has bought Archant, the fourth largest in the market.

Archant was previously acquired by private equity firm Rcapital in September 2020.

The move came as the NUJ became increasingly concerned about Newsquest's use of bonus schemes related to digital targets. It feared they could damage staff mental health and wellbeing.

An NUJ survey of members at Newsquest found that 72 per cent did not think their targets were achievable and the majority (62 per cent) received no bonus in 2021.

Of those who did trigger

the bonus payment last year, only nine per cent received a payment in every quarter, which demonstrates the difficulty of attracting the significant number of views required.

## Rethink urged as bill puts open justice at risk

**THE NUJ** has backed a call from crime and court reporters across the country for the government to think again about damaging provisions within the Judicial Review and Courts Bill.

Without substantive amendment the NUJ believes this bill poses a serious risk to open justice.

A memo shared by HM Courts and Tribunal Service is clear that the media's knowledge of a substantial number of court cases would be adversely affected under this proposed legislation, thereby severely impeding a journalist's ability to report accurately and contemporaneously on proceedings.



### Extradition appeal denied

Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, has been denied permission to appeal against the High Court's decision to extradite him to the US, the Supreme Court has confirmed. In March, the UK's highest court said that judges had refused the bid to challenge the decision because it did not raise 'an arguable point of law'. Assange is wanted in the US over an alleged conspiracy to disclose defence information following WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of leaked documents relating to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

JEFF MORGAN, ALAMY

## Irish NUJ should use pandemic changes for a 'reboot', says chair

**CHANGES** forced by the pandemic should be used as an "opportunity to reboot" by the Irish NUJ and its branches and chapels, Siobhan Holliman, the cathaoirleach (chair) of the Irish executive council, told the Irish delegate meeting.

The meeting was a shortened conference online in February as the union was unable to hold an in-person event because of Covid restrictions.

Holliman said there had been a drop in branch and chapel activity and that this was a problem in branches in general, especially in Ireland. She added that unions were not about one person or one office but about all members.

Séamus Dooley, Irish secretary, paid tribute to branches that had embraced technology and had gone the extra mile to remain active in the pandemic. He noted this extra effort had often come



from smaller branches. Journalists enjoyed socialising and it was frustrating to hear the familiar cry of 'you're on mute', he said.

He added that he was proud of the work journalists had done during the challenging circumstances of the pandemic.

Delegates voted to look at including online meetings in the general work of the union in Ireland.

The conference instructed the Irish executive council

(IEC) to consider what changes the union needed to make to reflect experiences of holding branch and other meetings online and how it might proceed in the future, incorporating lessons learned.

"Recent experience suggests that online meetings could become part of the way in which members have their say in how the union is run and discussing other issues of interest, while retaining the all-important face-to-face meetings,

which are an essential part of union democracy," said the motion.

The motion called on the IEC to produce a report suggesting changes to how meetings were held and identifying any rule changes that may be needed.

It also noted that freelance forums organised by Dublin freelance branch in the past two years had been recast as webinars and podcasts and acknowledged the support of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland in this.

Thanks were also given in the motion, which said "the conference congratulates the Irish secretary and the staff of the Irish Office on keeping the show on the road during the pandemic.

"It also thanks the general secretary and her staff and the officers of the union for the way in which they dealt with the unprecedented challenges on our behalf."



**Online meetings could become part of the way in which members have their say in how the union is run**

**Irish Delegate Meeting motion**

## Pay will be a priority for chapel work

**PAY** should be the main issue when addressing the economic impact of the pandemic, Michelle Stanistreet, NUJ general secretary, told the conference.

She said that the economic blow to

journalists had been felt across all sectors.

Pay stagnation remained a live issue, she said, confirming that campaigning work would be ramped up in the coming months. This would

include embarking on pay claims as a priority.

There would also be engagement and support for chapels in a drive to ensure progress on the issue.

As part of the initiative, a practical

seminar for chapels on advancing pay claims is being prepared and is expected to be available in the near future.

The importance of pursuing pay increases was underlined by the rise in inflation in Ireland and the impact on the cost of living.



## Concern remains as threats continue

**THE CONFERENCE** discussed the ongoing threats to journalists, particularly in Northern Ireland.

Delegates noted that any attacks jeopardising the safety of journalists, whether online or in person, would always be unacceptable.

Delegates said they believed the union had been quick to defend members and condemn those posing threats.

Recent concerns have grown over the rise in threats from anti-vaccination groups, and about people who specifically target female journalists.

Delegates reflected on the murder of journalist Lyra McKee three years ago when she was covering unrest on the streets in Derry.

A parliamentary screening of a film celebrating and paying tribute to McKee's life is being supported by the NUJ.

# Reach reports 'successful year' – but closer scrutiny of work feared

PHOTOEDIT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

**THE NUJ** is urging Reach, the country's largest newspaper publisher, to reward its journalists after the company's chief executive Jim Mullen revealed financial results showing it had enjoyed "a successful year".

Mullen's total salary, bonus and benefits totalled £4m – the highest award to the most senior executive in the company in the past decade.

Reach shareholders have earned £22.6 million from their 2021 investments with a dividend of 7.21p a share.

While the company's digital revenues climbed 25 per cent last year, Reach is planning a pilot accelerating personal development (APD) scheme that will focus on numbers of page views.



Chris Morley, Reach NUJ national coordinator, said: "Digital journalism plays an important and growing part in the mix of income for this company and has done so to date without the need to rely on rigid individual targets."

The NUJ has engaged in discussions with Reach over the APD plans, and raised concerns over its possible impact on staff mental health and their journalism.

"We do not see the case for

the setting of 'benchmarks', 'goals', 'objectives' or however targets may be described, with the negative behaviour and outcomes that can ensue."

The APD scheme is 'very detailed', Morley noted. It involves monthly one-to-one sessions with a focus on page view numbers, although Reach said personal projects and diversity and inclusion would also be discussed.

"We are particularly

concerned about the effect constant and relentless scrutiny of performance around page views will have on members' wellbeing – something that Reach tells us that they take very seriously."

A request to pause the pilot was rejected, but Reach said it was willing to review it as it went along and continue dialogue with the union.

Morley also said Reach's directors should address "languishing" pay: "It is not lost on our members that they have helped the company to make operating profits of £146.1 million – up nine per cent on the previous 12 months – and that the business's profit margin continues to tick higher to nearly 24 per cent."

## inbrief...

### FT SUBSCRIBERS CLIMB TO 1 MILLION

The Financial Times said that it has reached one million paying digital subscribers, with more than half of them based outside the UK. The FT has invested significantly in expanding its US readership in recent years and currently more than 20 per cent of its subscribers are based there.

### ARCHANT SELLS SPECIALIST BRANDS

Regional publisher Archant has sold several specialist brands to Kelsey Media ahead of an expected sale of the group by its private equity owner. The Norfolk-based group sold the magazines Agricultural Trader, Country Smallholding, Canal Boat, The Tillergraph and Pilot. Kelsey Media has a variety of specialist publications.

### JUDGE DISMISSES KAZAKH LIBEL CLAIM

A libel claim brought by a Kazakh mining company over FT journalist Tom Burgis' book about 'dirty money' has been dismissed by a High Court judge. Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation had sued Burgis over his book Kleptopia: How Dirty Money is Conquering the World, which was published by Harper Collins in 2020.

## Fresh push for O'Hagan inquiry

**THE UNION** has renewed its call for an independent investigation into the murder of Sunday World journalist and union activist Martin O'Hagan in September 2001 after fresh allegations about police conduct arose.

A BBC Spotlight programme claimed

that police were given the names of people said to have been involved in the murder in Lurgan, Northern Ireland, within 48 hours but did not act.

It said an insider known as Witness A met detectives soon after the Loyalist Volunteer Force murder. It is

understood Witness A said he had been asked to help dispose of the getaway car and other items and has named people he claimed were involved.

O'Hagan's family is suing the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Ministry of Defence.

## Arrest after Turkish journalist murdered

**The NUJ** has joined the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) in condemning the murder in February of the Turkish journalist Gungör Arslan. He was the owner and editor-in-chief of Ses Kocaeli. He was shot by an assailant just outside his office.

The IFJ has reported that Gungör had been subjected to regular threats of violence because of his coverage of corruption allegations against the Kocaeli Mayor Tahir Büyükakın who represents the ruling Justice and Development Party.

The authorities have arrested a suspect in relation to the killing. The murder is one of many incidents of violence against Turkish journalists in attempts to silence them and prevent media freedom.



### The Times pays Mike Ashley damages

News UK, publisher of The Times, has apologised to businessman Mike Ashley and agreed to pay damages over 'untrue' allegations that his phone records were 'protected' during a High Court battle. The chief executive of Frasers Group (formerly Sports Direct International) started libel proceedings after front-page coverage of mobile telephone company Sport Mobile. In 2018, regulator the Independent Press Standards Organisation ruled in Ashley's favour over a Times piece that wrongly said parliament had found Sports Direct's main warehouse was run like a 'gulag' conditions.

CHARLES TYRWHITT

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# Putin stands to lose the information war



Many journalists are rising to the challenge, says **Raymond Snoddy**

**T**he courage and resilience of the Ukrainian army and its thousands of civilian reservists has been surprising and inspiring.

The incompetence of the numerically superior Russian army has also surprised many specialists, but not the speed with which setbacks led to the descent into the targeting of Ukrainian civilians and growing allegations of war crimes and even genocide.

What is not in the least surprising is how dozens of British journalists from television presenters and camera crews to newspaper reporters and photographers have risen to the challenge, and the danger, of telling the story of Russia's war of aggression against an independent sovereign state.

When not deliberately targeted, the fate of all of them is at the daily whim of long-range missiles and shells.

Lyse Doucet and Clive Myrie of the BBC have been particularly visible, as have the indefatigable Lindsey Hilsum and Matt Frei of Channel 4 News. We should also mention Sky News special correspondent Alex Crawford and chief correspondent Stuart Ramsay, who is lucky to have escaped with his life after a deliberate attack. But the real story is about all of the journalists reporting from Ukraine and how, by collectively bearing witness, they have created a narrative of facts that has helped mobilise Western governments against the Putin attack while moving public opinion gloriously in favour of helping millions of Ukrainian refugees.

It is not at all surprising that in Russia, despite everything, many journalists have shown a different level of courage by standing out against Putin's state-run propaganda steamroller,

thereby risking loss of liberty and possibly their lives.

The individual act of live on-screen bravery by Marina Ovsyannikova, who held up her No To War placard to 12.5 million viewers of Channel One's main evening news bulletin, caught the imagination of the world.

Many fear her initial \$280 fine is only the beginning and that she could still face prosecution under a new law that provides up to 15 years in jail for spreading 'fake news'. This, of course, is anything that contradicts the official line that the invasion of Ukraine is a 'special military operation' designed to counter 'neo-Nazis'.

Other journalists have quit their jobs rather than push out the official line. They include experienced TV presenter Lillya Gildeyeva, who quit her anchor role on the pro-Putin Gazprom-Media's NTC channel. Gildeyeva fled the country before sending a letter of resignation and posting a No To War message.

The staff of the independent TV channel Dozhd – TV Rain – decided to resign en masse rather than face such draconian penalties.

Under such threats, Dmitry Muratov, the Nobel-prize winning editor-in-chief of opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta, decided he had to pull coverage of the war in Ukraine because the paper could not risk the freedom of its staff.

Instead, the newspaper said it would continue to report on the consequences Russia now faces, including the intensifying economic crisis and persecution of dissidents.

Since 2000, seven Novaya Gazeta journalists have been murdered, including Anna Politkovskaya who had suffered poisoning and a mock execution before finally being shot outside her Moscow flat.

Outside Russia, Putin is losing the information war not least because of President Volodymyr Zelensky's adroit use of Zoom to pop up before legislatures around the world, including the US Congress and the House of Commons. Twitter is used to distribute around the world pictures of smouldering Russian tanks.

A superficial glance might suggest that, inside Russia, Putin is winning the information war. State-owned television channels, the most influential source of news for most Russians, continue to spread propaganda that the 'special military operation' is going to plan.

Instagram, used by more than 60 million Russians, has been blocked and dissident voices are suppressed.

Yet the opposite could be true – or true before too long.

In this age, it is almost impossible to block all information. Most Russians have mobile phones and everywhere information seeps across porous frontiers. The Ukrainians have done their bit by broadcasting a channel in Russian.

Even if all unauthorised information could be stamped out, it would be difficult for Russians to ignore the evidence before their eyes.

They can hardly avoid the closures of Western-owned shops and businesses, the rationing of salt and sugar, the Russian civilian aircraft with few places to go – and the return of bodies.

In the end, information, helped on its way by word of mouth, will lead to the undoing of Vladimir Putin. Journalists everywhere, including the courageous minority in Russia, will have played a central role.

Here, we can celebrate such achievements but mainly we can celebrate that we are able to be safe in our homes.

“  
Journalists in Ukraine have created a narrative that has helped mobilise Western governments and move public opinion  
”



**Barney Cullum** on the heightened Russian assault on independent media

# Media muzzled

**T**he perceived power of Russia's partisan state media was notorious long before the war in Ukraine. As the space for independent voices shrinks further, what appetite exists for alternatives to the Kremlin's narrative?

Which party is the aggressor responsible for the brutal destruction seen in Ukraine? According to TASS, the behemoth Russian state news agency, a special military operation was authorised by president Vladimir Putin to 'protect people who have been suffering from abuse and genocide'.

The feed from TASS was published on February 24, the day of Russia's escalated invasion, eight years after the conflict between the two nations was first ignited. Further messages, from the Russian defence ministry, were amplified without challenge: 'Civilians are not threatened.'

State media has long been the dominant source of news in Russia. Independent outlets were reaching just 35 per cent of total audiences as recently as 2019, according to a study by pollsters Levada. Russians also tend to trust news produced domestically over that published overseas, according to a more recent survey from Deloitte in 2021. This data was taken over in March, however, without explanation. This may serve as a reminder that evidence can be fleeting you're looking – web browsers now navigate to statements of solidarity with Ukraine.

Millions around the world have stood shoulder to shoulder with victims of the conflict, including some citizens of Russia. Ilya Ershov, a St Petersburg resident, is one who has denounced what has unfolded. He posted his attendance at a protest in Estonia on Facebook in February.

At the start of the invasion, those in Russia with an internet connection could readily receive information from multiple sources. "Independent media were trying to show different points of view, giving the floor both to pro-Ukrainian and anti-Ukrainian speakers," Ershov told me.

A day after our interview, these same media outlets – the likes of TV Rain and Doxa – were effectively barred from reporting critically and objectively. Anyone found to be publishing 'misinformation about the special military operation' could face 15 years in jail.

The threat was not made empty. Even before the legislation was passed, Echo of Moscow – the capital's oldest independent radio station – was 'switched off' for spreading so-called false information about the war.

"Censorship is being imposed through regulation and legislation," Ershov said, with state media continuing to characterise those Russia is fighting as 'fascist clichés'. The

fact that nationalist parties have zero representation in Ukraine's parliament goes unreported.

Protests in Russia must be pre-approved by authorities or attendees risk arrest. Hundreds who have rallied in St Petersburg against the war have been jailed. Ershov has seen one friend detained for attending a dinner in honour of the war's casualties.

"My heart bleeds for Ukraine and its people," one UK-based Russian academic tells me, "but there is very little those of us with dual citizenships can do without calling a potential court martial on ourselves. Those in Russia can do even less as their perils are immediate unless the masses rise as in the '90s."

Ukrainian journalist Galyna Sergeyeva believes Putin's regime could indeed be toppled in an uprising but only if more Russians desired it.

"We Ukrainians proved that everything can be changed if you want it," the Finland-based news writer says, in reference to her country's Dignity Revolution of 2014. "I have Russian friends who been arrested for protesting, but there are too few of them."

On the day we spoke, Sergeyeva's sister-in-law had arrived in Helsinki from Dnipro, having escaped the industrial city in eastern Ukraine with her daughter. She cannot sleep from anxiety and the girl's father has had to stay in the country as martial law prevents all men from leaving so they are available to fight.

The Russian state-backed broadcaster RT – formerly Russia Today – was blocked in Europe on the day of our conversation. For weeks, RT has amplified the Kremlin's line that Russian precision attacks would hit only military targets. The BBC reported in parallel that all 400 military beds in the city were already full.

"We have Russian TV in Ukraine, though fortunately less and less," Sergeyeva continues. "Russian media is very powerful – and Russian education is also a form of propaganda – but, even here in Helsinki, hardly any Russians are vocal against the war. The second-generation Russians here have always had access to independent Russian-language media [so] they are not zombies. It seems they just don't want to do anything that could compromise themselves."

Sergeyeva has cousins in Russia and family ties are being tested. "There are still so many connections. But I am getting more and more convinced that we are totally different now."

One Russian dissenter described the situation on social media as "resembling 9/11, only it's your own country that's the terrorists and there are not enough people at the rear of the plane fighting back".

Belarusian human rights activist Natalia Koliada fears Russian society may have missed its opportunity to push back against propaganda, censorship and foreign policy.

"In Belarus in 2020, the presenters, producers and camera operators on state television all left their positions in protest at the scale of murder and rape committed on democracy activists in police cells. They knew what was happening after the elections and that it was not being reported and so they resigned. Our dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, brought RT to Minsk and simply replaced everyone who had left."

"In Belarus, we had our chance to block major propaganda over 26 years [before electoral violence in 2020], when the names of critics were being erased through dictatorship. It is

Those in Russia can do even less as their perils are immediate unless the masses rise as in the '90s



## An editor's protest

**MARINA OVSYANNIKOVA** was driven by 'deep shame' and thoughts of her father's Ukrainian family when the Russian journalist ambushed a news bulletin broadcast by her Channel One employers on March 14.

"No war. Stop the war! Don't believe the propaganda," read the words on a banner the news editor held up bravely live on state television.

too easy to say that Russian society is being controlled. It has allowed itself to be controlled. I'm glad to see some people in the Russian media now speak out against the war, but why couldn't they have done it when it could have been preventative?"

"If people in Russia have known for eight years that its government invaded Ukraine eight years ago, and it has continued to live the life it has lived until it became a 'wake-up call' now, clearly it means there is no society."

"Those going to protests are performing courageous acts... But this is out of a population of 140 million, so this means the population is happy. All the major voices are in jail. The population allowed itself to completely lose the idea of freedom and accept the bloody regime."

Journalists and others creatives who can escape Russia are now doing so. Many know of the purges of their parents' generation and are regrouping in central Asia, dreaming of destinations like Germany. Or Poland, where Koliada, whose early career was spent in nuclear disarmament, is based.

Together with her partner Nikolai Khalezin – a former journalist who saw the three newspapers he edited in Belarus shut down by state censors – Koliada recently directed a prescient play, *Dogs of Europe*, staged at London's Barbican. Set in 2049, the story sees swathes of the continent subsumed into a Russian super-state after its citizens eschew reading and rioting, turning a blind eye to the dangers of creeping authoritarianism.

"We started the play because we didn't have any space [to resist], but we had the strong belief that, if we went underground, we would find all the space of the world. There remains a window for the vision of 2049 to be avoided, but now it is a tiny one. And it is not down to us any more."

**Barney Cullum's reports on Russia and other areas appear in *New Internationalist*, *openDemocracy* and elsewhere. He has worked in Moscow and St Petersburg**

ZUMA PRESS, INC. / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Inevitably, the Muscovite was arrested shortly after. Spreading 'disinformation' about the war had 10 days earlier been made a crime punishable by up to 15 years in jail.

The real crime was the invasion, she argued in a pre-drafted video statement uploaded to Russian social media platform Telegram.

"I've spent many of the last few years working for Channel One, doing Kremlin propaganda, and I'm deeply ashamed of this," she said.

"Ashamed that I allowed lies to come from the TV screen. Ashamed that I allowed the zombification of Russian people."

Formerly known as Public Russian Television, it was the first station to air in Russia after the break-up of the Soviet Union. It had up to 250 million viewers globally before YouTube banned stations affiliated with the Kremlin after the escalation of the eight-year conflict.

"We were silent in 2014 when all this had just started," Ovsyannikova added. "We didn't protest when the Kremlin poisoned [Alexei] Navalny. We just silently watched this anti-human regime at work."

"We Russians are thinking and intelligent people. It's in our power alone to stop this madness."

Clever use of blockchain is getting stories told. **Barrie Clement** reports

PIRANG GFX / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



## Beating the **state blackout** of news

**I**t was the party slogan in George Orwell's 1984: "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength."

It might well be the guiding principles of Vladimir Putin.

However, try as he might, the Russian leader has achieved limited success in persuading a worldwide audience of the justice of his invasion of Ukraine.

He has had far more success in controlling the information the majority of Russians continue to consume and, apparently, continue to believe.

Over the past 10 years, Russian reporters have found it increasingly difficult to give their fellow citizens an honest view of their government's actions. Since the invasion of Ukraine, it has been pretty near impossible.

Apart from transmitting lies, the Russian government blocks or censors the truth, through punitive laws, shutting websites, limiting the scope of the internet and by forcing leading independent news outlets to close.

Attempts to defend press freedom are given short shrift. Russian human rights media project OVD-Info monitors

politically motivated persecutions and cases of abuse of authority by Russian police officers. In December 2021, OVD-Info's website got blocked.

The Duma – the Russian parliament – has passed a law banning news outlets from publishing anything other than state press releases. As we know, it is illegal to call the events in Ukraine a war. Bombing and shelling civilian targets does not happen or, if it does, the Ukrainians themselves are to blame.

But Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (Réporteurs Sans Frontières/RSF) has found an ingenious way of helping journalists disseminate the truth in Russia, as well as in Turkey and Brazil.

In the past, reporters in those countries have found that stories critical of their governments were either altered or taken down.

Now, with the help of blockchain technology, RSF can ensure original uncensored material sees the light of day through a new website called The Truth Wins. The technology makes it extremely difficult for government hackers to change or delete stories.

To introduce an element of irony into the process, readers and other

journalists can access the site by using codes publicised by the countries concerned; the latest winning lottery numbers. The beauty of this is that the codes change constantly so state censors find it hard to keep up.

"Even in countries with tight control of the media one thing always gets through: the lottery numbers," says RSF.

"Cutting through the propaganda and the chatter, the national lottery numbers provide a point of access. You type that week's Russian, Turkish or Brazilian lottery numbers into

Twitter or other social media sites, and the results take you to a source of current, independent journalism that those states don't want you to see."

RSF is working to make lottery codes work on almost every social media platform.

In response to the antics of the Kremlin, Twitter now has a Tor 'onion' service. The Tor browser system encrypts web traffic and routes it through a series of servers to ensure user anonymity.

Russia has more primitive methods of undermining freedom of information. Murders and physical attacks against journalists continue to go unpunished.

Many reporters are being arrested on trumped-up charges. On March 10, Crimean journalist Remzi Bekirov was sentenced to 19 years in prison by a Russian military tribunal for 'organising a terror group'.

Bekirov is a reporter for opposition news website Grani.ru. He was accused of being a member of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Russia.

Meanwhile, in Turkey, independent journalists risk imprisonment, or being subject to strict judicial control or stripped of their passports. The government controls 90 per cent of the national media.

In Brazil, many journalists have been killed. Harassment, disinformation and self-censorship usually spike around elections. Brazil is known for making independent information difficult to access, through harassment and disinformation as well as legal action.

To modify the 1984 quote, RSF is attempting to ensure that in those countries; war is war, freedom is freedom and ignorance is ignorance.

**//**  
**Readers can access the site by using codes publicised by the countries concerned: the latest winning lottery numbers. State censors find it hard to keep up**  
**//**

OLEG ELKOV / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



# Story behind the picture

Aid for Ukraine  
*By Jess Hurd*

**When I arrived at the large forecourt of the White Eagle Club in Balham, south London, it was full of cars delivering bags of aid. People formed a human chain to take donations of clothing, footwear, toiletries and other essential items, baby products and medicines.**

Chris, the manager of the Polish community centre, explained he was overwhelmed by the amount of donations, which had filled six aid trucks destined for Poland and Ukraine.

Inside, the volunteers snaked through into different rooms. One small room was for military items. A woman was trying on an old British Second World War helmet that had been donated: “That is not a good donation,” another volunteer laughed as he sorted medical supplies.

I walked through to a much larger room, formerly a restaurant with elaborate, cut-glass chandeliers, but now filled to the ceiling with bags of shoes and clothing. The atmosphere was tense and focused. You could feel the sense of urgency with which the predominantly women volunteers were sorting bags into groups for men, women and children. Some volunteers had been working 14-hour stretches.

Anastasiia, a young woman in her early 20s, was helping for a second day. Originally from Ukraine and with family still in Kyiv, she explained: “It’s better than staying at home and worrying.”

The operation reminded me of the Care for Calais warehouse, where I documented the journey of British Fire Brigades Union members on board a fire engine full of donations from the UK for refugees trying to seek safety in Britain. Back then, a different narrative towards refugees dominated much of the UK media, in comparison to the open borders and humane response we are seeing now for the Ukraine refugee crisis.

# Restart for refu

Journalists fleeing persecution are getting help to secure work. **Neil Merrick** reports

**O**sama Gaweesh never expected to become a journalist. Before a military coup in 2013, he worked as a dentist in Damietta, a small city on Egypt's Mediterranean coast. He was also a political activist.

Having fled to Turkey following the coup, Gaweesh (pictured right) helped set up Mekameleen, a TV channel opposed to the Egyptian government led by former general Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. He quickly established himself as a broadcaster and presenter.

A trip to London with his wife in 2018 was meant to be a holiday. But his plans changed dramatically when he was warned at Istanbul Airport that, should he return to Turkey, he would be extradited to Egypt and probably imprisoned.

Four years later, Gaweesh is settled in London and working for Al-Hiwar, an Arabic TV channel. He runs his own news website, Egypt Watch, hosts a podcast and freelances. Thanks to a UK project for refugee journalists, he also has a growing network of contacts and knows significantly more about international media.

"It wasn't acceptable to be living in a country with a major media industry but only working in Arabic," he says. "I wanted to become an international journalist and build a network of people around me."

The Refugee Journalism Project was set up in 2016 by Vivienne Francis, a former BBC journalist and a lecturer in journalism at the London College of Communication (LCC), part of the London University of Arts.

Its aim is to help refugees and other displaced migrants find work, while increasing diversity across the UK media. To date, more than 50 people have completed the project, with a fourth cohort having started this January.

To be accepted, participants must have worked in journalism or shown interest in it before being granted refugee status in the UK. They must also have a reasonable level of English.

"We try to connect people with professional roles and paid work," says Francis.

Osama Gaweesh's break came in 2015 when, through what became known as Sisileaks, he revealed major corruption in the Egyptian government. As a result, he received threatening phone calls and, though still living in Turkey, was sentenced to imprisonment in Egypt should he return.

By 2019, Gaweesh was granted leave to remain in the UK, at which point his wife and two children joined him. A year later, he joined the refugee journalism project and spent about a year attending workshops and lectures, as well as being mentored by Ian Dunt, a political journalist and author.

For Gaweesh, the project took him from conversing

reasonably well in English to being able to suggest and write articles. "It opened doors for me," he says. "I built up my self-confidence and learnt how to pitch ideas to the right editor."

Throughout the project, he received tips from journalists with experience of working in the UK and internationally. Now he has the confidence to take ideas to the likes of The Guardian, ITV and Bloomberg. "It's a precious thing to have this network when you are coming from abroad," he says.

The project is funded by Open Society Foundations, the Google News Initiative and LCC and is free to participants. Sessions include media law, data journalism, podcasting and making documentaries.

At the time the project was set up in 2016, Francis's journalism students at LCC were keen to write about the refugee crisis in Europe and had suggested visiting Greece or Calais. But, as she pointed out, it is possible to get a firsthand account of the crisis by speaking to refugees seeking sanctuary in the UK. This includes participants in the project, some of whom address students about issues linked to social justice.

Since 2021, the project has included paid fellowships. In Gaweesh's case, this took him to journalism.co.uk, where, among other things, he wrote about journalists working remotely during the pandemic. "It was a huge opportunity to understand the UK media," he says.

Among those starting on the project this year is Alia Rajai, who worked for BBC Persian TV in Afghanistan before moving to the UK in 2018. Since last August, she has



**THE NUJ** is receiving an increasing number of enquiries from asylum seekers and refugees who face barriers working in the UK, including language.

A project set up through the union's London freelance branch aims to tackle this and other issues by giving journalists who have recently arrived in the UK more opportunity to converse in their mother tongue.

Francesca Marchese (pictured above), who came

## Breaking down the language barriers

to the UK from Italy nine years ago, hopes NUJ members with languages besides English as their mother tongue will get to know and support refugees and other migrants.

Members can help new arrivals understand the conventions of the UK media and find employment, while also acting as ambassadors for the NUJ, she says. "The idea is to help people become journalists in the UK, including those who come as refugees because of difficulties in their own country."

The project, All the Voices of the NUJ, was launched by Marchese last year. Previously, she helped set up a group of more than 100 Italian speakers.

Many people who have been journalists in other countries struggle to find work in the UK because of poor English and, Marchese says, can end up in low-paid service industry jobs.

Anyone interested in All the voices of the NUJ should email membership secretary Phil Sutcliffe at [philsutcliffe47@gmail.com](mailto:philsutcliffe47@gmail.com).

# Refugees

freelanced for Afghanistan International TV, but would like to find a job with a UK broadcaster, and not be seen solely as someone who reports on Afghanistan.

“There is such a variety of media in the UK, especially in London,” she says. “I want to meet more journalists and improve my skills in writing and speaking, as well as finding out more about other countries and regions of the world.”

Mentoring is a key part of the project, and it allows participants to develop a one-to-one relationship with a UK-based journalist. Mentors generally find it rewarding as well, as it allows them to examine assumptions about how and why journalism functions as it does. “I’m very keen that it’s a reciprocal relationship,” says Francis at the LCC.

Daniel Trilling acted as a mentor for the project’s first cohort and continues to sit on its steering committee. A freelance who has written extensively about refugees and migration, Trilling was pleased to offer tips and hands-on experience and help his mentee negotiate the working environment when he took up an internship with a trade magazine.

“We stayed in touch. I was interested to see how he got on,” says Trilling. “Being forced to stop and explain why you do something the way you do or why a story is structured in a particular way is really useful.”

Since 2016, participants on the refugee journalism project have generally come from countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Afghanistan. Until this year, the majority were male, but the current cohort has more women than men.

In addition to Rajai, they include Mozhgan Shojaee, who escaped Kabul last summer after the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan. Shojaee had worked for TV channels in Kabul since she was 16 and later set up her own YouTube channel, carrying news about Afghanistan. “It’s very dangerous to live there as a woman or as a human rights activist,” she says.

Following the Taliban’s takeover, she made her way to Pakistan with her father and picked up a visa arranged by her husband, who was already living in the UK.

“I found out about the refugee journalism project and thought it would be a good experience for me,” she explains. “It’s the sort of thing that looks good on my CV.”

Shojaee’s ambition is to find a job in the UK, possibly with the BBC. For now, she is more confident communicating in Persian or Dari, as she did in Kabul, but the project may lead to opportunities to write or broadcast in English.

Most people who join the project have at least five years’ experience of journalism and are typically qualified at master’s level or above. It not only recognises what they achieved before their lives and careers were thrown upside down, but also offers the opportunity of making a new start away from the threat of persecution and other obstacles.

“Sometimes a person may have achieved a lot in their own country,” says Francis. “It’s about having the confidence [to succeed] when you have been through persecution and displacement, and perhaps separation from your family.”



**It opened doors for me. I built up my self-confidence and learnt how to pitch ideas to the right editor**



# Seen to be done? Hidden justice

Tribunals can appear secretive, especially in whistleblower cases, says **David Hencke**



he advice in the staff guide by HM Courts and Tribunal Services on the right of journalists to see witness statements and accompanying documents at employment tribunals could not be clearer.

“At the hearing, the public and the media are entitled to be shown a copy of the hearing bundle and any witness statement or other documents referred to in evidence, unless the tribunal orders otherwise.”

Yet there is growing evidence that judges are appearing to either ignore that advice or find a loophole so they can avoid allowing this.

One reason is that many judges are no longer used to reporters attending employment tribunals since staffing cuts and the decline of local papers mean fewer cases are covered.

The other is that employment tribunals are handling more highly controversial cases brought by whistleblowers – people often dismissed for making ‘protective disclosures’ on issues such as malpractice, corruption, bullying, discrimination and avoidable deaths, which the organisation would rather not be aired in public.

So what might be a routine hearing into a person’s employment rights turns into a hearing putting the reputation of the company or public body at risk. The stakes are much higher and both public bodies and companies are bringing in QCs at great expense to cross-examine the whistleblower, who is representing him or herself because of an ability to afford a lawyer for a series of hearings.

And witness statements and bundles of documents in these cases are withheld as public bodies and companies urge judges not to release all of them because of the damaging detail of the disclosures.

All this makes reporting much more difficult for journalists, often freelancers, who cannot get access to witness statements and details referenced in the tribunal hearings while whistleblowers are cross-examined.

Unlike other courts, there are no records of the proceedings of employment tribunals, only the judges’ notes, which are

private. It is also a criminal offence for a reporter or any member of the public to record the proceedings.

At the moment, four big whistleblower cases are going through the tribunal system – two of them involve protective disclosures in the NHS and the other two involve Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and jointly Sellafield and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

In three of these cases, judges have recently taken decisions not to release the full set of documents and witness statements to the press and the public.

The most dramatic development has been at Manchester employment tribunal where not only were journalists initially denied witness statements and bundles, but also there were moves to hold large parts of the hearing in camera.

The case brought by retired senior detective Peter Jackson against GMP claiming a ‘culture of cronyism’ and ‘cliques’ had seen senior staff overpromoted which put the public at risk and compromised major police operations. The GMP said his complaint was based on ‘professional jealousy’.

Lawyers for GMP asked the judge, Paul Holmes, to invoke rule 50, which allows a tribunal to be held in private. GMP wanted some of the hearing – covering a stake-out at a paedophile house in Operation Nixon and the infiltration of the police force by criminal gangs in Salford – to be held in camera with the press and public barred.

Journalists employed by the BBC, The Times, Daily Mail, Manchester Evening News and Reach, the owners of the Mirror group, combined to employ a barrister to argue that the case should be heard in public. They won their case, except for where an undercover police officer would have been named.

GMP even argued that Matt O’Donoghue, a freelance journalist covering the case for the BBC, who acted as a witness for the group, was ‘anti police’.

O’Donoghue said: “In their legal submission presented to the tribunal, they attempted to portray me as an anti-police propagandist and clipped up a tiny part of a longer report – that they’d somehow got hold of without on-screen idents or chyrons – to present to the judge out of context.”

Taking a section out of a 2019 Granada Reports documentary on a £26 million GMP computer failure when O’Donoghue interviewed a Police Federation officer, the GMP said: “The implied independence of Mr O’Donoghue in



**In one case ... I could only look at the document for 10 minutes because the official said she had to catch a bus**







Cumbria, the Whitehaven News and for The Daily Telegraph by Tommy Greene, a freelance journalist. However, they have not been able to access key documents.

The judge, Philip Lancaster, also at the request of Sellafield's lawyers, at one stage held part of the Leeds Employment Tribunal online hearing in camera – allowing the press to stay but barring the public.

She lost the case but plans to appeal.

The third example involves a cardiologist dismissed by Epsom and St Helier University NHS Trust, who made a protective disclosure over the avoidable death of a patient with a heart condition. The details of the case are in the panel on this page and a decision was pending at the time The Journalist went to press.

A spokesperson for the HM Courts and Tribunals Service said that part of the problem in obtaining documents was that the advice was “correct but somewhat simplistic”.

It turns out that there are much more complex rules – including one case going to the Supreme Court over the timing of the release of documents in cases.

Once a case is over, the tribunal do not always keep all the documents and are reluctant to release them if there has been a contentious argument between both parties.

Maybe the solution is to avoid getting witness statements via the tribunal altogether and go straight to the witnesses themselves. All parties get the bundles involved and, as far as I can see, the tribunal cannot do anything about it if this happens – unless part of the statements have been struck out of the evidence going to the tribunal.

But one thing is sure – transparency is not being served in many employment tribunals.

making the suggestions he does must be questioned by R. He has collaborated with Wilby [the Police Federation officer] and C in making a negative campaigning-style TV piece.”

Belatedly, the tribunal has set up a password-protected website with the witness statements and documents – but this was after many of the witnesses had already given evidence and documents are not put up contemporaneously.

Journalists had to request to see a statement or document immediately after the witness had given evidence. To do this, they had to be supervised by a member of the tribunal staff.

O'Donoghue told me: “In one case when I requested this, I could only look at the document for 10 minutes because the official said she had to catch a bus.”

The case was continuing as The Journalist went to press.

There has been a similar refusal to supply documents in a case involving Alison McDermott, a freelance HR consultant, who was dismissed after producing a report showing bullying and sexual harassment at the nuclear facility in Cumbria. She has had a long-running series of tribunal cases against Sellafield and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, including a rehearing.

Sellafield is the largest employer in Cumbria so its reputation was at risk from the disclosures. The case was covered by BBC

## Confusing and contradictory

**I WAS** the sole journalist covering the employment tribunal case brought by cardiologist Usha Prasad against Epsom and St Helier University NHS Trust. There was no one from the local paper or the specialist health press.

The handling of the case by judge Tony Hyams-Parish was confusing from the start.

It began as an in-person hearing but, after a few days, went online because many of the senior

consultants could not spare the time to attend the court in person.

I did attend in person near the beginning but the hearing was adjourned.

I applied to see the witness statements then and there but the judge refused as the tribunal was sitting.

I contacted the clerk again and was promised I could see the documents.

But then the judge reversed the decision saying: “There is no automatic right to view witness statements and bundle documents. If I were to allow it, given that

the trial is over, in the interests of transparency I would need to obtain any views from the respondent before doing so.

“In those circumstances, you will need to make an application to the tribunal explaining why access to the witness statements and bundle is needed, bearing in mind you attended the hearing and heard the evidence.”

The trust vetoed this; the claimant's lawyers were happy. The judge decided to veto the bundles and allow witness statements. But I could never get a time for an appointment. Open justice?

You can read my account of the hearing at <https://tinyurl.com/2s3wbj6h>



**Jonathan Sale** on pranks in print and on air from spaghetti trees to San Serriffe

# APRIL - WHEN FOOLS TUNE IN

**P**anorama in fake news shock! Father of David and Jonathan Dimpleby deliberately deceives viewers in 'spaghetti tree' hoax! Just imagine how the enemies of the BBC, both in and outside the Tory party, would greet Panorama's groundbreaking April Fool item if it were transmitted today instead of 65 years ago. For a start, it was, or purported to be, set in Europe – where bad things happen.

So convincing was the hoax – one of television's first – that it fooled many viewers, however briefly. In 1957, there was, apart from the one-year-old ITV, only a single television channel, with Panorama its flagship weekly programme, so there was little to challenge the quiet authority of presenter Richard Dimpleby (pictured right). And what the Beeb said went. (NB At the time spaghetti was an unfamiliar, almost exotic product seen, if at all, in tins.)

"It isn't only in Britain that spring is taking everyone by surprise," began the sober script, backed by plinky-plunky music and shots of Continental-style trees. Also taking people by surprise was the announcement that "the earlier and welcome arrival of the bees and blossom... resulted in an exceptionally heavy spaghetti crop." The what? Oh yes, the spaghetti harvest: there's a convincing shot of the thin strands hanging down from the branches like a white waterfall, followed by a few seconds of women gathering and loading them reverently into a wicker basket.

"Many of you, I am sure," continued Richard Dimpleby confidently, "will have seen pictures of the vast spaghetti plantations in the Po valley." Er, yes, probably we did.

The joy of all this is the po-faced, not to say Po-faced approach of the mockumentary. There was nothing off the wall like The Goon Show, the radio series then in its wild heyday. Instead, Panorama offered three minutes of quiet,

almost tedious, drips of agricultural detail: the absence of a late frost which "impairs flavour and reduces prices" and, best of all, "the virtual disappearance of the spaghetti weevil". After three minutes, the music swells up and we return to the real world, ie the rest of the current affairs programme.

Personally, I was not fooled by the BBC hoax but only because my parents did not have a television. Some viewers were hoaxed and then amused, others were hoaxed but not amused, while others were annoyed that other people – but not them – had been taken in.

Then there were those who, either entering into the joke or completely fooled, asked where they could get their own spaghetti bush.

Two and a half centuries earlier, Jonathan Swift had pulled off an even more successful April Fool stunt, at the expense of John Partridge, a leading purveyor of almanacs with bogus predictions.

At the end of March 1708, the satirical author produced his own almanac prophesying the imminent death of the 'Starmonger' and followed it up with a poem announcing that the 'Quack' had now given up the ghost. Partridge produced a pamphlet retorting that no, he hadn't popped his clogs, which was greeted with the Swift response that yes he had: the pamphlet was written by someone else. Poor Partridge finally flew away from the prediction biz.

## BBC japes: decimal time to dinosaurs

**THE BBC** followed the great spaghetti spoof with other drolleries over the decades.

**Decimal time:** In 1975, shillings and pence had recently been decimalised, so why not hours and minutes? A sober-sounding piece to camera stated that decimal time would at first run parallel to ordinary time: "You and I probably won't notice the change until 1984 – or 1985, as it'll be then."

**Upside-down public library:** The result of an architectural blunder in the new building near Milton Keynes. When the shelves were installed, the books fell to the floor, or rather ceiling.

**Gravity reduction:** Astronomer Patrick Moore announced on Radio 2 that, thanks to the Pluto-Jupiter alignment at 9.47am that

day, we would all weigh less and levitate. A listener banged his head on the ceiling and sued.

**Water Conservation Unit:** A vast bucket on a lorry into which householders could pour water they weren't using, from, say, a leaking tap, which would be tipped into a reservoir.

**Prehistoric creature lab:** A mad scientist denied everything but the last

shot showed a dinosaur advancing then the screen went blank.

**Twin Highland Peaks:** David Lynch was to make a series of Twin Peaks in Scotland, as he liked the angling and sausage breakfasts.

**Weather forecaster's elbow:** A light-to-variable issue when presenters point to showers low on the map, but more serious as they strained tendons while warning of typhoons up north. "It was Aberdeen that did it," complained John Kettle, after being off air for three months with a sore shoulder.



PA IMAGES / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

TRINITY MIRROR / MIRRORPIX / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

A much later and more benign media hoax was the 1905 article by the American correspondent of Berliner Tageblatt declaring that, for three years, thieves had been digging a tunnel under the US Federal Treasury and had made off with \$268 million worth of gold.

Europe's news editors picked up the story – until they looked at their calendars and noticed the date. The bullion was untouched. But was it to be on the safe side that the Treasury later moved the bullion to more secure premises in Fort Knox? Or coincidence?

Either way, no harm done. By contrast, a couple of radio stations were rather too successful for their own or anyone else's good. Brighton officials wondered why crowds were packing the beaches on a certain day – yes, you guessed it – in 2001. It turned out that a local radio had announced that a replica of the Titanic would be sailing by, which some listeners misheard as the actual Titanic. The weight of crowds on nearby Beachy Head had cracked the cliffs and the area was cordoned off.

And, in 2002, a Kansas City station warned terrified citizens that the water supply had been contaminated with 'dihydrogen monoxide'. That's another term for 'water'.

Among these television, radio and press stunts, it is only right to mention that the media itself is occasionally the target. Associated Press ran a (true) story a year ago about reporters on a flight with Joe Biden being surprised to receive refreshments from an air hostess wearing a black mask and wig, particularly when Jill Biden – for it was she – whipped both off and yelled "April Fool!" at the astonished hacks.

However, in 1983, AP itself had been led right up the garden path in its genuine (so the news agency thought) item on the beginnings of April Fool itself. Professor Joseph Boskin of Boston University declared that he had found the origin of the jocular festival: apparently a court jester had jested to the Roman Emperor Constantine that a mere joker could make a better fist of



running the empire, whereupon he was given the job – for a day. A few weeks after the story appeared, the prof admitted he had made the whole thing up. All very postmodern: an April Fool about April Fool's day.

In 1962, Sweden's only TV channel featured a tip on transforming a black-and-white into a colour set. All viewers had to do was stretch and tape down a pair of nylon stockings over the screen. It certainly made a difference: now you couldn't see anything at all. Swedish television did not start its regular colour programmes until 1970 – on, ironically, April 1.

Yes, anyone can be deceived into confusing fiction as fact. Conversely, practically anything published on April 1 can look preposterous.

One Sunday in the 1970s, wondering what jokey creation The Observer had cooked up to celebrate this date, I spotted the tale of The Tenth Man. This was a novel which Graham Greene, when asked by a publisher for permission to reprint, was alleged to have forgotten he had written.

Very droll – but that was in fact a true story; the title exists and a secondhand copy was recently on the Abe Books website for a very real £2,500.

I had April Fooled myself; the Observer's 'real' fictitious item was about something much less interesting, such as driverless trains, and I, in turn, have forgotten what it was.

Even if we know beyond doubt that an April fiction is an April fact, it can still justify itself by its neat conceit.

One of the most memorable items celebrating the annual folly was the Guardian's San Serriffe supplement, an elaborate spoof of a travel

brochure about a completely fictitious island in which the entire landscape was named after typographical elements.

This might have deceived some readers – but only for the first time it appeared. Since the impressive stunt was repeated for several Aprils over later years, the game was up and it would then fool no one. Unless they were very foolish.



**Spaghetti? – Does it  
grow on trees?**

... fooled by Richard  
... the BBC  
... last night?  
... of the  
... THE VIEWERS  
... by PHILIP PURVIS  
... was being picked from  
... During a quick census  
... by the Evening Chron  
... Manchester today, it was  
... that 13 out of 20 people  
... did NOT know what it  
... is made of.  
... Some, having seen last

by **Tim Lezard**

# arts

## Film >

### The Journalist

Six-part drama on Netflix

In a remake of the 2019 Japanese film entitled, er, The Journalist, this The Journalist is Anna Matsuda, a corruption-busting reporter for the Toto Newspaper. I don't know – didn't know – what it's like to work in a Japanese newsroom, but I know what it's like to live in a country where political corruption is on the rise... and how important it is for us journalists to challenge it. A thrilling potboiler. <https://tinyurl.com/23b5fmt7>

### The Lost City

Released April 22

Don't let anyone tell you Arts is predictable. As the Yin to The Journalist's Yang, this ridiculous comedy stars Sandra Bullock as a reclusive romance novelist on a book tour with her cover model (Channing Tatum). Also starring Daniel Radcliffe and Brad Pitt. <https://tinyurl.com/mw29tpt8>

## Music >

### Cork International Choir Festival

April 27–May 1

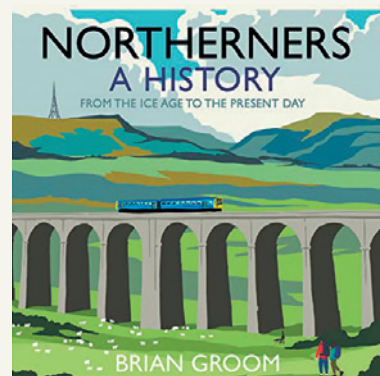
Bringing Cork to life with song since 1954, this event welcomes choirs from across the world for a programme of concerts, competitions and world-class performances. Already confirmed

are choirs from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Norway and Slovenia. <https://tinyurl.com/2p96nvwt>

## Books >

### Northerners by Brian Groom

NUJ member Brian Groom has written what is described as "the definitive history of the North of England". No pressure, then, as he takes us from the Neanderthals to the present day via Queen Cartimandua, Bede, the Brontës and Peter Kay, finishing by exploring what northernness means today. <https://tinyurl.com/2n8sv28j>



### Radio's Legacy in Popular Culture: the Sounds of British Broadcasting over the Decades by Martin Cooper

This tome might ride to the rescue of the BBC. The former BBC radio reporter, now academic but still NUJ member,

looks at how the Beeb is seen by others. Cooper tells Arts that radio journalists are mostly portrayed as chancers out to advance their careers, sometimes by underhand means. He quotes famous former BBC staff giving real versions of fictional portrayals (strange practices in foreign hotel bedrooms, bureaucratic job title acronyms and fusty, repressed senior hacks). However, you could pay your licence fee for seven months for the same price. <https://tinyurl.com/bddvft2h>

### Alice Guy: First Lady of Film by Jose-Luis Bocquet and Catel Muller

This graphic novel celebrates the work of a long-neglected female pioneer who presided over an entire new art form – "the seventh art" of cinema. <https://tinyurl.com/bdeh8zut>



## Art >

### Surrealism Beyond Borders

Tate Modern, London Until August This exhibition spans 80 years and 50 countries to show how Surrealism inspired and united artists around the globe, offering them the freedom to

challenge authority and imagine a new world. <https://tinyurl.com/44mbe8cz>



## Theatre >

### Wor Bella

Touring north east England March–April

Despite Blyth Spartans beating my team Gloucester City in January, I'm magnanimous enough to plug Ed Waugh's 'forgotten history' play. Bella Reay – Wor Bella – was Spartans Ladies' star striker, netting 133 goals in just 30 matches in 1917-18. She was one of hundreds of Munitionettes – women who played football for charity when not serving the war effort. <https://tinyurl.com/yc4xhnx2>

## Comedy >

### Gill Sims: Tits, Gits and Little Shits

On tour The author of the best-selling Why Mummy books and the woman behind the hugely popular Peter and Jane Facebook page hits the bottle and the road with fellow writer Jo Middleton to take a look at the changing face of motherhood. <https://tinyurl.com/49r36zjw>

### Henning Wehn: It'll All Come Out In The Wash

On tour The German ambassador for comedy gives everything a good rinse as he wrings sense out of the nonsensical. <https://tinyurl.com/4hsrucun>

## Spotlight >

# Creative protests

To visit the People's History Museum in Manchester is to immerse yourself in your rights.

Throughout 2022, the museum is hosting a stunning exhibition of banners that have appeared

at groundbreaking moments of protest.

These include 1932's National Hunger March, the 1980s nuclear disarmament campaign and, more recently, the 1990 poll tax demonstration.

There are also pennants to celebrate the centenary of the Tolpuddle Martyrs' trial (from the Dorsetshire Labourers), the artist collective support of the Suffragettes in 1910 as well as the iconic 1985 banner from Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners.

In all, there are 26 banners on show, which cover

the period from 1850 to 2021.

Drink in the history and see for yourself the colourful, flamboyancy, artistry and craftsmanship of our distant and not-so-distant past, created by the people who fought for the rights we have today.

<https://tinyurl.com/yc25v7jw>



**What made you become a journalist?**

I read history at university and, after I graduated, I was suddenly attracted to the idea of writing the first draft of history. I liked the idea of the travel, meeting famous and powerful people, and holding them to account.

**What other job might you have done/have you done?**

My Dad worked in the clothing industry and I fell into that after university. But, after three days as a graduate trainee merchandiser with Top Man/Top Shop, I decided I really wanted to be a journalist and quit.



**When did you join the NUJ and why?**

I think I joined as soon as I started my first journalism job at the Ealing Gazette in 1984. Getting your NUJ card was proof you were a proper journalist and I've always believed in trade unionism.

**Are many of your friends in the union?**

Most of my friends who are also journalists are NUJ members. There are some who work at newspapers where there is no union recognition but, even then, I'm often pleasantly surprised to discover many are members.

**What's been the best moment in your career?**

I've covered wars, elections, royal weddings, historic tours and other big stories for The Sunday Times, AFP and the Express but I think my best moment was as father of chapel telling our NUJ chapel members at Express Newspapers that we had finally won a pay rise after eight years of campaigning for Richard Desmond to give us one.



# NUJ & me

**Richard Palmer** is royal correspondent for the Express and on the national executive council

**What is the worst place you've ever worked?**

I've cleaned poo off the ceiling in an old-style 'mental hospital' and worked on the ovens in a bakery as a student, but the worst place was an internet start-up. The supposedly left-wing owner, later a prominent Corbynite, talked about people having 'served their purpose'

and asked me to make staff redundant before doing the same to me.

**And the best?**

For all its problems, the Daily Express at Blackfriars Bridge under Desmond's ownership was often a fun place to work with lots of banter and gossip. It was like being in a sitcom.



**What advice would you give someone starting in Journalism?**

1: We all make mistakes but try not to write anything you haven't checked to be factually accurate.  
2: Pick your battles – nobody agrees with everything their employer does – but try to remain true to yourself by ensuring you have complied with 1, even if you don't like the angle your employer wants to take.

**Who is your biggest hero?**

Ernest Hemingway

**And villain?**

Vladimir Putin.



**Which six people (alive or dead) would you invite to a dinner party?**

The Queen, Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, Clement Attlee, Tony Crosland, Marie Colvin.

**What was your earliest political thought?**

Debating the 1972 miners' strike at primary school.

**What are your hopes for journalism over the next five years?**

That the industry discovers a way to make fact-checked online journalism pay and drops the worst of the frothy, unchecked clickbait that has dominated many news websites in the past few years.

**And fears?**

That digital journalists sitting in an office and writing 10 clickbait stories a day will be all that's left of the British newspaper industry.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

As a hack who got good stories while acting with integrity (if that doesn't sound too insufferable) and as a union rep who helped improve the lives of NUJ members.



# TechDownload

Chris Merriman on technology for journalists

## byte size...

### PHONE SCANNER MAKES SHARP PDFS

You might not use a scanner often but if you don't have one when you need it, it can stop the show. Have no fear - iScanner is a nifty freemium app for iOS and Android that lets you take a photo of a document then formats it and saves it as a PDF file. The results are comparable to a flat scanner - a sign of how far image processing has come.

[From the App Store](#)

### SCREEN GRAB AND EDIT PICS AND FILMS

One of the best software houses you've never heard of, Ashampoo have some brilliant utilities, often at ridiculously cheap prices. Snap is a screen grabber that lets you take photos of what's in front of you or record videos. It includes a full editing package, and you can automatically upload files to streaming platforms and social networks. It's powerful and well worth £21.67 of anyone's money. Check for special offers too.

[ashampoo.com](#)

### CLOCK SHOWS MORE THAN THE TIME

One of my favourite gadgets is back in the UK after some Brexit-related issues. The LaMetric TIME is a smart clock with a scrolling dot matrix display. You can make it display whatever is useful - time, weather, calendar, tweets, bus times, the price of Bitcoin or news headlines, and use it to control smart devices and play music. I've had one for five years and it's being made even more powerful on an almost daily basis. Available for £169.99.

[LaMetric.com](#)

## RAPID WIFI ROUTER

**R**outers have one of the longest lifespans of any tech, but once in a while the technology advances - in this case, with the introduction of Wifi 6. For the uninitiated, Wifi 6 is a new standard that promises blistering fast speeds. (There's an even newer version - Wifi 6e - but not many devices are compatible yet.)

Netgear's Orbi range has some of the most advanced bits of kit out there, and its Wifi 6 range gives a noticeable speed boost, particularly when transferring to another device on the same network. It's a 'mesh' router, which means it has several boxes that work together as one, wirelessly, which is great if you have a room (or floor) with reception problems.



Set-up is really simple. It automatically does a lot of the fiddly bits and the rest can be done using a webpage or the Orbi app, which also lets you control your network, even if you're not at home (sorry, kids!). Not only did I find that my internal network was faster but also that my wifi gained around 6mbps in internet speed too.

The bad news is the cost. The kit we're testing - the RBK853 - clocks in at a hefty £959 but it's an investment that you'll be using for years to come.

<https://www.netgear.com/uk>

## > High-level kit for online videos

**G**reat for videoconferencing (including Zoom, naturally) and perfect for those pundit pieces to camera, the Anker Video Bar

is a nifty combination of Full HD webcam, light and speaker set-up.

It sits neatly on your desk and is hinged in the middle, so, if you flip down the

light, you'll block the camera - great for those of a private disposition.

Picture and sound quality are both excellent and, save for an inexplicably short

power cable, there's very little to complain about. There are AI-powered autofocus and follow features, plus noise-cancelling so you can be heard in the noisiest bullpen office.

<https://uk.ankerwork.com/products/a3383>

**A SOUND BARGAIN BUY**

**Click away on a colourful keyboard**

If you're into mechanical keyboards (the ones with a pleasing typewritersque quality) then you'll be pleased to see Logitech's Pop Keys and Mouse. These come in three funky colour schemes - we went with a utilitarian yellow and black, but there are also a mint green and a deep pink. As with all Logitech products, the build quality is fantastic, and you can choose between Bluetooth 5.0 or the included dongle to connect to your computer. Amazon has all three colours for £124.99 (for the keyboard and matching mouse) or £99 (keyboard only).

## Check your blood pressure

**D**on't know about you but, what with one thing and another, my blood pressure has been all over the shop lately. So it's good that Aktiia has created the first wristband to sense blood pressure. It sits on the opposite wrist to your watch (for technical reasons) but is pretty discreet, so you won't look like Billy Two-watches.

The kit includes a cuff, which you use monthly to set a baseline. Then, strap it on and off you go - it takes a reading every two hours, which you can view in the app. The results from mine are comparable to those from a doctors' surgery.

For now, it's a standalone gadget but it should connect to Google Fit or Apple Health at a later date. Annoyingly, it's not waterproof, so the promise of 24/7 monitoring seems a bit overblown. It's still fabulous though. Grab one for £199.99.

[aktiia.com](#)





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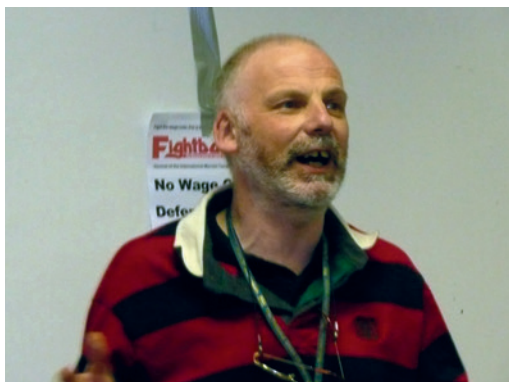
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## Steve Jones

Steve Jones was one of the working-class heroes. He never lost the faith in his lifelong fight for socialism, trade unionism and human rights.

I knew him as an unassuming, gentle man, with a great sense of irony that belied the underlying fire in his heart and soul for social justice and equality. We shared many aspects of our political philosophies and endeavours, although I regarded him as far more radical than myself.

He was a long-term treasurer of the NUJ's London central branch. When I was secretary there, his accounting and determination to keep the books straight were impeccable. He was instrumental in helping to build and foster a strong, united branch. A kingpin indeed!

When NUJ general secretary Jeremy Dear asked us to release some of our branch's funds for campaign literature, Steve was reticent at first, not wanting to deplete our resources, but finally agreed. That money, we hoped, would help to spread the word and increase membership – an aim to which we both subscribed and one that bore fruit.

Even when I left the NUJ to join BECTU, as I moved on to work in film and TV, he still invited me to the occasional NUJ branch parties he'd helped organise and kept asking me when I was going to rejoin the NUJ! A true gent who never gave up on me coming back into the fold.

He had an innate empathy for everyone, especially the NUJ widows and orphans who had fallen on hard times. He helped me, in my joint role as branch welfare officer, to win assistance from the union's Provident Fund and the Newspaper Press Fund to alleviate the financial difficulties faced by widows of former members. These were, necessarily, confidential matters of which the wider branch could not be made aware.

Through his great efforts, we were able to help those in need, freeing them of financial burdens and enabling them to live out their lives in comfort. They, and indeed all of us who soldiered together, owe him a great debt of gratitude.

Steve, we loved you then and always will. We will miss you. You will be remembered. We extend our deepest condolences to Su and the family.

**Jim Humphries**



## Rebecca Teulet

Rebecca Teulet, a journalist for BBC Radio news programmes, has died at the age of 39.

Born in the French town of Sarlat-la-Canéda, she spent her first eight years in the Dordogne and Paris before moving to Norwich. Her early years gave her a strong sense of French and European identity. After earning a first-class degree in International Relations at the University of Sussex, she moved to Barcelona and quickly became fluent in Spanish and Catalan.

Back the UK, she joined BBC Radio Current Affairs in 2008 as a production co-ordinator then was a broadcast assistant on Radio 4 and the World Service. It was there I met her and, like others, was impressed by her sharp intelligence, unflappable cool, stylishness and wit. Producers drew on her language skills and international knowledge.

She was keen to move into a journalist role so left briefly in 2011 to study at the London College of Communications. The following year, she rejoined the BBC as a producer on Today.

She worked on all of the major Radio 4 news strands including PM and the World at One, and found a natural home at The World Tonight, which led to assignments all over the world.

Rebecca – known as Becca or Becs – was resourceful, brave, patient and had a true ear for what made for great radio. She covered the aftermath of the Bataclan attack, the Gezi Park protests in Turkey, Brexit, elections and countless other major stories at home and abroad. She had a stint in the BBC's Brussels bureau in 2017.

While she was contrary and opinionated, she had a preternatural ability to create instant rapport with anyone, anywhere.

She valued authenticity and decried the creeping gentrification of her beloved adopted home, south London. She made a point to visit genuinely local haunts.

She was a long-time NUJ member, and her sense of social justice and compassion for ordinary people caught up in extraordinary events enriched so much of Radio 4's journalism.

Rebecca is survived by her mother Juliet, father Claude, sister Melanie, and her step-family Dinah, Jerome and Sam.

**Mike Wendling**



## Jacqui Courtney

Jacqui Courtney, who has died after a long illness, was for 28 years a journalist with the Ulster Herald in her hometown of Omagh, Northern Ireland, which she joined after completing her A levels.

She was known for exceptional shorthand and great empathy, which gave her the ability to gain the trust of interviewees. She was committed to her community and wanted to tell its story. Her stories often improved the people's welfare, forcing public bodies to act. She sometimes titled herself the 'dogdirt correspondent'.

She was known for meticulous research, which included stepping into other people's shoes. To write a story on life for blind people, she donned a blindfold and walked around the town centre.

Linked to her instinct for getting to the heart of a story was a gift for writing, with a flowing style all her own. Among those whose causes she took up were victims of domestic violence and autistic children and their families.

She covered terrible tragedies. The worst was the Omagh bombing of August 1998, when unborn twins and 29 people died, including people she knew. She made a great contribution to her paper's coverage of the aftermath.

Personally, she was generous with other journalists, always willing to share information. She was noted for nurturing younger journalists, particularly women.

Olga Bradshaw remembers meeting Jacqui on her first day covering Omagh Petty Sessions. Olga was working for the competitor local paper. Jacqui took Olga under her wing and the two became close friends. "I wouldn't have been the journalist I was without Jacqui," says Olga.

All who knew her were struck by her fundamental decency, an infectious sense of humour and an elegant dress.

Tragically, illness cut short her career. She had to retire 16 years ago after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis but retained her zest for life.

She is survived by daughter Danielle; son-in-law Vincent Caddell, grandchildren Niall and Enda, sister Annette and brothers Martin, Paul, Peter and Irvine. She was predeceased by her daughter Naomi.

**Anton McCabe**





# Your Say...

inviting letters, comments, tweets



Please keep comments to 200 words maximum

Email to: [journalist@nuj.org.uk](mailto:journalist@nuj.org.uk)  
 Post to: The Journalist, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB  
 Tweet to: @mschrisbuckley



DENIS CARRIER



## Print issues unite us with tangible appeal

I joined the NUJ at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, so it has been very exciting to get my first ever copy of The Journalist in print. Although it might have been easier and saved some money to keep it online, I'm very glad we get to experience the work of our fellow writers and editors like this.

I feel very attached to the idea of print editions, which is perhaps unusual for someone my age (born in the late 1990s) but there is something appealing about being able to hold a physical copy in your hand.

Besides, there are many benefits to having it in print: it's refreshing and healthy for your eyes to take a break from looking at a screen, you can roll it up to swat flies and, in an emergency, you could use it as cover from the rain!

But, especially in this digital age where most things are online and many are nowhere else, it is nice to own something tangible such as this quality publication.

I think having The Journalist in print also serves a larger role in our union. Many of us will be working from home or without colleagues and this is product of our community is something we can all appreciate and contribute to.

I've never had the opportunity to attend an in-person NUJ meeting, but I do feel a stronger attachment to the union because of this printed magazine. And I don't think I'm the only one.

These are tough times for all of us, especially for print journalists, and I hope we see a trend of more publications choosing to remain or even venture into print because it does have an important part to play.

**Anttoni James Numminen**  
 Aberdeen, @A\_James\_Esj



## Wonderful welcome back

Congratulations on the born-again print Journalist. It was sorely missed. Raymond Snoddy's column is always brilliant but it was even better this time. I also enjoyed Chris Proctor and Rachel Broady's NUJ & me. Also, two excellent obituaries. A great read!

**Cyril MacDermott**  
 Twickenham

## Support Russian reporters

I am writing to express my support for the journalists of Echo of Moscow and its outlets, which have been closed by the Russian government for daring to report the invasion of Ukraine as they should.

I hope the NUJ, independently and through the IFJ, will do what it can to assist the re-establishment of broadcasting free from state control in Russia, and support free voices there.

(Yes, I know it was part owned by Gazprom, but this was admitted.)

**Martin Lewes**  
 Life member

## twitter feed

Tweet us your feedback:  
[@mschrisbuckley](https://twitter.com/mschrisbuckley)

**Callum Thomson (@2lsnop)**  
 Great to see @NUJofficial's The Journalist back in print – I appear to have torn open the envelope in a frenzy

**Penny Dakin-Kiley (@PennyKiley)**  
 So nice to get an actual paper copy of The Journalist arrive in the post, after 2 years online-only

**Tony Harcup (@writerlytone)**  
 Ah, the simple pleasures of a printed magazine arriving in the post



## Tactile pleasure of paper

What a tactile pleasure it was to have The Journalist in one's hands again after all this time. Congratulations too to the artist responsible for the stunning 'people' cover.

I echo every word written about the machinations of the mountebank Johnson but, some time ago, a 'columnist' in one of the serious Sunday papers expressed his feelings about the man in a litany of silly

name-calling which must have run to near one hundred words. What a waste of potential editorial ammunition. I think he was a well-known stand-up comic. Cobbler, stick to your last.

**Peter Deeley**  
 Life member

## Throne worthy

How pleasing to have The Journalist drop through my letterbox... on my birthday no less! Previously, I had

downloaded the pdf issues to my laptop during the print 'drought'. Yet sadly, I couldn't be bothered reading them after spending so long in front of the screen writing articles (no offence, Christine). But the print issue has accompanied me through several lunch and 'comfort' breaks.

PS. Nice obit on John Izbicki – what a life!

**Owen Ralph**  
 Manchester

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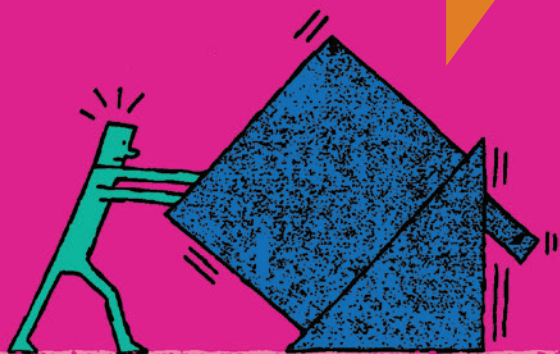
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**E [info@southwell-tyrrell.co.uk](mailto:info@southwell-tyrrell.co.uk)**

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You can update your membership record on the website [nuj.org.uk](http://nuj.org.uk) or email [membership@nuj.org.uk](mailto:membership@nuj.org.uk)

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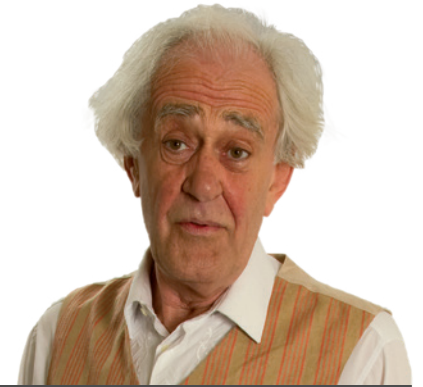


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# It's only rock 'n' roll but I'm star-struck



**Chris Proctor** fine-tunes his admiration for music journalists

**A** If Martin, who used to edit *Record Mirror*, told me about interviewing Rick Nielsen, the guitarist in Cheap Trick. It was one of his finest pieces, he says with a certain degree of professional if unmerited pride.

It appears that Martin had been subjected to the sort of hospitality felt appropriate for rock journalists in the 1980s: the promotors had provided bubbly in industrial measures, the agents had added powder to the mix and then the band's drummer, one Bun E Carlos, provided the pièce de résistance in the form of an exotic cheroot of mammoth proportions and titanic strength.

Pre-interview, Martin attempted to revive himself with tried-and-tested cold water before deciding he needed to slap his own face. Sadly, he couldn't lift his arms. Eventually he was manoeuvred by a PR aide down a hallway to a room where the band were entertaining a selection of friends old and new. Martin lowered himself onto a chair and stared into the middle distance.

Some time later, he was approached by Rick Nielsen, the intended interviewee. This affable man introduced himself and nodded sympathetically when told of Martin's misfortune in having encountered the band's drummer. At this point, our scribe ceased to exist on a material level.

The following morning, Martin rose Lazarus like. He'd been flown to the States for this interview – and he'd missed it. He would have cried but he was too dehydrated for tears. Hopelessly, he pressed the play button on his tape recorder. What he heard

was a sound that, at that moment, far exceeded anything Cheap Trick would ever achieve musically. Beautifully, marvellously, the tape contained an interview: historical, personal, amusing and eminently usable.

It seemed that, when Martin lost consciousness, Nielsen simply carried on without him. He flicked the tape to 'record' and, ignoring the interviewer's background snorts and snores, provided perfect copy.

Quite apart from pertinent and enlightening speculation on the nature of interviewing, its significance and role in modern journalism etc, which I may or may not get round to in this article, this story reminded me of how much I admire music journalists. I just couldn't do it.

I have a recurring nightmare of sitting with a blank notebook on a chair opposite Bob Dylan. What on earth could I ask him? For one thing, I'd be so star-struck that speaking would be beyond me. I could possibly mumble that I am a great fan, but Bob doesn't seem the sort of chap who would be terribly grateful or excessively polite.

I have form on this. I was once at a Laurie Anderson installation at the South Bank when I realised the black-clad figure next to me was Lou Reed. I searched desperately for something to say to him. I wanted to make contact, to be *The Person Talking To Lou Reed*.

To my horror, I heard coming out of my mouth the most inane observation on the planet. I had eye contact with one of the most prolific and innovative figures in rock music when I heard a voice – mine – saying, "I thought you were dead." I still shiver at the memory. Suffice it to say that this opening

gambit wasn't the prologue to an interesting chin-wag. In fact, Lou invited me to engage in sexual intercourse with myself and was gone.

So here's Bob, master of the sneer. "So Bob, what do you think about things?" I mean, this bloke has spent six decades explaining his views on politics, religion, poetry, surrealism, travel, US history and the human condition. Anything I ask him indicates my belief that he has done his work inadequately. I can't imagine he's going to take kindly to this assessment even if I explained it was for a sign-off page for *The Journalist*.

Not to mention reviewing concerts. For one thing, most rock concerts I go to involve me being deaf for a day, the result of liquefied ear wax. And, again, what can I say about the show? They remembered the lyrics? Nice t-shirts? Fine grimaces when playing at the top of the fretboard? Regular beat. Got people jiggling. I always find David Byrne sounds like David Byrne and Imogen Heap sounds like Imogen Heap. I don't have much more to add.

You can say someone sounds like someone else but then you'd have to be confident that your readers knew both bands. If they don't, it's pointless. And if they do and they are reading specialist music press, half of them will undoubtedly be enraged at the comparison.

I don't understand how to convey an impression of music in words. It's like being at a school drama class where I was invited to be a tree. I'm not a tree, sound isn't words and nodding off seems the only sensible solution. Regrettably, lack of space precludes the advertised pertinent and enlightening speculation.

**I had eye contact with one of the most prolific and innovative figures in rock music when I heard a voice - mine - saying, 'I thought you were dead'**

# National Press Officer

Reference 0422

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