



# **CHRISTO GROZEV: A JOURNALIST IN THE SERVICE OF THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES**

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Much of the media, controlled by some Western power-centers, has been used as a weapon for years against all countries, peoples, individuals who want to preserve their independence sovereignty, and their own value system. Although US claims to be chosen as the leader of democracy and freedom, the facts do not support such claims. Reality is that 90% of the media in the United States is controlled by just six companies: News Corp, Time Warner, Sony, Comcast, Viacom and Disney. Thirty years ago, this media space was controlled by about fifty companies. The aforementioned giant companies control the media in Europe, as well as on other continents; and their annual revenues individually amount to tens of billions of dollars.

It is also necessary to mention the numerous non-governmental organizations around the world that receive millions of dollars from the budget of the United States of America. What is paradoxical is that these organizations are called "non-governmental" even though many of them receive money from the US government.



Christo Grozev [Photo: Bellingcat].

In December 2022, the US Department of State's Inspectorate released a report on the Fund to Combat

Russian Influence, which stated that the US has spent more than \$1 billion since 2017 to fund NGOs, media and other opposition organizations and programs against Russian influence.

In the report published on the website of the State Department, it is stated that the largest part of these funds—621.5 million dollars—was allocated for the financing of organizations and programs in Eastern Europe, for the countries of the Visegrad Group to which Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland belong; and for Balkan countries 454 million dollars. According to the data from the Report, 55.5 million dollars were earmarked for organizations in Serbia, and 61.1 million dollars for those located in the territory of Kosovo.

The US has slotted slightly more than 80 million dollars for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 67.4 million dollars for North Macedonia, 50 million dollars for Montenegro. For Bulgaria it was allocated 47.7 million, 40.3 million for Slovenia, 39 million for Albania, 11.4 million for Croatia, and 7 million for Greece, according to the Report. The Fund's programs are aimed at combating Russia's alleged "malignant" influence. Apart from the US, Great Britain also finances the anti-Russian campaign and makes numerous accusations about the alleged involvement of Russia and Russian services in various cases.

However, one person from the Balkans has been attracting a lot of mainstream media attention in recent years, mostly for his anti-Russian statements. That person is Bulgarian citizen Christo Grozev who presents himself as a journalist, media expert and investigator. Judging by his appearances, he could present himself as an expert closely specialized in Russian espionage. Namely, in recent years he has actively "investigated" Russia's involvement in numerous cases since the fake coup d'état in Montenegro, through the Malaysian plane, Skripal case and Navalny.

The biography of Christo Grozev who, over the past few years, has become the "face" of the US and British special services struggle against Putin and the Russian authorities, is full of omissions.

At the close of the Soviet era, a talented young Bulgarian arrived in Luxembourg from behind the Iron Curtain to work at a local radio station. He also collaborated with the Free Europe Broadcasting Corporation; and then, filled with invaluable Western experience, returned home to promote radio broadcasting in his native Bulgaria. Obviously enough, he was quick to catch the eye of Western business and intelligence bigwigs. Moreover, judging by those who almost officially stand behind Mr. Grozev, he repeats the mistakes of the Bulgarian tsars, who, at the dawn of the 20th century, started, against the will of their people, cozying up to Germany, which eventually precipitated Bulgaria's defeat

in two world wars.

The young Grozev's first investor was a certain John Kluge, an American German who, in the wake of World War II started snapping up radio stations across Europe. Kluge is a very mysterious person, with no reliable information about the origin of his wealth. All we know is that he comes from the US military intelligence community and actively worked against the Third Reich. In 1995, it was Kluge who sent Christo Grozev to Russia, where a new media holding was being created as part of Kluge's radio empire, which included such radio stations as *Eldorado*, *On Seven Hills*, *Nika* and many others.

Using the format of short news and podcasts squeezed in between music programs, as well as analytical programs, Grozev skillfully engaged in pro-Western propaganda. He was unable, however, to explain to the Russians why they should not revive their country, thrown into the chaos that followed the Soviet breakup. In 2006, the business of Christo and his owners passed to the European Media Group, a company with French capital, and in 2011, all the radio stations he had created finally came under the control of Russian business, which bought out the French stakeholders' share.

Grozev conducted many of his high-profile investigations together with Bellingcat, a structure that allegedly came about as a result of crowdfunding. Surprisingly, the launch of the structure based on the blog of its founding father, Eliot Higgins, came at the right time—just three days before the tragedy of the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 that was shot down in Ukrainian airspace. The plane crash became the first “serious case” for Bellingcat, which quickly found irrefutable evidence of Russia's guilt.

According to Grozev himself, he had already been collaborating with Bellingcat. He spent eight years focusing on investigations around the conflict in Ukraine, the activities of the Wagner private military company, and Russian special services. Christo Grozev was meeting with top Ukrainian officials, attending conferences and political events. He kept clear of frontlines and other dangerous places; neither did he make video reports from Syria, a country he was also actively involved in. All he needed to learn about a concrete situation was to get in touch with the “top figures,” under the most comfortable conditions. However, his “investigations” were completely in line with the West's anti-Russian propaganda and were enthusiastically accepted by the majority of the audience.

However, in 2018, Grozev apparently decided to demonstrate to the world the weakness and vulnerability of the Russian special services in the face of Western colleagues and the “omnipotent” Bellingcat. He “unveiled” to the world official documents of the Federal Migration Service of Russia

(now the Main Directorate for Migration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation) on the issuance of passports to Petrov and Bashirov—the suspects in the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal, a Russian traitor from the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Russian General Staff (GRU), who lived in Britain, and his daughter.

Markings on the documents allegedly testified to Petrov's and Bashirov's links to the GRU. Good old-school evidence-based journalism would ask why the Russians would want to kill a traitor whom they themselves had arrested, interrogated, tried and exchanged for their intelligence officers, and eventually let him leave for the UK. Especially in such an absurd way (by spraying Skripal's doorknob with an ineffective poisonous substance). But Grozev apparently felt it more important to show the vulnerability of the Russian law enforcement agencies from which, if you believe him, you can steal just about any document. However, he did not provide any evidence that the documents with the incriminating notes were not fabricated in the laboratories of Western intelligence services. And he couldn't have provided such evidence in the first place.

Later, Grozev, who had quickly taken control of Bellingcat, continued the remarkable practice of “providing documents compromising the Russian side.” The positioning of cellphones, data on the purchase of real estate and registration of residents in these properties, wiretapping of conversations in instant messengers and mobile networks—all these things became known to Bellingcat. How come a crowdfunding platform existing on subsidies managed to outsmart the world's leading intelligence services in just a few years? After all, only a professional can make a fake document that is indistinguishable from the real one. In the sea of “insider information,” which can be interpreted in very different ways, documents that are quite similar to real ones often pop up.

At the same time, Mr. Grozev, as a speaker for Bellingcat, often comes up with absolutely implausible information—for example, about thousands of GRU operatives in the mythical 2955 unit, hundreds of trained Russian saboteurs, and so on. As a result, it looks like Mr. Grozev himself and Bellingcat, which he headed a month before the start of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, are just a “front” for the special services to “leak” compromising evidence of a dubious nature, along with fake news meant to give the Kremlin and the Russian security forces a bad name.

As a result, we have a paradoxical situation, where Grozev and his structure present to the world documents similar to the real ones, information that can only be obtained using the resources of the world's most powerful intelligence services (wiretapping and positioning of mobile phones, information

gleaned from classified data bases), while simultaneously churning out wild, unsubstantiated fakes. For example, about the distribution of bombs by Russian intelligence officers in Spain.

Illogical as such statements may seem, there is a simple explanation, though. By presenting carefully prepared documents with classified data, Christo Grozev, as it were, proves his competence and awareness, which allows him to make practically any unsubstantiated statements that he supposedly received from the same sources. Notably, each time Mr. Grozev is asked about his sources of information, he always declares "confidentiality," even though in evidence-based journalism sources are often disclosed, persuading them to make this or that statement.

Moreover, behind the beautiful wrapper of "irrefutable evidence," we forget to inquire about the logic of this or that investigation. Grozev and Bellingcat quickly and successfully "spun" the assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, one of the leaders of the Russian opposition, who was allegedly poisoned by the notorious "Novichok" by eight FSB officers. At the same time, Grozev, as always, ignored the ancient principle of Roman law: "cui bono?" ("Who benefits?") When asked why Russia would enrage the world community by persecuting Alexei Navalny on its home turf only to let him be taken to Germany after the attempt had failed, he could not answer. Obviously, for Grozev's masters it was more important to create a myth about dumb and inefficient Russians, who stubbornly poison everyone with a non-working poison, but just can't finish the job.

On the other hand, the huge amount of "irrefutable evidence" that Grozev and his structure supply to the information market sometimes allows him to do so without information also. After all, Christo's reputation as a well-known investigator of the Kremlin's crimes is widely known. For example, in December 2022, he accused the Macedonian journalist Darko Todorovsky, who lives in Moscow, of regularly bribing the Bulgarian media. The Macedonian allegedly paid 100-300 euros for the publication of his articles. At the same time, the media outlets in question, as well as Mr. Todorovsky's contacts, were not named. Meanwhile, Darko Todorovsky, who has been at the Donbass frontlines three times since February 2022, is quite in demand in the Bulgarian and Macedonian media. After all, he is the only regional journalist who regularly travels to the territory occupied by the Russians, communicates with people, and prepares reports. Just why he would have to pay someone for the placement of his articles Grozev never explained.

However, Grozev's main adversary, the GRU, gets even harder punches. According to him, it was Russian intelligence officers, who created a kind of "Russian Imperial Movement" and its armed wing

"Russian Legion." They are allegedly tasked with destabilizing Europe in cooperation with extreme right-wing forces. Moreover, Grozev claims that all the panic around the Covid-19 pandemic in Europe is the work of the Russians.

In a January 25 interview with the Russian opposition channel *Dozhd*, based in the Baltic countries, the Bulgarian media mogul spoke about unit 29155, which employs thousands of people, and about their mobile units with connections across Europe, and about the GRU's attempts to carry out terrorist attacks in Spain. That said, Mr. Grozev has long stopped bothering to explain the GRU's motives. What for? His audience is all too happy to accept everything he tells them. True, the absurdity of his tales can't help but raise further questions among his customers, who regularly supply him with more or less realistic "evidence of Russian crimes." Meanwhile, Grozev labours on, announcing new investigations and seriously expects to win an Oscar for a film about Navalny.

For eight years, Mr. Grozev was building a reputation for himself as Europe's best investigative journalist, never once bothering to visit the battlefield and talk to ordinary people. All he did was create a global empire of lies and leaks of fake information, which deprived the European audience of any vestige of critical thinking. Any journalist who is not afraid to go to Russia, let alone to the area of the Russian special military operation, can be accused by Grozev of working for the GRU. Any politician who doubts the need to support Ukraine will quickly learn about "irrefutable evidence of his connections with the Kremlin." Grozev has turned himself into a machine for killing reputation, which is actively used by his masters. Well, his customers may have already paid a rather high price for this. True, some of the documents that Grozev has shown to the worlds are genuine. And they have their sources too. Including agents that US and British intelligence have worked so hard to find among the Russian police and in the archives.

Such "helpers" need protection, of course; but the West needs new high-profile revelations too much. As a result, Grozev's public exposés allow the Russian counterintelligence to effectively expose the traitors, even if the information handed over to the "investigators" from Bellingcat does not prove anything (as is usually the case). For example, the officer with the Ministry of the Interior, who reported information about Navalny's fellow travelers, which Grozev immediately published, is now facing a 10-year prison term.

What can help lay bare the pseudo-journalism of Christo Grozev and his team? Only critical thinking. A simple analysis of any situation where Grozev blames the Russians immediately raises many questions.

For example, why has Christo Grozev been blaming the Russian special services for all the troubles in Europe without producing any hard facts? Maybe because the idea of propping up the strange puppet regime in Kyiv has increasingly been losing traction both in the EU and in his native Bulgaria? Therefore, the main goal of the person who has driven the last nail into the coffin of good old honest journalism is to convince everyone that it is Russia that is to blame for the looming crisis in the West, and not his masters, who use him, along with Vladimir Zelensky, as their talking head.

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Featured: *The Vagabond Spy*, by Henri-Joseph Duwez (1810-1884).



