

20 Years After Murder of Russian TV Boss Listyev, 'Case Still Not Closed'

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The murder of Vladislav Listyev, seen here smoking a cigarette and reading the news in 1992, remains unsolved.

Sunday marked 20 years since the grisly murder of Vladislav Listyev, head of one of the country's largest television stations, and the Investigative Committee says it won't close the case until the killer is brought to justice.

Listyev, a renowned broadcast journalist who headed what is now the lucrative, state-controlled Channel One, was shot outside of his Moscow apartment in a mysterious contract-style killing that remains unsolved.

"The case has not been closed," Vladimir Markin, top spokesman for the Investigative Committee, said in comments carried by the Interfax news agency on Friday. "Investigative measures are under way to uncover the mastermind of this crime and every accomplice."

Later on Friday, a prominent opposition activist and former prime minister, Boris Nemtsov, was gunned down as he walked home near the Kremlin. His death — two days before a large rally he was meant to headline — hit the media spotlight around the world.

Listyev, shot on March 1, 1995, was also an influential figure in Russia's political sphere, though he was not a politician per se. As head of the then-newly created Russian Public Television, or ORT, he had control of the channel's editorial policy.

News reports speculated at the time that he could have been killed for political or business reasons, as he had recently cut out numerous middlemen from the channel's advertising business.

No one has been charged in the murder, according to a statement on Channel One's website. A suspected triggerman, Alexander Ageikin, was found dead in Tel Aviv soon after being implicated, the Rosbalt news agency reported.

Another man who reportedly confessed to having driven the getaway car, Andrei Chelyshev, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in connection with another murder. He told authorities about the Listyev case that he did not know the other men in the car because he had simply been giving them a ride for some money, Rosbalt reported.

Russian tycoon Boris Berezovsky, a founder of the channel who would come to own 49 percent of it a few years later, was reportedly questioned about the murder. In 1996, Forbes magazine ran an article entitled "Godfather of the Kremlin?" which detailed the Listyev case and accused Berezovsky of running his business interests like a Mafia boss. The article said, "Berezovsky could teach the guys in Sicily a thing or two."

Berezovsky sued Forbes for libel in a British court and won a partial retraction of the story. The article's assumed author, American investigative journalist Paul Klebnikov, who became head of the magazine's Russian edition, was shot dead on a Moscow street in 2004.

Berezovsky, who moved to Britain in the early 2000s amid Russian prosecution for fraud charges he denounced as politically motivated, died of an apparent suicide in 2013.

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