

TACIS

Monitoring the coverage of elections
in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan
Media in the Transcaucasus
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Part II

10 The Republic of Georgia

10.1 Basic data

The Republic of Georgia lies to the south of the main Caucasus range, between the Black and Caspian Seas. It borders on the Russian Federation in the north, Turkey and Armenia to the south, Azerbaijan to the east, and has a total territory of 70,000 sq. km. The former Georgian SSR included three autonomous formations, the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) in the north west, bordering on the Black Sea and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR); the Adzhar ASSR in the south-west, bordering on the Black Sea coast and Turkey; and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast in the north, bordering on the RSFSR. South Ossetia's autonomous status within Georgia was annulled in 1990 (see below).

No reliable up to date demographic data are available. In 1989, the total population stood at 5.4 million. Georgians were the largest single ethnic group, accounting for 70 per cent of the population, followed by Armenians, Russians, Azerbaijanis, Ossetians and Abkhaz. Up to half a million people, mostly Georgians and Russians, are estimated either to have emigrated or to have left Georgia temporarily in search of employment during the past few years.

10.2 Historical and political background

As one of the oldest Christian nations in the world, the Georgians have withstood invasion by the Arabs, Persians, Seljuks and Ottoman Turks. A brief "Golden Age" in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was followed by 600 years of rivalry and intrigue between the rulers of the various princedoms that comprise the present day Republic of Georgia. In 1783, the Georgian monarch Erekle II signed the Treaty of Georgievsk making eastern Georgia a protectorate of Tsarist Russia; this treaty was adduced by Tsar Paul I in 1801 as grounds for incorporating the country into the Russian Empire. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of October, 1917, Georgia and its Transcaucasus neighbours, Armenia and Azerbaijan, proclaimed their independence in May, 1918. Less than three years later, in February, 1921, the Red Army invaded Georgia and overthrew the existing Menshevik government.

The Georgians' subliminal resentment of Russian domination within the confines of the USSR surfaced in the March 1956 mass demonstrations against Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" disparaging Stalin (a native Georgian) and to call for Georgia's independence. A dissident movement emerged in the early 1970s headed by writer Zviad Gamsakhurdia and musicologist Merab Kostava, who together compiled and circulated samizdat articles and journals. In 1976, they founded a group to monitor the 1975 Helsinki agreement. The two were arrested in 1977 and sentenced to prison the following year; Gamsakhurdia sent a petition for his early release to the Georgian authorities and in the early 1980s resumed his dissident activities as the head of a group of like-minded students.

Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's espousal of glasnost in 1986 and the general amnesty for political prisoners in 1987 (in which Kostava was released) gave momentum to the emergence of a nationalist movement which focused initially on cultural issues but swiftly broadened its scope to encompass demands for Georgia's independence.

In April, 1989, Soviet troops violently dispersed a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi, killing 19 people, mostly women and girls, and injuring several hundred others. This intervention engendered widespread bitterness, and a mood of disillusion and antipathy towards Gorbachev and perestroika. It further served as the catalyst for the emergence of numerous small political parties whose leaders, despite their shared commitment to Georgia's secession from the USSR, quarrelled acrimoniously among themselves.

Parliamentary elections were scheduled for October, 1990. A total of 34 parties registered candidates; given that their programmes were in most respects identical, the campaign centred not on issues but personalities. In these conditions, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, with his reputation for defying Russian hegemony, enjoyed an overwhelming advantage, and his Round Table/Free Georgia bloc won 155 of the 250 seats in the new parliament.

Despite his reputation as a champion of human rights, Gamsakhurdia rapidly discredited himself and his leadership in the eyes of the international community by his blatantly chauvinistic and dictatorial policies. In particular, his decision in December 1990 to abolish the autonomous status of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast sparked off a bitter conflict that remains unresolved. The esteem Gamsakhurdia enjoyed among the Georgian population was, however, so great that he was elected president in May, 1991, six weeks after the new parliament had formally declared Georgia's independence from the USSR.

Opposition to Gamsakhurdia began to crystallise in the late summer of 1991 following his failure unequivocally to condemn the abortive putsch against Gorbachev, and in December the combined paramilitary formations of Dzhaba Ioseliani and defence minister Tengiz Kitovani launched an attack on the parliament building in Tbilisi where Gamsakhurdia had established his headquarters, finally forcing him to flee into exile on 6 January 1992.

In order to overcome the crisis of legitimacy created by the violent ousting from power of a democratically-elected president, Ioseliani and Kitovani invited former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who had served as first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party from 1972 to 1985, to return to Tbilisi and head an interim State Council. New parliamentary elections were scheduled for November 1992; this time, 47 parties competed. As in 1990, their programmes were virtually interchangeable.

The elections were overshadowed by fighting in Abkhazia between the ragtag Georgian army and Abkhaz separatist forces backed by hard-line elements within the Russian military; no voting took place either in Abkhazia or South Ossetia. The outcome of the elections, assessed as free and democratic by most international observers, enhanced Shevardnadze's image -- in a separate poll, he was elected parliament chairman with an overwhelming 96 per cent of the vote -- but failed to augment his authority. In effect, he was forced to share power with Kitovani and Ioseliani. Neither the pro-Shevardnadze Mshvidoba ("Peace") bloc, nor any other single party gained a clear majority within parliament. Several successive attempts to form either a pro- or an anti-Shevardnadze majority faction failed; the enacting of legislation took second place to protracted and inconclusive debates on procedural issues.

In September, 1993, the Abkhaz launched a new offensive in contravention of a Russian-mediated cease-fire signed two months earlier, and by early October had succeeded in taking the Abkhaz capital, Sukhumi, and expelling the entire Georgian population of some 250,000 from Abkhazia. Gamsakhurdia took advantage of the Georgian armed forces' collapse to launch a comeback attempt that Shevardnadze succeeded in neutralising only with Russian logistical assistance, in return for which he committed Georgia to membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Four months later, in February, 1994, Shevardnadze further enraged the radical opposition by signing a Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation with Russia.

For most of 1994, Georgia appeared on the verge of collapse. An almost total breakdown in law and order, evidenced by nightly gunfire in Tbilisi and a series of political assassinations that claimed the lives, among others, of charismatic and influential National Democratic Party chairman Gia Chanturia, was paralleled by economic collapse. Industry ground to a standstill; hyperinflation and unemployment reduced much of the population to dependence on international aid.

The three Transcaucasus republics were unique within the former USSR in that the language of the titular nationality was designated as the official language of the republic in the constitution. Georgians' collective pride in their native language gave rise to mass demonstrations in Tbilisi in April, 1978, to protest the changed wording of the new draft republican constitution that downgraded the status of the Georgian language. It was finally decided to revert to the original formulation after Georgian Communist Party First Secretary Eduard Shevardnadze reportedly warned Moscow of the possibility of widespread unrest if the proposed changes were formalised. This overtly defensive approach to any perceived attempt to undermine Georgian national identity by promoting the role of the Russian language was first reinforced by events of April 1989 and then masterfully exploited by Gamsakhurdia, to the point that in 1991 it was considered unwise, if not unsafe, to speak Russian rather than Georgian on the streets of Tbilisi. The privileged status of the Georgian language is reflected in the present media landscape. Whereas in the late 1980s minority ethnic groups such as the Armenians, Azerbaijanis and even Kurds had their own newspapers, virtually all of these have been constrained to cease publication because of financial difficulties. Of the previously existing Russian language publications, only the successor to the former Russian language Party and government organ survives.

10.3 The runup to the 1995 parliamentary and presidential elections

Only in 1995 did a gradual process of political and economic stabilisation get underway. In December 1994, at the insistence of the International Monetary Fund, the Georgian government had adopted a stringent anti-inflation programme that began to take effect almost immediately, paving the way for the introduction in October of a new currency, the lari, which has preserved its value against the US\$. The eclipse of armed mafia groups expedited a burgeoning of private street trading. The decision in early October by the international consortium formed to exploit three Azerbaijani Caspian Sea oil fields to export part of the output through Georgia generated (probably wholly unrealistic) hopes of an imminent economic upswing.

During the early months of the year a heated polemic took place in the Georgian press on the relative merits of a parliamentary or presidential system of government. Although many opposition deputies favoured a parliamentary system, Shevardnadze argued that the presidency (abolished after Gamsakhurdia's ouster) should be reintroduced; and the new draft constitution did in fact provide for a president with broad sweeping powers. On 4 July, the Georgian parliament voted to hold parliamentary and presidential elections on 5 November, contingent on the adoption of the new constitution, which after repeated postponements was finally endorsed by parliament on 24 August.

Five days later, on 29 August, Shevardnadze narrowly escaped death when a car bomb exploded as his motorcade was leaving the parliament building for the formal ceremony of signing the new constitution. Georgian procuracy officials laid the blame for the assassination attempt, and for a string of previous unresolved terrorist incidents including the murder of Chanturia, on the head of the Georgian security service, Igor Giorgadze, and on the Mkhedroni paramilitaries, whom Shevardnadze had unsuccessfully attempted to disarm earlier in the year.

The spectre of the anarchy that would undoubtedly have followed Shevardnadze's untimely demise could not but influence the outcome of both parliamentary and presidential elections, to the point that some Russian journalists suggested that the car bomb attack may have been stage-managed by Shevardnadze himself to boost his support. The suspected involvement of Igor Giorgadze and Mkhedrioni was used by the Georgian authorities to bring pressure to bear on Giorgadze's father Panteleimon, chairman of the United Communist Party, who declared his candidacy for president, and Ioseliani, who had likewise considered running for president but reconsidered. (Ioseliani was arrested in mid-November as soon as it became clear that he had not been reelected to parliament, and thus no longer enjoyed immunity from arrest).

11 The 1995 parliamentary elections

11.1 The electoral system

On 1 September, the Georgian parliament adopted new laws on both parliamentary and presidential elections. The law on parliamentary elections (based on the relevant paragraphs of the new Constitution) was a simplified version of that of 1992, under which some two thirds of the deputies were elected under the proportional system and the remaining third in single-mandate constituencies.

The new parliament was to be elected for a period of four years. Similar to 1992, 150 deputies were to be elected by the proportional, and a further 85 by the majoritarian system. In order to register for the elections, political parties either had to be represented in the existing parliament, or to collect in their support the signatures of 50,000 voters. Only those parties which polled a minimum of 5 per cent of the vote nation-wide in the 1995 elections qualified for representation in parliament under the proportional system. (A 4 per cent barrier for seats to be allocated under the proportional system was one of the provisions of the 1990 election law, but no such minimum was written into the 1992 election law). Participation of at least 1/3 of the electorate was required to validate the poll.

Similarly, candidates for the majoritarian system were required to produce the signatures of at least 1,000 supporters if they were not already parliament deputies. In order to be elected, a candidate for the majority system needed to receive a majority of the votes cast in his/her electoral district; and a minimum of one third of all registered voters were required to cast their ballots. If no candidate was elected in the first round of voting, a runoff election would be scheduled between the two candidates who polled the most votes.

As in 1992, no voting was scheduled in ten electoral districts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The electoral process was overseen and coordinated by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) chaired by an eminent mathematician, Professor Ivane Kighuradze. The chairman and two members of the Electoral Commission were appointed by the existing parliament; each parliamentary party had the right to appoint one further commission member. Groups of five non-parliamentary parties likewise had the right to nominate a representative to the CEC.

In order to nominate candidates for the parliamentary elections, political parties were required to register with the Central Electoral Commission no less than 50 days before the elections and to present a list of prospective candidates within ten days after that. Given that the Electoral Law was only adopted on 1 September, and the elections were scheduled for 5 November, this in effect left parties with very little time to organise, and of a total of 85 parties wishing to do so, only 67 succeeded in registering. Two of these subsequently withdrew, one was disqualified, and several others united to form blocs.

According to the Electoral Law, the costs of the electoral campaign were to be covered by the Georgian government, although the Law did not specify what funds would be made available either to parties or to individual candidates. The chairman of the CEC told Verification Technology Information Centre (VERTIC) that it had been allocated 1,311,000 lari (a little over \$1 million) by the Georgian government towards the cost of conducting the elections. It was, however, subsequently decided that in the light of the country's catastrophic economic situation, on the one hand, and the huge number of parties and candidates that had registered, on the

other, the Georgian government was not in a position to provide campaign funding. Parties were therefore constrained to raise funds to finance their own campaigns, but strict limits were imposed on the amount of money that could be spent. Political parties were entitled to spend a maximum of 2,000 lari (\$1,600) for each candidate on their party list; individual candidates running in single mandate constituencies were similarly entitled to spend 2,000 lari. Parties and individual candidates were under an obligation to provide the CEC with detailed information concerning the amount and source of funds donated, although VERTIC forecast that this requirement would be honoured more in the breach than the observance.

11.2 The parties and blocs

The final number of parties and blocs competing in the parliamentary elections was 53, i.e. more than in either 1990 or 1992. These included three separate Communist parties (the United Communist Party of Georgia; the Stalinist Communist Party of Georgia; and the Communist Party of Georgia); two separate women's parties (the Union for Women's Protection and Women of Georgia for the Elections); two rival monarchist parties (the Conservative Monarchist Party of Georgia and the Union of Georgian Traditionalists); two parties claiming to represent peasant farmers (the Agrarian Union of Georgia and the Agrarian Party of Georgia); the coalition "The Way of Zviad -- Voice of the Nation" uniting supporters of deceased President Zviad Gamsakhurdia; and organisations to defend the interests of such disparate groups as veterans of the war in Afghanistan (All-Georgian Party for Peace and Freedom), the physically handicapped (Union of God's Children), the population of the remoter mountain districts (the Union of Georgian Mountaineers and the All-Georgian Political Organisation "Lemi") and Georgian refugees from Abkhazia ("Abkhazia is my Home" and the Georgian Citizens' Political Association "Colchis").

Of the total 53 parties/blocs, only approximately half a dozen were considered by political commentators prior to the elections as likely to gain representation in the new parliament.⁹ They were

- **The Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG).** Chairman: Eduard Shevardnadze; General secretary: Zurab Zhvania. A relative late-comer to the Georgian political scene, the CUG was created in late 1993 by a group of young intellectuals from the Greens together with some former Communists, to provide Shevardnadze with a personal power base. Its election programme focused on resolving economic problems, specifically expediting the creation of a market economy and reducing unemployment, on strengthening law and order and on promoting inter-ethnic harmony.
- **The National-Democratic Party of Georgia.** Acting Chairman: Mamuka Giorgadze. One of the earliest parties to emerge in the late 1980s, and one which has consistently taken a radical position vis-à-vis the Georgian authorities. Its original leader, Giorgi Chanturia, split with Gamsakhurdia in 1989 and boycotted the 1990 elections. The party proclaimed its readiness to work with Shevardnadze on his return to Georgia in 1992, and won 12 seats in the 1992 parliamentary elections, but distanced itself from Shevardnadze in late 1993 after his decision to commit Georgia to membership of the CIS, which it still adamantly opposes. It also opposes a Russian military presence in Georgia. It describes its ideological orientation as Christian- democratic in the West European sense.

⁹ For a full list of the 53 parties, see the table on the allocation of free time on the Georgian state tv channel.

- **The United Republican Party (URP).** Chairman: Nodar Natadze. The URP was created on the basis of merging the Georgian Popular Front of Georgia (formed in 1989 and headed by Nodar Natadze, with a radically anti-Russian orientation), the Republican Party, the organisation "Democratic Choice for Georgia", and the organisation Charter -91 (which originally supported Gamsakhurdia but went into opposition in the autumn of 1991). In the 1992 elections the constituent parties won a total of 27 parliamentary seats. The URP opposes the introduction of the presidency, CIS membership and a Russian military presence in Georgia.
- **The Union of Georgian Traditionalists (UGT).** Chairman: Akaki Asatiani. The Union was created in 1990 and was a member of Zviad Gamsakhurdia's Round Table/Free Georgia coalition in the 1990 elections. Asatiani served as parliament speaker in the Gamsakhurdia parliament but after the latter's violent ouster aligned himself with Shevardnadze in 1992. The UGT won seven seats in the 1992 elections. Its orientation is described as conservative/nationalist.
- **The United Communist Party (UCP) + Social Democratic Party (SDP).** The United Communist Party chairman is Major-General (retired) Panteleimon Giorgadze, Igor's father. The UCP supports "non-orthodox" Marxism-Leninism, opposes the introduction of the presidency, and calls for greater reintegration within the CIS. The Social-Democratic Party was founded in early 1990 by Guram Muchaidze, a professor of history at Tbilisi State University; it won two seats in the 1992 elections. The SDP advocates the "Chinese model" of a socialist regulated market economy.
- **The Political Union "Tanadgoma" (Solidarity)** was founded in July, 1995, by parliament speaker Vakhtang Goguadze and Prime Minister Otar Patsatsia on the basis of a parliamentary faction numbering 20 deputies. It defines its ideology as democratic-centrist; supports market reforms, privatisation of land and cultivating good relations with both Russia and the neighbouring Transcaucasus states.
- **The Union of Reformers (UR).** The Union was formed in the summer of 1993; its members include five deputies from the 1992 parliament including deputy prime Minister Bakur Gulua and two other government ministers. The UR labels its ideology "liberal-centrist"; it supports the implementation of market reforms as the precondition for emergence of a middle class, and is in favour of close relations with Russia.

11.3 The results of the parliamentary elections

Of the total electorate of 3,121,075 people, 2,127,946 or 68.01 per cent, participated in the parliamentary elections. The number of ballots cast was 2,079,462 of which 113,588, or 5.46 per cent, were ruled invalid.⁹

As widely anticipated, Shevardnadze's Citizens' Union of Georgia received the largest number of votes cast in the proportional system (504,586, or 23.71%). This translated into 90 parliamentary seats. Only two other parties overcame the five per cent barrier -- the National Democratic Party, which polled 169,218 votes (7.95%) to win 31 seats, and, surprisingly, the All-Georgian Union of Revival headed by Adzhar parliament chairman Aslan Abashidze, which polled 145,626 votes, or 6.84%, giving it 25 seats. (The All-Georgian Union of Revival is the successor party to the All-Georgian Union for the Revival of Adzharia, which was formed in

⁹ The figures stated are those released by the CEC as published in Svobodnaya Gruzia on 21 November 1995.

January, 1992 and participated in the 1992 elections as part of the Mshvidoba (Peace) bloc, winning 6 seats).

Four seats thus remain to be allocated under the proportional system. Four other parties polled marginally less than five per cent: the United Communists + Social Democrats (4.49%); the Union of Georgian Traditionalists (4.42%); the 21st Century/Konstantine Gamsakhurdia Society bloc (4.15%); and the Socialist Party (3.79%).

A total of some 2,000 candidates contested the 75 seats to be allocated according to the majoritarian system; in some constituencies, there were up to 50 candidates. Consequently, voting under the majoritarian system resulted in the election of only 32 of a possible total of 75 candidates in the first round. Runoff elections were therefore scheduled for 19 November in the remaining electoral districts (including all ten Tbilisi constituencies), as a result of which 39 of the remaining seats in parliament were filled.

The seats were distributed as follows:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| • Citizens' Union of Georgia | 16 seats (to give a total of 106) |
| National Democratic Party | 3 (to give a total of 34) |
| All-Georgian Union of Revival | 7 (to give a total of 32) |
| • Socialist Party | 4 |
| "Progress" bloc | 3 |
| Union of Georgian Traditionalists | 3 |
| Political Union "Tanadgoma" | 3 |
| United Republican Party | 1 |
| Union of Sportsmen of Georgia | 1 |
| "Lemi" | 1 |
| Union for a Law-Governed State | 1 |
| Union of Reformers | 1 |
| • "Independent" candidates | 27 |
| • In three constituencies (including that of Mtatsminda contested by URP leader Nodar Natadze), the results of the 19 November voting were inconclusive, and a further round was scheduled for 3 December. | |

The British NGO VERTIC, which monitored events in Georgia during the runup to the elections, registered what it termed "numerous cases of individual abuse by local officials, candidates and parties" but attributed these to inexperience and confusion, and to the very limited duration of the electoral campaign, rather than to any deliberate and concerted attempt to influence the outcome of the voting. The verdict of the international observers teams who monitored the ballot was that despite occasional violations the elections were in the main "democratic, free and fair".

Some Georgian political parties, however, have challenged the official results. The Social-Democratic Party, for example, issued a statement accusing Shevardnadze's entourage of falsifying the election results. Similarly, the comparatively large number of seats won by Aslan Abashidze's party in the proportional system was questioned by some observers, given that its support came almost exclusively from voters in the Adzhar Republic. The entire population of Adzharia in 1989 was 393,000; the number of voters in November, 1995, was 237,225, of whom 145,626, or more than 60 per cent, voted for the All-Georgian Union for Revival. Representatives of the URP told this author on 1 November that they anticipated falsification of the results specifically in Adzharia, where informal opinion polls had determined that they could expect some 25 per cent of the vote, as compared with 19 per cent for Abashidze's party and 16 per cent for the Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG).

12 The 1995 presidential elections

12.1 The legal framework

According to the Georgian Constitution (Article 70), the President of Georgia is to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage by secret ballot, for a term of five years. One individual may hold this office for no more than two consecutive terms. Candidates for president must be no less than 35 years old (this restriction has been interpreted as having been adopted to preclude the candidacy of Gia Chanturia's widow Irina Sarishvili), and to have lived in Georgia for no less than 15 years (although not necessarily 15 consecutive years prior to the elections, which would have disqualified Shevardnadze given his tenure as Soviet Foreign Minister). Candidates must, however, be resident in Georgia at the time of the elections. Presidential candidates may be nominated by political associations or initiative groups who collect a minimum of 50,00 signatures in support of the given candidate.

The presidential elections are declared valid if the majority of the electorate (50 per cent plus one person) participate. A candidate who receives the votes of more than half the electorate is considered elected president. If the elections are declared valid, but no single candidate receives the required number of votes, a second round of voting between the two candidates who received the largest number of votes is to be scheduled two weeks later. This second round of voting will be deemed valid if at least one third of the total number of voters participate; the candidate who receives the larger number of votes is considered elected, on condition that this figure is equal to no less than 20 per cent of the total electorate.

Candidates for president were required to submit their application for registration to the Central Electoral Commission no later than 50 days prior to the elections, and to produce a minimum of 50,000 signatures supporting their application no later than 40 days prior to the elections.

12.2 The presidential candidates and their programmes

The first to declare his candidacy was Eduard Shevardnadze on 30 August (the day after the car bomb attack, and two days before the parliament actually adopted the law on the presidential elections). As of mid-September, eleven potential candidates had reportedly registered with the Central Electoral Commission, including Mkhedrioni leader Dzhaba Ioseliani. The latter subsequently withdrew his candidacy to protest reprisals against Mkhedrioni in the aftermath of the car bomb attack on Shevardnadze, and a further four potential candidates failed to collect the requisite 50,000 signatures in their support.

The six candidates who succeeded in formally registering were

- **Roin Liparteliani.** (Nominated by the Agrarian Party of Georgia). Born in 1951, graduated from the Georgian Institute of Agriculture and then from the Faculty of Law of Tbilisi State University. Initially supported Gamsakhurdia but distanced himself from him in early 1991; tried but failed to register as a candidate for the May 1991 presidential elections. Was elected to parliament in 1992. Advocates land reform. Supports Georgian membership of the CIS but opposes a Russian military presence in Georgia.

- **Akaki Bakradze.** (Nominated by the Ilia Chavchavadze Society). Born 1928, graduated from Tbilisi State University where he taught literature. Gained a reputation for unorthodox political thinking in the early 1980s, for which he was castigated by Shevardnadze. Assumed a leading role as ideologist of the nascent national movement in the late 1980s. Gives priority to creation of a western-style democratic state in Georgia but concedes that this will take time. Opposes membership of the CIS and a Russian military presence in Georgia.
- **Dzhumber Patiashvili.** (Nominated by a group of supporters). Born in 1939, graduated from the Georgian Institute of Agriculture and then made a career first as a Komsomol and then as a Communist Party functionary. Patiashvili was elected Georgian Communist Party Central Committee secretary for agriculture in 1974, and in 1985 succeeded Shevardnadze as First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party following the latter's appointment as Soviet Foreign Minister. He was dismissed in the wake of the attack by Soviet troops on demonstrators in Tbilisi on 9 April, 1989. He was elected to parliament in 1992 as an independent candidate. His presidential programme was harshly critical of Shevardnadze's economic policies; he opposed privatisation of land and argued that the transition to a market economy should be strictly controlled.
- **Panteleimon Giorgadze.** (Nominated by the United Communist Party). Born in 1925, entered the Georgian industrial Institute in 1941 and then in 1943 joined the frontier troops as a career officer, serving inter alia in Mongolia and Cuba. Resigned his commission in 1987 and returned to Georgia. Assumed the post of head of the tripartite peacekeeping forces in South Ossetia in 1992 at Shevardnadze's request. Was elected to parliament in 1992 as a deputy for the Workers' Socialist Party (the forerunner of the United Communist Party). Served briefly as Commander-in-Chief of the Georgian frontier forces in 1993 but stepped down over disagreements with Shevardnadze, of whose policies he is exceptionally critical. Advocates "socialism with a Georgian face" and closer integration within the CIS. It is unclear, however, whether he does in fact favour the restoration of the USSR as some reports have claimed.
- **Eduard Shevardnadze.** (Nominated by the Citizens' Union of Georgia and the Socialist Party). Born in 1928, graduated from the Kutaisi Pedagogical Institute, and embarked upon full-time work as a Komsomol activist. He was first secretary of the Georgian Komsomol from 1957 until 1961 when he switched to party work. From 1965 to 1972 he served as Georgian minister of internal affairs. He was first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party from 1972 until his appointment as Soviet Foreign Minister in 1985. Shevardnadze's presidential program emphasised his allegedly unique ability to reestablish Georgia's territorial integrity (i.e. to induce the Russian leadership to extract the necessary concessions from the recalcitrant Abkhaz separatists) and to stabilise the domestic political situation so that "every individual will be in a position to create his own well-being by virtue of his own labour."
- **Kartlos Gharibashvili.** (Nominated by a group of supporters). Born in 1954, studied law first at Tbilisi State University and then as a postgraduate in Moscow. In 1989-90 was an activist with the Georgian Popular Front but later split with its leader, Nodar Natadze, and became chairman of the "Democratic Georgia" movement. Volunteered to represent Dzhaba Ioseliani following the latter's arrest on Gamsakhurdia's orders in February, 1991; failed to collect the minimum number of signatures necessary to run against Gamsakhurdia in the May, 1991, presidential elections. Gharibashvili supports rapprochement with Russia and Georgia's membership of the CIS. His presidential programme focused on social protection of the more vulnerable strata of the population; to this end he advocated state control over the economy.

12.3 The presidential election results

The overwhelming victory of the Citizens' Union of Georgia in the parliamentary elections was paralleled by Shevardnadze's personal triumph in the presidential poll.

Voter participation in the presidential elections was 68 per cent.

Name candidate	Per cent
Eduard Shevardnadze	74.94%
Dzhumber Patiasvili	19.01%
Akaki Bakradze	1.05%
Panteleimon Giorgadze	0.40%
Kartlos Gharibashvili	0.40%
Roin Liparteliani	0.20%

13 The media in Georgia

Paradoxically, the advent to power in November 1990, of Zviad Gamsakhurdia's ultra-nationalist leadership heralded a media crackdown that continued for several years. Whereas in 1989 and the first half of 1990 political debate flourished in the pages of the Georgian press, as of early 1991 media freedom was systematically eroded. Television coverage of the Georgian parliament sessions, for example, was censored to exclude speeches by opposition deputies. Journalists, whether Soviet or Western, whose articles were deemed by Gamsakhurdia to lack objectivity, were threatened with expulsion from the country. In part this was the direct result of tensions engendered by the confrontation between the central government in Tbilisi and the secessionist-minded leaderships of Abkhazia and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast. It is worth noting that the first draft of a new media law compiled in early 1991 advocated strict control over, and censorship of, materials that could be construed as inciting inter-ethnic animosity -- a restriction that could effectively have been adduced to prevent the publication of any materials reflecting either the Abkhaz or the South Ossetian view.

Nor did the general situation improve substantively following Gamsakhurdia's ouster and Shevardnadze's return to Georgia in March 1992. True, representatives of moderate opposition parties had greater access to the official media than they did under Gamsakhurdia. Independent journalists, however, were subjected to systematic harassment, and opposition newspapers were arbitrarily closed on the flimsiest of pretexts. In one notorious episode, a renowned film director and supporter of Shevardnadze personally demolished the typesetting equipment of the pro-Gamsakhurdia newspaper *Tavisupali Sakartvelo*. Only in 1994 did a gradual relaxation of political control of the press get underway; several journalists confirmed that the media enjoyed greater freedom in late 1995 than one year earlier.

13.1 The print media

As of late 1995, there were between 100 and 200 registered newspapers in Georgia, but only approximately 20 - 30 currently publish with any degree of regularity. They can be divided into the following categories:

- Two are state-owned and controlled: *Sakartvelos respublika* (Georgian Republic, in Georgian) and *Svobodnaya Gruzia* (Free Georgia, in Russian). (The latter reportedly receives some funding from the Aragvi commercial bank). These constitute the "official" press, and focus primarily on government policy (internal political, foreign policy, economic/social developments). The contents may overlap, for example in cases where both publish dispatches from the official news agency Sakinform, but are not identical. Since 1992, neither has been known to print materials that would reflect badly on Shevardnadze.

In addition to dispatches filed by their own correspondents, both these papers draw on materials from independent news agencies such as BGI and Black Sea Press. The editors of both papers are members of the former Communist nomenclature in their 60s.

- Three newspapers are likewise owned/controlled by official bodies: *Tbilisi*, published (in Georgian) three times weekly by the office of the mayor of Tbilisi (this paper may receive some commercial funding). It focuses primarily on local news (and gossip) rather than mainstream politics, and is said to be Shevardnadze's favourite newspaper.

Banki, published weekly by the National Bank of Georgia, focuses specifically on economic/financial topics.

Zakavkazskiy voyenniy vedomosti (Transcaucasian Military Review) is published in Russian five times weekly by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, primarily for the Russian military stationed in Georgia. It prints articles on Russian and Georgian military topics.

- Organs of non-political government bodies, i.e. *Literaturuli Sakartvelo*, the weekly publication of the Union of Writers of Georgia, and *Ganatileba*, the weekly paper of the Ministry of Education.
- Organs of specific political parties or organisations, e.g. *Mamuli* (Shota Rustaveli Society); *Kartuli khronika* (National Democratic Party) *Sakartvelo* (United Republican Party); *Sarangi* (Merab Kostava Society); *Komunisti* (United Communist Party).
- There are a number of nominally independent papers (*Rezonansi*, *Mimomkhilveli*, *Shvidi dghe*, *Droni*, *Shansi*, *Samreklo*, *Msgepsi*, *Iveria-spektr*) focusing primarily on political topics. These produce much of the most original and stimulating journalism and, consequently, may on occasion experience pressure from the Georgian authorities. A member of *Rezonansi*'s staff, for example, told the monitor that in the summer of 1994 the paper was threatened with closure by the Tbilisi prosecutor's office for publishing materials that allegedly insulted Shevardnadze.
- Newspapers financed wholly or partly by commercial structures: *Kavkasioni* (receives some funding from Coca-Cola); *Biznes-Kurier* (owned and funded by a group of Tbilisi businessmen).

The most serious constraints on the print media are no longer political but financial, and are the direct consequence of the economic collapse that followed Georgia's unilateral declaration of independence from the USSR under Gamsakhurdia in 1991 and the ensuing three years of near civil war. (While the press in almost all the Newly Independent States experiences such problems, there are arguably more acute in Georgia than in some other countries). These financial constraints apply both to the government-owned and to the independent press.

A major problem is ensuing supplies of newsprint. All journalists who talked to the monitors complained that the cost of paper was astronomical: according to Guram Gogiashvili, editor of *Sakartvelos respublika*, his paper imports newsprint from Turkey at a cost of \$1400 per ton; this is more expensive than the cost in Western Europe. (The paper is published 5 times per week in a print run of 10,000 copies; the price is 25 tetri, or 30 cents, which is tantamount to 1.5 per cent of the average monthly wage). The skyrocketing cost of newsprint, in conjunction with hyper-inflation that has savagely eroded the purchasing power of the Georgian population, has led to dramatically reduced circulations: in the case of *Shvidi dghe* (Seven days), the number of copies printed has fallen from 100,000 in 1991-2 to 55,000 in 1993 and then to 5,000 - 10,000 in 1995. It should be noted in this context that the print runs of state-owned newspapers (10,000 for *Sakartvelos respublika* and 5,000 for *Svobodnaya Gruzia*) are the same, or lower, than those of the most popular independent papers. *Mimomkhilveli* has a print run of 10,000; that of *Rezonansi* varies from 10,000 to 15,000.

A second factor that impinges on the size of print runs is the almost total collapse of the state-controlled distribution system, which means that most publications experience considerable difficulties in ensuring regular distribution outside Tbilisi. (*Rezonansi* has overcome this problem by establishing its own parallel distribution system in the major cities of Kutaisi and Batumi).

The precarious financial situation of most newspapers, whether state- or privately owned, in an environment where advertising is in its infancy and the revenues to be garnered from it are therefore minimal, is reflected in the average salary for journalists of \$30 (*Rezonansi* pays on average \$50; the average monthly salary in state-funded organisations and enterprises is \$20). Understandably, the far higher salaries to be made in trade and commerce serve to deter many talented young people from entering journalism, a trend that inevitably impacts on standards.

It could be argued that the whole issue of journalistic standards is considered as secondary to that of financial survival. The middle and upper management of the state-controlled press, for the most part people in their late 40s and 50s who were raised on the Socialist ethic that regarded the primary obligation of journalism as proselytising, are wary of printing any controversial materials that could compromise their standing with the national leadership. As for independent journalists, they not only have to contend with the possible repercussions of offending Shevardnadze, but are equally, if not more vulnerable to pressure from parallel power structures such as Mkhedrioni. In addition, some complain that the cataclysms which the Georgian population has lived through over the past five years are of such magnitude that they have bred a degree of apathy and even indifference to politics. One journalist with *Rezonansi* explained that in 1989-1990 the press played a key role in disseminating the ideas and demands of the nascent national movement, and that at that time newspaper articles were the subject of passionate discussion and polemic. Now, however, even the most brilliant and originally argued articles fail to generate such a response.

13.2 The broadcast media

Given that the comparative cost of daily newspapers in Georgia is so high as to render them a luxury beyond the reach of much of the population, the role and influence of the broadcast media is proportionally greater. This is not to say that economic factors do not play a role in this sector also. Chronic energy shortages have curtailed the broadcasts of state TV to five hours per day, but even this limited output is liable to disruption by power cuts which are reportedly even more frequent in rural areas than in the capital.

Georgia has two state controlled TV channels. Channel 1 broadcasts news, entertainment and advertising for a total of 4 hours per day; Channel 2 broadcasts for 3 hours per day. The broadcast language of both channels is Georgian. Georgian Radio, by contrast is on the air 24 hours per day, and airs programmes in Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Greek for those ethnic minorities within Georgia. It also reportedly has some programming in German and English.

The ideological constraints observed by the state-controlled press, and the "generation gap", are equally applicable to the official broadcast media. It should, however, be noted that representatives of the younger generation of TV journalists who spoke with the monitoring team in Tbilisi demonstrate considerable initiative, integrity, tenacity and courage in seeking constantly to expand the parameters of what is permitted. Predictably, the greatest problems are presented by coverage of internal political developments. One journalist who sought to make a series of documentary features on such issues as the fate of those residents of Tbilisi whose homes were destroyed during the fighting that preceded Gamsakhurdia's ouster in January 1992, or the misappropriation of international humanitarian aid, encountered innumerable difficulties.

In addition, Georgia has between 10 -15 private TV stations in regional centres, broadcasting a mixture of local news, entertainment and advertising. According to one Georgian media expert, it is quite easy to circumvent the stringent licensing requirements by bribing the appropriate official(s) within the Ministry of Communications. Independent TV stations are vulnerable to local mafia or pressure groups; the independent TV company Ibervizia, which had a studio in Tbilisi and affiliates in several provincial towns, was closed down in the wake of a bomb attack in 1994.

Finally, there are some 6-7 private radio stations in Tbilisi, and one in Kutaisi.

13.3 Legislation governing the media

In August, 1991, the Georgian parliament passed a Law on the Press and Other Mass Media, which took effect as of its publication on 10 September, 1991. The Law is acknowledged by journalists to be exemplary, but there exists no official independent "watchdog" body authorised to monitor its implementation and review, alleged violations and charges of non-compliance. (This duty devolves on the relevant commission of the Georgian parliament). The Law states that "the press and other mass media in the Republic of Georgia are free. This freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Georgia. Citizens of the Republic of Georgia have the right to express, distribute and defend their opinions via any media, and to receive information on questions of social and state life. Censorship of the press and other media is not permitted."

Restrictions on the free flow of information via the media were enumerated in Article 4 of the law, which stipulated that "The mass media are forbidden to disclose state secrets; to call for the overthrow or change of the existing state and social system; to propagate war, cruelty, racial, national or religious intolerance; to publish information that could contribute to the committing of crimes; to interfere in the private lives of citizens or to infringe on their honour and dignity." Article 21 of the law establishes the rights of journalists to gather information.

At the same time, the law made clear the subordination to, and responsibilities of, the state controlled media vis-à-vis the government. Article 18 stipulates that government-controlled media outlets are obliged to print free of charge official government communications. Non-government controlled media outlets are obliged to do so only in "exceptional circumstances", such as the outbreak of war or natural disasters.

The principle of freedom of the mass media is similarly written into the Georgian Constitution adopted in August, 1995. This states, specifically, that "the mass media are free; censorship is impermissible" (Article 24.2) and that "the state or separate individuals do not have the right to monopolise the mass media or the means of disseminating information" (Article 24.3).

13.4 Self-censorship

There is no formal official body in Georgia charged with media censorship. The existence, however, of official guidelines on news coverage, and intermittent interference from persons attached to the staff of the head of state, combine to create an atmosphere in which some journalists modify their approach to coverage of political developments. For example, a parliament decree enacted during the summer of 1995 could be construed as limiting or even violating the professed freedom of information. The decree in question stipulated detailed guidelines for the coverage of internal political developments in Georgian State Television news broadcasts. Specifically, broadcasters were instructed that the day's parliamentary proceedings

should invariably be the lead story, followed by the activities of the head of state (Eduard Shevardnadze), and then by coverage of the activities of ministries and other official structures. Moreover, this coverage should be compiled exclusively on the basis of information received and press releases issued by the press centres of the respective structures. (This latter requirement creates logistical problems insofar as parliament sessions end only at 7.30 p.m., and the main news programme *Matsne* goes on the air at 8 p.m.) An analogous restriction on coverage of domestic political developments is the fact that while State Television is accredited to cover sessions of the Cabinet of Ministers, many independent journalists are not.

Moreover, the monitors were informed by a journalist with Channel 1 of Georgian State TV that there are an unspecified number of people on Shevardnadze's personal staff whose duties are not clearly defined, but who claim that one of their unofficial functions is to monitor the work of the Georgian media. It was not clear to the individual in question whether they do so on their own initiative or have been charged with this responsibility by Shevardnadze himself.

One TV journalist who spoke with the monitoring team said that she could accept that some constraints were necessary during what she termed "a transition period", but argued that they should take the form of specific official guidelines. In the absence of such clear guidelines, journalists revert to the practice of self-censorship. This may take the form, for example, of cutting particularly radical statements when editing an interview with an opposition political figure, or balancing a controversial opinion with a statement by Shevardnadze on the same topic.

This is not to imply that the phenomenon of self-censorship is confined to the state-controlled media; but as indicated above, in the case of the independent media the rationale is less likely to be fear of offending the national leadership as of running foul of the mafia or paramilitary structures such as *Mkhedrioni*.

There is, significantly, one aspect of government policy that is apparently considered so sensitive that it is subject to official censorship in the state-controlled media, and that is the combined efforts of the Georgian and Russian leaderships to resolve the Abkhaz conflict. A German journalist who accompanied German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on his official visit to Tbilisi in January 1996, noted that journalists from Georgian State Television were admitted to the state banquet in Kinkel's honour only after Shevardnadze's official speech in which he suggested that Georgia might draw on the NATO practice in Bosnia of employing a combination of diplomacy and military force to extract concessions from the Abkhaz leadership.

13.5 Conclusions

The Georgian press, both official and independent, and to a lesser degree the broadcast media, testify to a laudable plurality of opinion. There are no perceptible political/ideological restrictions on the opposition press. The state-controlled media appear to be making a concerted effort to achieve a degree of impartiality in political broadcasting, although this process is hampered by the conservative mindset of some representatives of the upper management. Investigative reporting may be thwarted both by residual caution on the part of government officials who decline to divulge sensitive information, and by logistical constraints imposed by the generally catastrophic financial situation of both official and independent media.

Despite the limitations and problems enumerated above, the overall standard of Georgian journalism, if not exemplary, is more than acceptable. There is, as noted above, a "generation gap" between those journalists in their 40s and 50s who received professional university training, but for much of their careers were constrained to observe rigid political constraints, and the younger generation who endeavour to compensate for their lack of formal training with enthusiasm. Georgian journalists themselves are aware of their professional shortcomings but at the same time are confident that overcoming them is only a matter of time.

The most serious threat to the continued development of free independent media in Georgia is financial. The inclusion in the annual budget passed by the Georgian parliament in February 1996, of 20 per cent value-added-tax on the press, information agencies and TV companies was widely protested by the independent media as tantamount to a death blow. Media representatives appealed to Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze to veto the proposed tax, and he undertook to request that the Georgian parliament do so. At the time of writing, it was not clear whether in fact the decision had been reversed. VAT on the media had been abolished on the eve of the 1995 elections.

14 The media coverage of the elections

14.1 The electoral law and the media

The Electoral Law (Article 31.3) stipulated that "the media shall cover the course of preparation and holding of elections to parliament. They have an unrestricted right to attend all meetings and procedures of the electoral commissions. The electoral commissions, parties and electoral blocs, state and public organisations, enterprises and organisations shall provide the media with all information pertaining to the elections."

According to Article 47.1, "candidates shall have equal rights from the moment of their registration and during the whole electoral campaign". Article 47.2 stipulated that "citizens of Georgia are free to agitate either in favour of or against specific parties, blocs or candidates." In theory, this right to agitate against a party or bloc is counter- balanced by Article 20 of the 1991 Law on the Press and other Mass Media, which states that persons criticised or slandered in the press or by broadcast media have the right to reply to the accusations within one week of publication/broadcast. In practice, however, this right appears to have been abused in at least one case in the course of the pre-election campaign (see below).

Article 47.8 ruled that public TV and radio should allocate three hours per day for election propaganda, to be distributed equally among the parties and blocs participating in the elections. Article 48 proclaimed the right of parties and election blocs to publish their programmes in the central and local media, and of individual candidates in the parliamentary elections to publish their programmes in local media; these were to be submitted to the editorial board of the newspaper in question no later than 15 days prior to the elections. The Central Electoral Commission was charged with determining which newspapers should publish election documents gratis, and with monitoring the media coverage of the election campaign in general in order to ensure equal conditions for all parties and candidates.

It was subsequently decided that each political party or bloc should receive 80 minutes' free air time on state controlled television and radio, plus the opportunity to publish its programme once free of charge in the state-controlled press, i.e. in Sakartvelos respublika and Svobodnaya Gruzija. The procedure for doing this was that the party submitted its programme to the CEC, which in turn forwarded it to the newspapers. The order in which these programmes appeared in print did not therefore necessarily correspond to the order in which they were listed on the ballot sheet. Presidential candidates were each allocated eight 20-minute slots on state-controlled radio and TV.

14.2 Election coverage in the broadcast media

The actual amount of free airtime on state TV finally allocated to the various parties and blocs varied widely.¹⁰ The political movement "Fatherland, Language, Faith", for example, broadcast only a single ten-minute spot, while three parties -- Dzhaba Ioseliani's "Archevnebi", the United Republican Party, and the bloc "For Life" broadcast 71.01, 79.06 and 76.43 minutes respectively. The only party that contrived to broadcast more than the statutory 80 minutes was the Union for the Revival of Families, which managed to clock up a total of 95.54 minutes. It is, however, likely that those parties which failed to make use of their full allocation either chose

¹⁰ The table containing the free time allocated to the 53 parties is annexed to this report.

voluntarily to do so or were prevented from doing so by financial constraints. The differences may also be due to the complicated process of monitoring the allocation of free time to 53 parties with occasionally virtually the same names. VERTIC, who questioned the leadership of the various parties, reported that although some political figures had expressed dissatisfaction that financial constraints limited their access to the broadcast media, they were aware of no censorship of party political broadcasts on state-controlled media.

The free time allocated to the presidential candidates was divided most fairly. The six candidates received eight slots of 20 minutes on alternating evenings for political advertising. All availed themselves of the opportunity, the eventual differences are marginal and due to the length of the programmes produced by the candidates themselves.

Under the terms of the electoral law, non-editorial coverage of the electoral campaign on state TV and radio was to be confined to the work of the Central Electoral Commission. Although criticised as "totally incomprehensible and unacceptable" by the press spokesman of the Citizens' Union of Georgia, Dato Tqeshelashvili (in an interview with *Kavkazioni*), this restriction was duly observed by the broadcast media, with exception of minimal coverage of official functions performed by Shevardnadze in his capacity as head of state.

The evening news programme *Matsne* devoted several ten-minute programmes to the work of the Central Electoral Commission; in addition, two ten minute programmes were devoted to voting procedure, i.e. how to fill out the rather complex ballot papers correctly.

14.3 Election coverage in the print media

Between 17 October, when the monitoring mission commenced, and 4 November, *Sakartvelos respublika* published the election programmes of the following 32 parties and blocs: the Liberal-Democratic National Party; the Party for National Unity and Social Equality; the United Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party; the Democratic Party; the Socialist Party; the Union of Traditionalists; and the Bloc for Economic Revival (21 October); the Political Union "Tanadgoma"; the political organisation "Trade Unions in the Elections"; the Christian Democratic Union-European Choice bloc; the Union of Reformers - National Accord bloc; the Conservative (Monarchist) Party; the Stalinist Communist Party; the Progressivist Party; "New Georgia"; the Communist Party; and the Merab Kostava Society (25 October); The Citizens' Union of Georgia; "Abkhazia is our Home"; the "For Life" bloc; the Union for the Revival of Georgian Families; "Samshoblo"; and the Union for Social Justice (28 October); the Agrarian Party; "Fatherland, Language, Faith"; the Union of God's Children; the organisation "Mamuli" (Homeland); the Liberal-Conservative Party; and the Ilia Chavchavadze Society (1 November); the All-Georgian Union of Revival; the League of Georgian Intellectuals; and the Union for the Protection of Women (4 November).

Additional editorial coverage of the election campaign in *Sakartvelos respublika* demonstrated a clear bias in favour of Shevardnadze and of the Political Union "Tanadgoma", which is headed by former parliament speaker Vakhtang Goguadze and former Prime Minister Otar Patsatsia. In addition to coverage of official statements and decrees by Shevardnadze and his various activities as head of state, the paper published an interview with Russian Minister of Defence Pavel Grachev endorsing Shevardnadze's candidacy for president (1 November); a half-page article by veteran political commentator Koba Imedashvili which, without mentioning Shevardnadze by name, argued vehemently that the only way in which Georgia could avoid being again plunged into anarchy and poverty was to support a national leader for whose sake the West would continue to provide generous quantities of financial aid, and that voters should therefore be mindful of their moral obligation to their fellow countrymen when casting their

ballots (21 October); and statements by various government officials in support of Shevardnadze's candidacy.

Sakartvelos respublika also printed interviews with the deputy parliament speaker Rusudan Beridze, a candidate representing the Union of Traditionalists (17 October); with two candidates for the "Progress" bloc (1 and 2 November) and with several independent candidates (28 October, 2 November). The editor of *Sakartvelos respublika* admitted to the monitoring team that his journalists had published "interviews with our friends ... with decent people" but implied that he considered this justified "...in order that voters don't make a mistake but ... elect tomorrow's people."

Of the presidential candidates, during the period monitored *Sakartvelos respublika* published interviews with Kartlos Gharibashvili (20 October) and Akaki Bakradze (21 October).

Svobodnaya Gruzia's editorial coverage of the parliamentary elections was more varied and balanced: the paper featured articles by the chairman of the Bourgeois-Democratic Party, Nugzar Koberidze (26 October), by the chairman of the All-Georgian Union for Revival (26 October) and an interview with the head of the "Yellows" bloc for economic revival, David Zodelava (2 November).

Svobodnaya Gruzia published interviews with presidential candidates Panteleimon Giorgadze (31 October), Akaki Bakradze (31 October) and Dzhumber Patiashvili (2 November).

As for the independent press, those papers aligned with/financed by specific political parties predictably focused primarily on their "own" candidates. Of the more or less independent papers, *Kavkazioni* published (under the rubric "Kavkazioni's Chalk Circle") summaries of their parties' respective programmes by the heads of the Socialist Party; the pro-Gamsakhurdia bloc 21st Century - Konstantine Gamsakhurdia Society - United Georgia (17 October); the Union of Traditionalists; the Social-Democratic Party; the Citizens' Union of Georgia; and presidential candidate Roin Liparteliani (20 October), and interviews with several independent candidates. *Kavkazioni* also published extracts from a biography of Shevardnadze (20, 24 and 26 October).

Droni was a rather popular oppositional paper during the Gamsakhurdia period, yet since it does not perform this function anymore, it has lost much of its readership. Three issues appeared during the monitored period, all carried substantial information on the working of the Central Election Commission. *Droni* also published interviews with the leaders of several parties of various political orientations.

Rezonansi chose a different approach, publishing interviews with three or four candidates from a given Tbilisi constituency in an attempt to enlighten voters. Its final pre-election issue contained interviews with three of the presidential candidates (Shevardnadze, Patiashvili and Bakradze) plus the programmes of the Union of Traditionalists, the National Democratic Party and the United Republican Party.

Both the state-controlled and the independent press systematically published materials on the work of the Central Electoral Commission and of the district electoral commissions. It is not clear, however, on the basis of the monitoring tables compiled in Tbilisi, whether all statements issued by the CEC were automatically published in both the state-controlled and the independent press. For example, on 19 October *Kavkazioni* printed a warning by the CEC to deputy parliament chairman Vakhtang Rcheulishvili not to abuse his position to propagate the programme of his Socialist Party. This statement apparently was not printed in either of the state-controlled papers.

Rezonansi also reported (26-27 October) violations of the election law provisions for media coverage in Adzharia to give a disproportionate amount of air time to Aslan Abashidze's All-Georgian Union of Revival, which prompted two other parties to lodge a complaint with the Central Electoral Commission.

Some of the monitored papers appeared irregularly in the course of the campaign and it is therefore impossible to quantify the coverage in those papers reliably. The paper *Shvidi Dge* (Seven Days), for instance, was issued twice in the monitored period. It appeared to oppose the government and Shevardnadze. One large article stated that the present authorities do not have the right to run in the elections, another article attempted to make clear that a peaceful solution of the conflict in Abkhazia is a mere illusion.

The paper *Shansi* was also issued twice. The paper appeared to provide balanced, yet opinionated, material. One article provided an overview of the presidential candidates, yet conveyed a clear preference for Akaki Bakhradze; another article endorsed Shevardnadze and the Socialist Party. Most significant was the coverage of the bloc Progress, which was featured in one long article and a three page enumeration of all the candidates of the bloc.

Only one issue of the "daily" *Mimomkhilveli* was included in the monitoring exercise. One interesting article noted a split among the supporters of former president Zviad Gamsakhurdia: one part created a political bloc and participated in the elections, another part attempted to disrupt the elections. In general, the paper is known for its serious and analytical articles and is popular among intellectuals.

The bi-weekly *Sarangi* was issued once in the course of the campaign. The paper is founded and supported by the Merab Kostava society and strongly supported the association's political ambitions. In fact, all articles (and some paid advertising as well) advocated the society. One particularly large section was devoted to all the candidates of the society.

The single issues of *Mtatsminda*, *Mzgebsi*, *Akhali Taoba*, *Gulani*, *Respublika* and *Alia Sakartvelodan* do not allow for a genuine assessment of their political stance in the campaign. It can, however, be concluded that the newspaper landscape in Georgia boost a wide variety of voices, from radical to moderate to intellectual, which can be disseminated without limitations imposed by the authorities.

14.4 Advertising

In addition to the free airtime allocated on state TV, six parties had between one and three paid slots: the Merab Kostava Society on 25 October (8.16 minutes), 27 October (8.54) and 3 November (4.51); the National Democratic Party on 1 November (10.03), 2 November (6.30) and 3 November (6.33); "Abkhazia is Our Home" on 2 November 6.04); the Union of Traditionalists on 2 November (5.40); "Fatherland, Language, Faith" on 3 November (6.43 -- this is somewhat odd considering that they used only 10 minutes of their allocated free airtime); the Conservative Monarchist Party on 3 November (5.27); the Bourgeois Democratic Party on 4 November (3.16); and the Union of God's Children on 4 November (3.34).

The lion's share of paid advertising in the state-controlled press was for "Tanadgoma", which had 7 advertisements of one full page in *Sakartvelos respublika* (on 17, 21, 25 and 28 October and 1, 3 and 4 November) plus four smaller spreads of approximately 1/8 page. By contrast, Aslan Abashidze's All-Georgian Union of Revival had two full-page advertisements (on 1 and 3 November); The Progress bloc -- one (1 November), and the Citizens' Union of Georgia -- four small (1/8 page) advertisements. In the independent press, there was a very small amount of

paid advertising for the Union of Reformers, the United Republican Party and the National Democratic Party.

It should be noted that both on state TV and in the state-controlled press it was sometimes difficult to make a clear distinction between paid access for a political party and for a presidential candidate, as parties would in their parliamentary election propaganda endorse one or other presidential candidate (e.g. Tanadgoma for Shevardnadze, as in *Sakartvelos respublika* on 25 October).

One further aspect of campaign advertising deserves special mention, and that is the abundance of posters that adorned the main streets of Tbilisi during the runup to the poll. Here the campaign posters of the Citizens' Union of Georgia, the National Democratic Party, "Tanadgoma", and the Union of Traditionalists were the most frequently encountered. Leading members of the United Republican Party told this writer that the Citizens' Union of Georgia offered 5 lari per night to young men to paste their posters on buildings; they also claimed that the CUG posters were pasted on the inside of shop windows, rather than the outside, to make them more difficult to remove or deface. The most serious allegation, however, was that Shevardnadze had far exceeded the official limit on campaign spending; he was said to have had 1,200,000 posters printed; the United Republicans, by contrast, had printed only 12,000.

14.5 Conclusions

There appear to have been no restrictions whatsoever imposed on the rights of political parties, individual parliamentary candidates or presidential candidates to make use of the free access allocated to them under the terms of the electoral law. As noted above, the right to lobby against a specific candidate or party was also written into the electoral law. The state-controlled press published defamatory statements about specific candidates (such as an accusation by Socialist Party leader Rcheulishvili in *Sakartvelos respublika* on 18 October that Dzhumbar Patiashvili had dubious contacts with ex security chief Igor Giorgadze), but neither the state-controlled press nor any of the more responsible independent newspapers carried any direct criticism of Shevardnadze. Similarly, in an interview with *Mimomkhilveli* (24-27 October), Shevardnadze's chief of staff, Petre Mamradze, criticised the TV broadcasts by Kartlos Gharibashvili (for allegedly making wild promises about raising the average wage: "only someone who has no understanding of economics could talk in this way") and Panteleimon Giorgadze ("full of senseless slander and accusations").

One particularly disturbing example was the publication by *Sakartvelos respublika* on 4 November -- the day before the elections -- of an article accusing two Democratic Party candidates from Adzharia of collaborating with the Russian intelligence service. Theoretically, in the case of such serious accusations, the Georgian Law on the Media guarantees the subject of the accusation the right to reply within one week, but in this case the persons accused had no chance to clear themselves before the voting took place.

It should be noted, however, that these negative examples were isolated incidents; it is not possible to speak of any systematic campaign of vilification by the official state-controlled media directed against any specific party or candidate.

As noted above, far more people in Georgia have regular access to the broadcast media than to the press. Consequently, the role of the state-controlled broadcast media in covering the election campaign was proportionally greater. Cognisant of their responsibility, state-controlled TV and radio clearly made considerable efforts to comply with the requirements of the electoral law. However, the brevity of the election campaign in conjunction with the large number of

parties competing, resulted in a total of four hours of continuous political advertising on prime time every night -- a classic case of overkill which cannot fail to have engendered boredom, even apathy, in some voters and thus ultimately prove to have been counterproductive.

Moreover, logistical shortcomings, specifically the breakdown of the press distribution system outside major cities and the frequent power cuts that arbitrarily curtailed election-related broadcasting on TV meant that much of the rural population had only minimal knowledge of the parties and personalities involved. A district electoral commission official in the west Georgian rayon of Sachkhere complained to *Sakartvelos respublika* for example that people in that district were "totally deprived" of election-related information.

Whether the distribution of seats within the new parliament and/or the final results of the presidential elections would have been different if the electorate in rural areas had been better informed is, however, highly unlikely given Shevardnadze's personal prestige.

15 Media outlets in Georgia

15.1 Television

Name of channels	Channel 1
Founder / owner	State
Funding	State budget and advertising
Director	Archil Gogelia
Address	Kostava st 69, 380015 Tbilisi
Phone	388166; 360481
Fax	998650
Hours of broadcasting	17.00-22.00 daily
Area covered	Georgia
Programming	Information, entertainment, series.
Political affiliation	state oriented
Staff	over 100

Name of channels	Channel 2
Founder / owner	State
Funding	State budget and advertising
Director	Zaza Daraseli
Address	Kostava st 69, 380015 Tbilisi
Phone	368257
Fax	998650
Hours of broadcasting	Three hours daily
Area covered	Georgia
Programming	Information, entertainment, series.
Political affiliation	state oriented
Staff	over 100

15.2 Radio

Name of channels	Radio 1
Founder / owner	State
Funding	State budget and advertising
Director	Vakhtang Nanitashvili
Address	Kostava st 69, 380015 Tbilisi
Phone	363559, 368362
Hours of broadcasting	24 hours a day
Area covered	Georgia
Programming	Information, entertainment, series.
Political affiliation	state oriented

15.3 Independent television

Name of channel	Imereti 2000
Director	Ilia Labadze
Address	Zestafoni
Phone	51229; 54848
Hours of broadcasting	six hours daily, seven days a week
Area covered	300.000 people around Zestafoni
Programming	Own programming, news
Services offered	On-air personal announcement
Name of channel	Zari
Date of establishment	1989
Director	Otary Tevzadze
Address	Samtrediya
Phone	(88311) 21987; 25245; 25207
Area covered	70,000
Programming	Films and necrologia
Name of channel	Odishi
Director	Levan Kobaliya
Address	Zugdidi
Phone	(8215) 21469; 25342; 26403; 21469
Programming	Entertainment
Services offered	Advertising
Name of channel	Teleradiokompania Fazisi
Funding	municipal administration
Director	Lela Kakuliya
Address	Poti
Phone	53472; 54100; 58043; 22700
Hours of broadcasting	three hours a day
Programming	retransmission of RTR (Russian Television and own programmes
Name of channel	Channel 25
Director	Gia Surmanidze
Address	Batumi
Phone	38210
Area covered	300,000
Programming	produced local news and rebroadcast satellite transmissions
Name of channel	Guriskoe Televidenie
Founder / owner	Ibervisia television network, now independent
Director	Mamuka Gogvadze
Phone	64488; 64264; 66370
Fax	65993
Area covered	100,000
Programming	News (Facti)

Name of channel	Tele-radio company Trialeta
Director	Badri Nanetashvili
Address	Kareli
Phone	8265 31331
Area covered	150,000
Programming	Addressed to agrarian population
Name of channel	Teleradiokompaniya Kartli
Director	Goge Ablokhavilli
Address	Gori
Phone	22852; 25369
Area covered	300,000
Programming	various
Name of channel	Gurjani TV
Director	Tamara Abelashvili
Address	Gurjani
Phone	3080; 2813
Area covered	100,000
Programming	Three original programmes and news
Name of channel	Rustavi 2.
Director	Eros Kitsmarishvili
Address	Rustavi
Phone	126273
Area covered	300,000
Programming	various, including daily news as well as weekly cultural and entertainment programmes.

15.4 Press

Name of publication	Sakartvelos respublika
Periodicity	Five times a week
Founder	Editors & Firm "Press".
Address	Tbilisi, Kostava st. 14.
Phone	999226
Editor-in-chief	George Gogiashvili
Circulation	10,000
Staff	80 People
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Governmental paper; theoretically independent.
Funding	Subscription, direct (kiosk) sales, advertising, subsidies

Name of publication	Svobodnaya Gruzia
Periodicity	Five times a week
Founder	Editors & Commercial Bank "Aragvi
Address	Tbilisi, Rustaveli AV 42
Phone	931158
Editor-in-chief	Appolon Silagadze
Circulation	5,000
Staff	80 People
Language	Russian
Political orientation	Svobodnaya Gruzia is the Russian variant of Sakartvelos respublica
Funding	Subscription, direct (kiosk) sales, advertising, Commercial Bank "Aragvi".

Name of publication	Tbilisi
Periodicity	Three times a week
Founder	Tbilisi Mayor office
Address	380096, Tbilisi, Kostava st. 14
Phone	990427
Editor-in-chief	Archil Tsitskishvili
Circulation	1,000
Staff	30
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Local tabloid. If anything, loyal to Shevardnadze (who said it is his favourite paper).
Funding	Subscription, direct (kiosk) sales, subsidies

Name of publication	Vecherni Tbilisi
Periodicity	Twice a week
Founder	Editors
Address	380096, Tbilisi, Kostava st. 14.
Phone	997034
Editor-in-chief	Vadim Anastasiadi
Circulation	1,500
Staff	20
Language	Russian
Political orientation	not defined
Funding	Advertising, sales, Greek editor and mayor's office

Name of publication	Zacavcazskie Vojenie Vedomosti
Periodicity	Five times a week
Founder	Newspaper of Ministry of Defence of Russia
Address	380008, Tbilisi, Tabukashvili st. 27
Phone	996423
Editor-in-chief	Anatoli Dergilev
Circulation	30.000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Focussed on military topics, yet also raise political issues.
Funding	Ministry of defense

Name of publication	Rezonansi
Periodicity	Three times a week
Founder	Editors
Address	380002, Tbilisi, Agmashenebeli Av. 89.
Phone	969260
Editor-in-chief	Shalva Megrelishvili
Circulation	20,000
Staff	15
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Independent quality paper; contains political, economical and cultural information. Not aligned.
Funding	Advertising and sales
Name of publication	Mimomkhilveli
Periodicity	Three times a week
Address	380002, Tbilisi, Agmashenebeli Av. 110
Phone	951998
Editor-in-chief	Koba Akhalbedashvili
Circulation	10,000
Staff	10
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Rather intellectual independent paper, yet regularly critical towards the government. Features analytical articles on domestic and international issues
Funding	Advertising and sales
Name of publication	Kavkasioni
Periodicity	five or six times a week
Address	380009, Tbilisi, Petriashvili st. 7
Phone	294805
Fax	294805
Editor-in-chief	Mamuka Pachuashvili
Circulation	2,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Cautiously critical towards the government and somewhat less scandalous than Rezonansi.
Funding	Coca-Cola
Name of publication	Droni
Periodicity	twice a week
Founder	Private
Address	380096, Tbilisi, Kostava st. 14
Phone	932157, 931500
Editor-in-chief	Soso Simonishvili
Circulation	500
Staff	10
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	oppositional newspaper during Gamsakhurdia. Currently less popular and outspoken.

Name of publication	Novaya Gazeta
Periodicity	weekly (currently folded, due to a lack of liquid assets)
Founder	Staff of newspaper & firm "Aisi", formerly Komsomol
Address	380008, Tbilisi, Rustaveli Av. 42
Phone	996881
Editor-in-chief	George Golembiovski
Circulation	--
Language	Russian
Political orientation	opposition paper
Funding	
Name of publication	Banki
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Editors & National Bank of Georgia
Address	380018, Tbilisi, Leonidze St. 3
Phone	982190, 987794
Editor-in-chief	Gia Lomadze
Circulation	1,000
Staff	10
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Unpolitical; focussed on financial issues (banking sector, exchange rates) and read by professionals in the sector.
Funding	National Bank of Georgia
Name of publication	Business Kurier
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Editors & corporation of businessmen of Tbilisi
Address	380054, Tbilisi, Tsereteli Av. 56
Phone	953861
Editor-in-chief	Zaur Nachkhebia
Circulation	1,500
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Not political, provides information on economical matters.
Funding	
Name of publication	Literaturuli Sakartvelo
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Union of writers of Georgia
Address	380093, Tbilisi, Gudiashvili Av. 3
Phone	998404
Editor-in-chief	Tamaz Tsivtsivadze
Circulation	2,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Read among intellectuals, the paper regularly contains provoking articles, critical of the government. Content nevertheless largely comprised of literature, reviews, etc.
Funding	Union of writers of Georgia

Name of publication	Ganatileba
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Ministry of education of Georgia
Address	380096, Tbilisi, Kostava St. 14
Phone	936247
Editor-in-chief	Zaza Kakhidze
Circulation	1,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Not political; paper for teachers
Funding	Ministry of education of Georgia
Name of publication	Mamuli
Periodicity	Three times a month
Founder	Rustaveli society
Address	380008, Tbilisi, Rustaveli Av. 37
Phone	935899
Editor-in-chief	Vazha Gigashvili
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Support Bakhradze, destined for members of Rustaveli political society, honorary chairman of which is Tengiz Sigua
Funding	Rustaveli society
Name of publication	Sarangi
Periodicity	Twice a month
Founder	Georgians' society of Merab Kostava
Address	380007, Tbilisi, Tabidze St. 17
Phone	983912
Editor-in-chief	Maya Purtseladze
Circulation	500
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Aligned with the society of Merab Kostava, who was closely connected to Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Paper is politicised and has a rather nationalistic character.
Funding	Georgians' society of Merab Kostava
Name of publication	Konstitutsiuri Demokrati
Periodicity	Once or twice a month.
Founder	Democratic party of Georgia
Address	380008, Tbilisi, Rustaveli Av. 37
Phone	988311
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Against the privatisation policy of the authorities; analysis of political events.

Name of publication	Kartuli Kronica
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	National Democratic party of Georgia
Address	380009, Tbilisi, Rustaveli Av. 26
Phone	984978
Editor-in-chief	Ramaz Chubabria
Circulation	700
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Liberal Opposition
Funding	National Democratic party of Georgia
Name of publication	Iberia-Spectri
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Staff of newspaper
Address	380007, Tbilisi, Machabeli St. 31
Phone	987386
Editor-in-chief	Irakli Gotsiridze
Circulation	10,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Opposition paper
Name of publication	Shida Kartli
Periodicity	Once a month
Founder	Staff of newspaper
Address	383500, Gori, Stalin St.111
Phone	24690
Editor-in-chief	Vasil Sabanadze
Circulation	1,100
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Concerns the condition of refugees from Tskhinvali region
Name of publication	Mshromelta Khma
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Stalin Communist Party
Address	385009, Gori, Ertoba St. 54
Phone	23771
Editor-in-chief	Ioseb Gioshvili
Circulation	2,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Stalinism, rejects market reforms, has a circle of loyal readers
Funding	Stalin Communist Party

Name of publication	Akhali Karabadini
Periodicity	Twice a month
Founder	Trade union of medical workers of Georgia
Address	380002, Tbilisi, Khetagurov St. 26
Phone	969217
Editor-in-chief	Malkhaz Razmadze
Circulation	970
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Issues of medicine & health care. Destined for medical workers.
Name of publication	Dvrita
Periodicity	bi-weekly
Founder	Board of Editors
Address	380060, Tbilisi, Vazha Pshavela Av. 76/B
Phone	302239
Circulation	1.500
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Aimed at young audience; popular & amusing information.
Name of publication	Saodjakho Birzha
Periodicity	Twice a week
Founder	association "KAVKAZ"
Address	380096, Tbilisi, Kostava St. 69
Phone	986329
Circulation	25,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	none; advertising paper, distributed freely
Name of publication	Asaval Dasavali
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Commercial society "ARSI
Address	380062, Tbilisi, Chavchavadze Av. 49/B
Phone	294331
Fax	226134
Editor-in-chief	Lasha Nadareishvili
Circulation	10,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Independent; contains not particularly profound political analysis
Name of publication	Sakartvelo
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Popular Front of Georgia
Address	380060, Tbilisi, Freedom SQ., Pushkin St. 5
Phone	932036
Editor-in-chief	Nodar Grigalashvili
Circulation	5,000
Language	Georgian
Political orientation	Organ of the Popular Front of Georgia; radical opposition
Funding	Popular Front of Georgia

Name of publication	Politics (magazine rather than a paper)
Periodicity	Once a month
Founder	Editors of the Magazine
Address	380096, Tbilisi, Kostava St. 14
Phone	932919
Editor-in-chief	Soso Tsintsadze
Circulation	3,000
Language	Georgian, Russian & English
Political orientation	Serious, analytical magazine regarding political developments and social/ethnic issues.

15.5 Information agencies

Name	Georgian Information Agency (GIA)
Founder	Georgian Government, but since 1994 passed on self financing
Address	380008, Georgia, Tbilisi, Rustaveli Av. 42
Phone	(8832) 931920, 984549, 933340
Director	Vakhtang Abashidze; home phone number 363618
Customers	Substantially all newspapers & magazines of Georgia, informational agencies of ex-Soviet Republics

Name	Iprinda
Founder	Independent informational agency; staff of the Agency
Address	380008, Tbilisi, Rustaveli Av. 19
Phone	(8832) 990377, Fax: 987365, 989283
Director	Ketevan Bokhua
Content	Provides information from Republics of northern Caucasus, Transcaucasia. The information is provided twenty-four hours
Customers	Moscow bureau France-press, Reuter, Associated press, Spanish informational agency EFE, BBC, some Georgian newspapers

Name	Iberia
Founder	Independent informational agency; staff of the Agency
Address	380060. Georgia, Tbilisi, Gotua St. 14
Phone	(8832) 375506, Fax: 375201
Director	Kakha Gagloshvili
Content	Provides information from Republics of Northern Caucasus, Transcaucasia
Customers	BBC, France-Press, Reuter

16 Monitoring tables Georgia

Below are the 53 political parties/blocs participating in the November 1995 elections. For the sake of clarity, no acronyms have been used and the order equals the arrangement on the ballot paper.

16.1 Television - channel 1

Party	Free time
1. Union for Social Justice of Georgia	50m 00s
2. Political Organisation of All Georgia "Lemi"	56m 45s
3. Party for National Independence of Georgia	37m 29s
4. Bloc - United Communist Party of Georgia and Social Democrats	60m 05s
5. Democratic Party	59m 14s
6. Union for Revival of All Georgia	57m 58s
7. Abkhazia - My Home	42m 10s
8. Motherland Party	57m 58s
9. Union for the Protection of Women	57m 58s
10. Bloc - Christian Democracy - European Choice	48m 33s
11. Progressive Party of Georgia	48m 48s
12. Socialists Party of Georgia	47m 51s
13. Party for Peace and Freedom (Afghans) of all Georgia	61m 27s
14. "New Georgia"	59m 03s
15. Communist Party of Georgia	52m 02s
16. League of Intellectuals of Georgia	39m 15s
17. Freedom Party of Georgia	40m 22s
18. Christian Democratic Party of Georgia	24m 16s
19. Agrarian Union of Georgia	27m 05s
20. Society of Merab Kostava	38m 46s
21. Party for Social Protection of All Population	56m 59s
22. Bloc - Way of Zviad - Voice of the Nation	46m 51s
23. Erovuli Dasi (national club) elections	38m 02s
24. League for Economic and Social Progress of Georgia - Capitalist Democratic Party of Russia	44m 17s
25. Liberal - Democratic National Party	47m 34s
26. National Democratic Party of Russia	29m 08s
27. Stalinistic Communist Party	50m 24s
28. Union of Families of All Georgia	37m 47s
29. -- not on ballot sheet --	
30. Political Organisation Mamuli (Motherland)	33m 29s
31. Political Movement of Georgia "Motherland, Language and Religion"	10m 01s
32. Union of God's Children of Georgia	52m 03s
33. Party for Friendship Among Nations and For Justice	47m 12s
34. Political Organisation "Professional Unions - in the Elections"	53m 18s
35. Party for State - National Unity of Georgia "Shield of Georgia"	53m 38s
36. Conservative (Monarchist) Party of Georgia	50m 59s
37. Agrarian Party of Georgia	49m 10s
38. Bloc - Economic Revival - Yellows	48m 57s
39. Society of Ilya Chavchavadze	51m 44s

40.Liberal Conservative Party of Georgia	46m 15s
41.Political Union "Solidarity"	50m 48s
42.Political Organisation of Citizens "Women of Georgia for Elections"	39m 09s
43.Party for National Unity and Social Equality of Georgia	43m 06s
44.State - Justice Union	47m 08s
45.Citizens' Union of Georgia	38m 51s
46.Citizens - "21st - Society of Constantine Gamsakhurdia - United Georgia"	43m 48s
47.Political Movement Future of Georgia	58m 19s
48.Society "Elections"	71m 01s
49.Bloc "Progress"	62m 02s
50.Union of Georgian Traditionalists	48m 11s
51.Bloc - Union of Reformers of Georgia - National Accord	50m 41s
52.Republicans - United Republic Party of Georgia	79m 06s
53.Union for Revival of Georgian Families	95m 54s
54.Bloc - For Life	76m 43s

Time (in minutes) devoted to election related material by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

The differences between the various parties may be caused by confusion over the names. It is, for instance, quite possible that some slots for the Union of Families of All Georgia (37 min) were attributed to the Union for Revival of Georgian Families (95 min). Nevertheless, the table indicates that the free time was fairly allocated among the 53 political parties.

Editorial coverage was not accounted for in the tables, since the State Television Company decided to suspend coverage of the political parties in the course of the campaign. Although this may have prevented bias, free access alone is not enough. After all, it is often considered propaganda, and consequently treated with scepticism, by the audience. The journalists, and especially those from state television, therefore have a significant responsibility in providing the audience with fair and balanced information about the candidates and political parties participating in elections.

Television - channel 1

Presidential candidate	Editorial	Free
Roin Liparteliani	--	2 hr 36 min
Akaki Bakradze	--	2 hr 58 min
Jumber Patiashvili	--	2 hr 30 min
Panteleimon Giorgadze	--	2 hr 31 min
Eduard Shevardnadze	1 hr 51 min	2 hr 40 min
Kartlos Gharibashvili	--	2 hr 44 min

Time (in minutes) devoted to election related material by presidential candidates - © European Institute for the Media 1996

16.2 Radio

State radio granted an average 2½ hours free airtime daily to all the political parties and presidential candidates, in much the same manner as state television. Editorial coverage of the elections was minimal.

16.3 Press

As stated above, some of the papers appeared too irregularly in the course of the campaign to be included in the monitoring tables below. After all, quantifying the coverage in a paper on the basis of one to three issues can hardly be considered reliable.

Svobodnaya Cruzia (six issues monitored)

Party/candidate	Editorial	Per cent
Akaki Bakradze	160	1,1%
Jumber Patiashvili	200	1,4%
Panteleimon Giorgadze	160	1,1%
Eduard Shevardnadze	185	1,3%
Union for Revival of All Georgian	350	2,4%
Bourgeois-Democrats	380	2,8%
Bloc Economic Revival - Yellows	240	1,6%
Progressive party of Georgia	130	0,9%
Various manifestos	11,520	78,1%
Various CEC	1,420	9,5%
Total	14,745	100,0%

Space (in square cm) devoted to election related material by parties/candidates - © European Institute for the Media 1996

Sakartvelos Respublica (11 issues monited)

Party/candidate	Editorial	Per cent	Paid
Citizens' Union of Ge. / Shevardnadze	3,280	43,3%	260
Union for Revival of All Georgian	--	--	1,920
Republicans - United	*480	6,3%	--
Tanadgoma (Solidarity)	1,200	15,8%	7,420
Bloc Progress	400	5,3%	--
National Democratic Party of Georgia	--	--	480
Union of Reformers of Georgia	600	7,9%	350
Socialist Party	320	4,2%	100
Union of Georgian Traditionalists	560	7,4%	--
Various (CEC, etc)	740	9,8%	--
Total	7,580	100,0%	10,530

Space (in square cm) devoted to election related material by parties/candidates - © European Institute for the Media 1996

N.b. The free time provided to all 53 parties is not included in the table, yet was fairly equally distributed and ranged between 500 to 700 square cm per party.

* negative

Kavkasioni (seven issues monitored)

Party/candidate	Editorial	Per cent	Paid
Citizens' Union of Georgia	860	10,7%	--
Union of Reformers of Georgia	--	--	640
Union for Revival of All Georgian	--	--	800
Socialist Party	240	3,0%	--
National Patriotic Front of Georgia	2,400	30,0%	--
Liberal Democratic National Party	50	0,6%	--
Union of Georgian Traditionalists	160	2,0%	--
21st cent- Constantine Gamsakhurdia	160	2,0%	--
Bloc - Way of Zviad Gamsakhurdia	160	2,0%	--
Various (also re CEC)	1,020	12,7%	--
Independent candidates	2,960	37,0%	480
Total	8,010	100,0%	1,920

Space (in square cm) devoted to election related material by parties/candidates - © European Institute for the Media 1996

Rezonansi (four issues monitored)

Party/candidate	Editorial	Per cent	Paid
Citizens' Union of Georgia	160	7,9%	--
Bloc - For Life	80	3,9%	--
Bloc - Progress	--	--	960
Various	550	27,1%	--
Independent candidates	1,240	61,1%	960
Total	2,030	100,0%	1,920

Space (in square cm) devoted to election related material by parties/candidates - © European Institute for the Media 1996

Iberia-Spectr (four issues monitored)

Party/candidate	Editorial	Paid
21st cent. Constantine Gamsakhurdia	2,740	80
Shevardnadze	*1,980	--
Irakli Batiashvili (independent)	800	--
Total	5,520	

Space (in square cm) devoted to election related material by parties/candidates - © European Institute for the Media 1996

* negative and critical. One article, for instance, trivialised all the promises of the president.

17 The Republic of Azerbaijan

17.1 Basic data

The Republic of Azerbaijan lies to the south of the main Caucasus range, on the Western shore of the Caspian Sea. The country has a total territory of 86,600 sq. km and borders the Russian Federation in the north, Iran to the south and Georgia and Armenia to the west. The enclave of Nakhichevan (5,500 sq. km) is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by a strip of Armenian territory, and because it borders Iran and Turkey in the west.

The population of Azerbaijan on 1 January 1995 stood at 7,529,000. Given the exodus of virtually the entire Armenian population in the late 1980s, and of many Russians since 1992, the ethnic composition of the population can only be estimated. Up to 90 per cent are ethnic Azeris, and possibly 5 per cent Russians. The remainder are Georgians, Lezgins, Talysh and representatives of other Caucasian ethnic minorities. Up to one million Azerbaijanis are refugees from regions of the country occupied by Armenian forces.

17.2 Historical and political background

The Azeris are a people of mixed Indo-European and Turkic stock, who adopted a Turkic language in the wake of repeated invasions by Turkic speakers beginning in the 11th century A.D. The majority are Shiite Muslims. From the late 16th century, the region was fought over by Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Iran and Russia. The existing frontier between Azerbaijan and Iran, which effectively divides the Azeri-speaking population, was delineated in 1828 under the terms of the Treaty of Turkmenchai at the end of the second Russo-Iranian war. The exploitation of Caspian oil dates from the 1870's and by the end of the century Baku had become one of the world's major oil-producing regions. In the wake of the 1917 October Revolution, Azerbaijan enjoyed a brief period of independence from 28 May 1918 to 27 April 1920, when the Bolsheviks peacefully ousted the Musavat government.

Whereas in the late 1980's CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost served as the catalyst for the emergence of national movements in Georgia, Ukraine and the Baltic republics, Azerbaijan was initially quiescent. It was only in response to the campaign launched by the Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast in 1987-8 for the Oblast's unification with Armenia that a group of Azeri intellectuals founded the Azerbaijan Popular Front. Initially committed to supporting perestroika and building a democratic Azerbaijani state within the USSR, the Front's moderate leaders found themselves constrained to adopt ever more radical positions in response to public outrage over the Armenian claims on Nagorno-Karabakh, mobilising the population of Baku in mass demonstrations in September 1989. It was radical elements within the Azerbaijan Popular Front who were blamed for inciting the demolition of frontier installations along the Soviet-Iranian frontier and for anti-Armenian pogroms in Baku in January 1990. In an attempt to pre-empt the perceived danger that the local Communist Party would be overthrown, the Soviet leadership endorsed military intervention that resulted in the deaths of some 150 people, mostly unarmed civilians.

This intervention engendered intense anti-Russian feeling but also deep shock and political apathy which enabled newly-elected Azerbaijan Communist Party first secretary Ayaz Mutaibov to consolidate his position; he was appointed president in May 1990. In elections to a new Supreme Soviet in September 1990, held under a state of emergency and accompanied by numerous procedural violations, opposition candidates won only 10 per cent of the 300 seats.

At the time of the abortive Moscow coup in August 1991, Mutaibov initially expressed his support for the putschists. The Azerbaijan Popular Front staged a series of protest demonstrations, whereupon Mutaibov ostentatiously announced his resignation from the CPSU. The following day, on 29 August 1991, the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet voted unanimously to "restore" the independent status the republic had enjoyed from 1918-1920. In September, Mutaibov was elected president of Azerbaijan after the only alternative candidate withdrew his candidacy, but within parliament he was subjected to increasing pressure from the opposition. In late October at the opposition's insistence, Mutaibov agreed to the creation of an alternative mini-parliament, the Milli Mejlis (National Assembly), which comprised 25 opposition deputies and a further 25 from the former nomenclature. Despite a unanimous veto by this body, Mutaibov committed Azerbaijan to membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in December 1991.

In March 1992, the Supreme Soviet convened an emergency session to debate the massacre by Karabakh Armenian forces of the Azeri population in the village of Khodzhal. Mutaibov, as commander in chief of the country's armed forces, was forced to resign, and the rector of the Baku Medical Institute, Yagub Mamedov, was named interim president. The new presidential elections were scheduled for June. Following a further military setback in Nagorno-Karabakh in early May, Mutaibov's supporters demanded a new session of the Supreme Soviet at which Mutaibov was reinstated; within 24 hours, however, the Azerbaijan Popular Front had mobilised its supporters in Baku and Mutaibov fled ignominiously to Moscow.

On 16 May the Milli Mejlis formed a new coalition government; two days later, the old Supreme Soviet formally ceded its powers to the Milli Mejlis pending new elections (theoretically due in October 1995). On 7 June the chairman of the Azerbaijan Popular Front, Abulfaz Elchibey, was elected president of Azerbaijan.

Idealistic, sincere, but ineffective, Elchibey alienated Moscow and embarrassed Turkey by his effusive pan-Turkish rhetoric; his inability to counter overt corruption by members of his government contributes to a rapid loss of popular support.

In early June 1993, Azerbaijani army units attacked the headquarters, in Gyandzha, of renegade warlord Suret Huseinov, who had appropriated large quantities of military equipment relinquished by Russian troops. Huseinov's men not only beat off the attack but proceeded to march on Baku, meeting minimal resistance. Huseinov demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Panakh Guseinov and parliament chairman Isa Gambar; both were constrained to comply. In an attempt to strengthen his position, Elchibey summoned former Azerbaijan CP first secretary Heidar Aliiev to Baku. (After being forced to retire from his post as First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers by Gorbachev in 1987, Aliiev returned to his native Nakhichevan in 1990 and was elected chairman of the local parliament the following year).

On 15 June the Milli Mejlis elected Aliiev as its chairman; two days later, Elchibey fled into self-imposed exile in his home village of Keleki in Nakhichevan, whereupon the Milli Mejlis transferred the bulk of Elchibey's powers to Aliiev. Aliiev succeeded in cutting a deal with Suret Huseinov, who was appointed Prime Minister. Aliiev then set about consolidating his own position: he held a nation-wide referendum on public confidence in Elchibey in late August and

in October 1993 defeated two political nonentities to be elected president with 98.9 per cent of the vote.

Some Russian political commentators have suggested that Moscow may have instigated Elchibey being ousted from his position, first, because of dissatisfaction with his overtly pro-Turkish orientation and second, in order to thwart the imminent signing by the Azerbaijani leader of an agreement with a consortium of eight Western oil companies to exploit three offshore Caspian oil fields. (Aliiev subsequently renegotiated the agreement on terms that were more favourable to Azerbaijan and included the Russian oil giant LUKoil). Although in October 1993 the Azerbaijani parliament voted in favour of the country rejoining the CIS (which it had left one year earlier), Aliiev proved less than amenable to Russia's demands either for the deployment of Russian border troops to guard the frontier between Azerbaijan and Iran, or for the dispatch of a contingent of Russian troops as part of an OSCE-sponsored peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Despite his professed commitment to democratisation, since his return to power, Aliiev has ruled the country with a rod of iron. Opposition parties, in particular the Popular Front, have been subject to systematic repression. In October 1994, the OPON special police chief Rovshan Dzhavadov took the Azerbaijani prosecutor-general as hostage to demand the government's resignation, Dzhavadov was released 24 hours later and pledged his loyalty to Aliiev. Shortly afterwards Aliiev adduced an alleged planned coup attempt by Suret Huseinov, this time directed against himself, as the rationale for launching a major purge of government officials suspected of disloyalty. In March 1995, Dzhavadov incurred Aliiev's wrath by barricading himself into his headquarters to protest a government crackdown on illicit exports of copper by his men. Aliiev argued that Dzhavadov's actions constituted an attempted coup and ordered Azerbaijani army troops to storm the OPON HQ: some 70 people, including Dzhavadov himself, were killed. In addition 200 people were arrested on suspicion of complicity with Dzhavadov, including former Interior Minister Iskander Hamidov, who in September was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for embezzlement and abuse of his official position. The March incident was subsequently adduced as the rationale for the arrest in September of former foreign minister and Musavat Party member Tofik Gasymov.

17.3 The runup to the 1995 parliamentary elections

In mid-April 1995, Aliiev announced that parliamentary elections would take place in October and that a new constitution, currently being drafted, would be submitted to a nation-wide referendum before the end of the year. In mid-June the Milli Mejlis set the election date for 12 November and on 3 October scheduled the referendum on the constitution for the same date.

Further purported threats to Aliiev came to light in the summer and autumn. In early August the Azerbaijani Interior Ministry disclosed that two boxes containing explosives had been found under a bridge on the outskirts of Baku on the road leading to Aliiev's dacha. Two weeks later, Aliiev told a meeting of the country's constitutional committee that ten people, including several senior military officers had been arrested on suspicion of plotting a coup d'etat at the behest of Mutalibov, who is still living in exile in Moscow.

18 The 1995 parliamentary elections and referendum

As noted above, the Azerbaijan Supreme Soviet that had been elected in October 1990, transferred its powers to the Milli Mejlis (National Assembly) in May 1992, shortly after the advent to power in Azerbaijan of the Azerbaijan Popular Front. The Front's leadership duly promised to hold new parliamentary elections in the autumn of 1992, but failed to do so either then or later.

In the months following Elchibey's ouster and Aliev's advent to power, the subject of new elections vanished from the agenda. Only in the summer of 1994 did the issue resurface in the Milli Mejlis. In August 1994, Azerbaijan parliament speaker Rasul Guliev announced that a draft law on new elections would be presented to the legislature very shortly, and that new parliamentary elections would take place in June or July 1995. Visiting Baku later that year, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros Ghali pledged UN funding for these elections. In December 1994, Turkish parliament chairman Husamettin Cindoruk offered Aliev Turkish assistance in expediting the holding of new elections which at that time were tentatively scheduled for June 1995, i.e. some three months before the expire of the existing parliament's five year term.

18.1 The electoral system

Possibly because of the alleged coup attempt by Rovshan Dzhavadov in March 1995, it was only in late May 1995, that a draft election law was finally submitted to the Milli Mejlis. After the Constitutional Court had rejected three draft proposals, one of which provided for a bi-cameral parliament, in early August a new draft was published in the national press. This variant, which provided for the election of 100 deputies according to the majoritarian and a further 25 according to the proportional system, was finally passed by the Milli Mejlis on 22 August despite lobbying by several opposition parties who demanded that the number of seats be increased to 181, half to be allocated under the proportional and the other half under the majoritarian system.¹¹ National Independence Party chairman Etibar Mamedov subsequently stated that not a single proposal advanced by any opposition party was incorporated into the final text of the election law.

The new parliament was to be elected for a period of five years. Those parties participating under the proportional system were required to poll a minimum of 8 per cent of the vote in order to gain representation in parliament. Participation of at least one half of the electorate nationwide was required for the proportional system voting to be valid.

Similarly, candidates for the majority system needed to receive a majority of the votes cast in their electoral districts, and at least 50 per cent of all registered voters were required to cast their ballots. If no candidate was elected in the first round of voting, a runoff election would be scheduled between the two candidates who polled the most votes.

No voting was scheduled in the electoral district of Khankendi (the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh). Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, wherever in Azerbaijan they happened to be resident, were offered the opportunity to vote for a candidate representing Nagorno-Karabakh; refugees and displaced persons from other districts of Azerbaijan voted for candidates for the electoral district in which they were living at the time of the elections.

¹¹ Turan newsagency. The proposed division most likely was 91/90 or 90/90/1, yet this was not clarified by Turan.

Meanwhile, even before the enactment of the electoral law, those political parties who wished to participate in the elections were required formally to re-register with the Ministry of Justice. Despite Aliev's personal assurances to a visiting US expert that all opposition parties would be allowed to field candidates without hindrance, the Azerbaijan Popular Front, the Social-Democratic Party, the Islamic Party, the Party of Social Justice, Boz Gurd (the "Grey Wolves"), the Party for Equal Rights of the Peoples of Azerbaijan, the Communist Party and the Labour Party were initially refused registration on various grounds. Following expressions of concern by the US Ambassador in Baku, the Azerbaijan Popular Front was finally permitted to reregister, as was the Communist Party. (Of a total of 45 parties that applied to reregister, 38 were permitted to do so).

Only eight parties, however, succeeded in collecting the required 50,000 signatures in their support in order to participate in the elections under the proportional system. The Musavat (Equality) Party, the Communist Party of Azerbaijan and the Social-Democratic Party of Azerbaijan were refused registration on the grounds -- queried by Western monitors -- that some of the signatures appended were forged. (Some Musavat candidates were, however, permitted to stand in single-mandate constituencies). The registration of individual candidates from opposition parties who wished to contend single-mandate constituencies was similarly problematic: of some 1,200 candidates who submitted the necessary 2,000 signatures in their support, only 359 were officially registered. The Central Electoral Commission received a total of 546 complaints from individuals or parties whose registration as candidates was refused; in 120 of these cases, the potential candidate or party appealed the refusal in the Supreme Court, but only in two instances did the Supreme Court overrule the decision of the CEC.

Representatives of the opposition parties briefly considered boycotting the elections to protest the restrictions on registration, but ultimately decided not to do so.

18.2 The political parties

The eight parties finally permitted to register candidates for the proportional system were:

- **The Alliance for Azerbaijan.** A pro-government party founded in 1994 with some 13,000 members.
- **Anavatan (Motherland) Party.** Founded in 1990, approximately 2,500 members. Chairmen Fazil Agamaliyev (former minister of Labour). This party was initially aligned with the Azerbaijan Popular Front but subsequently expressed its support for Aliev's leadership.
- **The Party of Democratic Independence of Azerbaijan.** The party is likewise pro-Aliev: it split from the National Independence Party of Azerbaijan in October 1993.
- **The Democratic Property Owners' Party of Azerbaijan.** Founded in 1994, the party is headed by Mahmud Mahmudov, proprietor of the newspaper *Gunay* and a particularly wealthy individual. It claims 27,000 members and has 45 district branches. Its programme focused primarily on economic reform and development.
- **Yeni Azerbaycan (New Azerbaijan).** The party was founded by Aliev in late 1992 in a clear attempt to build a power base nation-wide and claims over 100,000 members.

- **The Azerbaijan Popular Front.** Headed by former prime-minister Abulfaz Elchibey. The party is strongly oppositional, and maintains that Aliev position is unconstitutional (since it followed a coup). The party claims to have 10,000 members and sponsors the newspaper *Azadlyg*.
- **The National Independence Party of Azerbaijan.** The party's chairman is Etibar Mamedov, who headed the radical wing of the Azerbaijan Popular Front in 1989 - 1990. It was considered, especially by other more radical opposition parties, part of the "loyal" opposition to Aliev. The party advocates a parliamentary rather than a presidential system, and does not agree with the current status quo regarding Nagorno-Karabakh.
- **The Party of National Statehood of Azerbaijan.** The party is the creation of Nemat Panahov, who rose to prominence as one of the organisers of mass anti-Armenian demonstrations in Baku in late 1988, on the basis of an independent trade union organisation. Panahov aligned himself with Aliev, to whom he served for a time as an advisor, but demonstratively split with Aliev in late October 1995, alleging that the election results had been determined in advance.

In addition, the following three parties registered candidates in the majoritarian system:

- **The Communist Party of Azerbaijan.** The Party was reregistered in March 1994; estimates of the number of its members range from 10,000 - 40,000. The Party advocates greater integration within the CIS.
- **The Social-Democratic Party of Azerbaijan.** One of the oldest opposition parties, the SDP is headed by Araz Ali-Zade, who left the Azerbaijan Popular Front in 1989 and participated in the October 1990, Supreme Soviet elections. Its ideology is close to its Western European counterparts.
- **The Musavat (Equality) Party.** This party considers itself the successor to the party of the same name that governed Azerbaijan from 1918-1920. Its leader is Isa Gambar, who served as parliament speaker under Elchibey. The party was refused registration for the proportional elections (the CEC said it found faked signatures)

18.3 The results of the parliamentary elections

The voting on 12 November was marred by flagrant procedural violations on a massive scale. Defeated opposition candidates who spoke to the monitor the following day described blatant interference and harassment by local officials or police; Musavat party chairman Isa Gambar and Azerbaijan Popular Front deputy chairman Ali Kerimov both described the elections as "a significant step backwards towards authoritarianism." In one particularly spectacular incident, armed masked men broke into the district electoral office in the Gyandzha constituency where Foreign Minister Hasan Hasanov was standing as a candidate and stole the ballot boxes. International monitors not only condemned what they termed widespread fraud and vote-rigging on the part of the Azerbaijani authorities, but also queried the preliminary estimate that voter participation was over 80 per cent. (According to the final statistics released by the CEC, 3,556,277 people, or 86.05 per cent of the electorate, cast their ballots).

The distribution of the 25 seats to be allocated according to the proportional system was as follows:

Yeni Azerbaijan	19 seats
National Independence Party	3
Azerbaijan Popular Front	3

The remaining five parties failed to poll the necessary 8 per cent of the votes to qualify.

Of the 99 deputies to be elected in single-candidate constituencies, 71 were elected in the first round of voting. According to the independent Azerbaijani news agency Turan, all but one of these 71 names corresponded to the list circulated to journalists prior to the elections by Nemat Panahov of those persons whom he alleged had been selected in advance by the Azerbaijani leadership as deputies to the new parliament.

The exact distribution of these seats between parties is unfortunately virtually impossible to determine, given that the list of deputies put out by the CEC specified the occupation, but not the party affiliation, of the new deputies. In addition, a large number of supposedly "independent" candidates were in fact supporters of Yeni Azerbaijan. Turan reported on 20 November that "about 40" of the 71 deputies elected under the majoritarian system in the first round were Yeni Azerbaijan candidates, with the Party of Democratic Independence and the Democratic Property Owners' Party having one deputy each. Commentators were unanimous, however, in concluding that Aliiev enjoys an overall majority in what is termed "a tame parliament."

A second round of voting was scheduled for 26 November in 21 constituencies where no single candidate polled 50 per cent of the vote in the first round; in addition, repeat elections were set for 4 February 1996, in eight constituencies where "serious violations of electoral procedure" were registered. (Whether these eight were selected at random, or the violations that took place there were even more egregious than elsewhere in the country, is not clear). Results of the 26 November poll are not available. On 4 February Yeni Azerbaijan won 12 of the 15 contested seats. Foreign Minister Hasan Hasanov was one of those elected; Musavat Party chairman Isa Gambar was not.

18.4 The referendum

The new draft constitution, which was published for public discussion on 15 October states that the Republic of Azerbaijan is "a democratic, secular and unitary state". Nakhichevan was formally accorded the status of an autonomous republic within Azerbaijan, but no mention was made of any analogous status for Nagorno-Karabakh.

According to the draft, the designated head of state of the Republic of Azerbaijan is the president, who is elected for a period of five years, and can be impeached only by a vote of 2/3 of the deputies to parliament. (The Prime Minister's functions are confined to chairing the sessions of the Cabinet of Ministers and directing its activities). The president has the right to announce parliamentary elections, select the cabinet and propose the candidacies of members of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court; he is also Commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces.

Although the law on the referendum stipulated that the final, amended draft of the new constitution should be published in the national press no later than 10 days before the referendum (i.e. on 2 November); in fact it appeared in print only on 8 November.

According to the Central Electoral Commission, 91.1 per cent of the electorate voted in favour of the new constitution.

19 The media in Azerbaijan

The media landscape in Azerbaijan is less varied than in many other Soviet successor states and, from a political point of view, polarised. At the one extreme are the state-controlled TV, radio and press, which are subservient to President Aliev, and whose political coverage concentrates overwhelmingly on his day-to-day activities as head of state; at the other are a handful of opposition newspapers that are aligned with, and in some cases funded by, opposition political parties, and are subject to stringent censorship. The only significant exceptions are the independent weekly newspaper *Zerkalo* (in Russian), and the independent TV station ANS-TV.

The relation between the media and the government has, in conjunction with the political developments, been rather changeable over the past five years. In the first phase, coinciding with the rule of Ayaz Mutalibov, the governmental press enjoyed more autonomy and the newspaper *Azerbaijan* occasionally carried news regarding the opposition. The state television also had more freedom of manoeuvre. In addition, opposition papers were not censored.

In the following phase, the period of Abulfaz Elchibey, the media law, which theoretically still governs the media, was passed. Although the law clearly prohibits censorship (see below), military censorship was introduced in May 1993 (officially due to the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, yet perhaps the genuine reason was related to Elchibey's feeling that his ouster was approaching).

Aliev continued and exacerbated the practice. Military censorship was expanded to political censorship, although the parliament disagreed. Moreover, since Aliev's return to power in Baku, reprisals against journalists and newspapers have become routine: the Moscow-based Fund for the Defence of Glasnost noted that in 1994 alone, 45 journalists and ten newspapers were targeted. The editorial office of *Azadlyg*, the Azerbaijan Popular Front newspaper, is regularly raided by police.

19.1 The broadcast media

Because the steadily deteriorating economic situation has rendered newspapers an unaffordable luxury for a large percentage of the Azeri population, the role and influence of the broadcast media are disproportionately greater than that of the press.

As of August 1995, there were 36 TV and radio stations officially registered in Azerbaijan, but only a handful were actually broadcasting: the two channels of Azerbaijan State TV; ANS-TV; the two channels of state radio; ANS-radio; and the private radio station Sara. It is possible to receive the first and second channels of Russian TV; the first channel of Turkish TV (TRT-1) and also the privately owned Turkish TV station Show TV, which broadcasts mostly entertainment.

Azerbaijan State Television broadcasts on two channels for 16 and 4¼ hours per day respectively. Its political coverage, as noted above, concentrates overwhelmingly on the political activities of President Aliev, to the extent that channel 1 is popularly referred to as "**Haidar-TV**". It relays one hour of Iranian state TV programming per day.

ANS-TV is the creation of Vakhid Nakhish, who worked as a cameraman for Western TV stations covering the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and claims to have invested his entire savings into founding his own private TV company, which was registered in 1992. It is part of a group of

private companies that also includes ANS Radio, a press agency, ANS records, which reissues classics of Azerbaijan music, a trading company and two Baku discotheques. The commercial ventures help finance the ANS-TV, which is also said to receive some financial help from parliament chairman and oil magnate Rasul Guliev, but Nakhish made no mention of this in his conversation with the monitor. The station's studios are equipped with state-of-the-art computerised equipment, some of which was donated by Internews. Its broadcasts can only be received using a foreign manufactured TV set, and only in Baku and the immediate surrounding area.

Nakhish claimed that ANS-TV is the only media outlet in Azerbaijan not subject to censorship, although it was threatened with closure by the Azerbaijani authorities for its coverage of the Dzhavadov hostagetaking in October 1994. (The Azerbaijani leadership backed down after US Ambassador Richard Kauzlarich protested). ANS-TV also had live coverage of the stand-off in March 1995, between Dzhavadov's OPON troops and the Azerbaijani army; this footage was used by the Azerbaijani procuracy in its investigation.

ANS-TV broadcasts four hours per night, mostly entertainment, with two evening newscasts. These consist of straight news coverage, without commentary, and are considered by other Azerbaijani journalists to be objective. Nakhish claimed that his staff are meticulous in checking, and always specify, their sources.

According to Internews, small private local TV stations exist in a number of other towns in Azerbaijan including Gyandzha, Nakhichevan, Dashkesan, Mingechaur and Lenkoran.

Azerbaijan's state radio broadcasts on two channels, one of which relays one hour of broadcasting nightly by the BBC World Service. Both stations are, comparable to the state controlled TV channels, subservient to the authorities.

ANS-Radio broadcasts light music (a mixture of Western/Turkish/ Azerbaijani and Iranian) with a 2-3 minute newscast once an hour. Radio Sara broadcasts only music.

19.2 The print media

In 1995 there were over 400 registered newspapers in Azerbaijan, of which only approximately 50 were published with any degree of regularity. The remainder either no longer exist, or have been forced to suspend publication indefinitely for financial reasons.

The print media in Azerbaijan, both official and opposition, have to contend with horrendous financial and logistical problems. First, it is difficult to obtain regular supplies of paper, which is extremely expensive. The deputy editor of *Millyet*, Djeyhoun Nasibov, said his paper imports newsprint from Russia at \$1,200 per ton; according to the editor of *Zerkalo*, 90 per cent of his total costs go on paper, which he imports from Turkey at \$850 per ton. Second, there is only one printing press in Baku, and it is under state control. A breakdown in the state-controlled distribution system has led to delays of 3-4 months in the transfer of payments. It also means newspapers are virtually impossible to obtain outside the capital; an estimated 80 per cent of all copies printed are sold in Baku. In addition, the non-official press is subject to censorship (see below).

Print runs are very low, ranging from 8,900 for *Millyet* (the organ of the Party of National Independence) and 9,800 for *Zerkalo* to 12,223 for the official state newspaper *Azerbaycan*, 12,543 for *Gunay*, the organ of the Party of Democratic Property Owners, and 14,308 for *Azadlyg*, the Popular Front paper. (At the beginning of 1995 *Azadlyg* had a print run of 30,000, but costs have increased significantly since then).

Although it is theoretically the official organ of the Azerbaijan parliament, *Azerbaycan*, which is published five times a week, does not receive any funding from the state. It does, however, generate some revenue from advertising. The Azerbaijani leadership will not allow any private individual to invest in it. It is supplied with paper by the state publishing house, but working conditions are primitive: the paper does not own a single computer, according to one of its staff. Its chief editor has to coordinate its political coverage with the president's chief of staff, but is not subject to military censorship.

Azerbaycan published interesting materials in 1992-1993, but after Aliiev's advent to power degenerated into the organ of the presidential apparatus. The paper complies with orders from the president, parliament or government and publishes official news, reports on meetings of the president, etc. As a result, many of the younger staff left; the older generation are characterised as "prisoners of the socialist mindset". The level of professionalism is consequently very low. The salaries range from \$15 to \$20, but are paid regularly.

The paper also publishes a Russian-language edition in a smaller (3,000) print run: the level of professionalism is higher, and articles are more analytical, but it has very little political coverage, concentrating instead on social and ecological issues.

The remaining newspapers can be divided into three broad categories:

- those aligned with a political party, and which serve primarily to propagate that party's ideology, rather than to give a balanced overview of political developments. Most copies of such papers tend to be bought by members of the party in question.

The most prominent in this category are *Azadlyg*, founded in 1988, which appears 2-3 times weekly. The paper is the organ of the Popular Front, and the journalists working for *Azadlyg* are most likely to be members of the party; *Millyet*, the organ of the Party of National Independence of Azerbaijan, founded in 1991; and *Yeni Musavat*, the organ of the Musavat Party, which appeared as a samizdat publication in 1988 and registered officially in 1992. Objectivity or balanced reporting can, of course, not be expected from these papers.

Gunay was founded in 1993 by Mahmud Mahmudov, the chairman of the Party of Democratic Property Owners, but at least at first was not an instrument for party propaganda; its coverage ranged from materials about Aliiev to cultural topics; much of the material was taken from other news agencies. Two months prior to the elections, however, Mahmudov created his own news agency, Ria Gunay, to provide news materials, and political coverage began to focus increasingly on his party.

- non-partisan papers offering broad coverage of political and economic affairs, such as *7 Gun* and *Zerkalo*.

Within this second category, which also includes Turkish-funded papers such as *Zaman*, *Zerkalo* stands out for the quality and boldness of its reporting. It is, moreover, the only paper that offers a plurality of political views. It claims to be wholly independent and financed by its income from advertising.

- papers which focus almost exclusively on economic and financial issues, such as *Economic Express* and *Birzha* (the economic supplement to *Zerkalo*).

19.3 News agencies

News agencies can be divided into two categories, official and independent, the latter being for the most part more informative than the former.

Azertadzh is the official state news agency and issues reports on day to day political developments in Azeri and Russian. It also issues some feature material.

The Presidential Press Service employs approximately 30 people, and has two main functions: it screens the Azerbaijani press for Heidar Aliev's personal consumption, and telephones journalists in Baku to inform them when he is scheduled to hold a press conference. It does not put out press releases (that is the task of Azertadzh), but provides some materials to Azerbaijan. Its deputy head, Fuad Akhundov, is said to have excellent contacts with the Russian media and with Western correspondents, and is respected for his intelligence by media colleagues in Baku.

The parliamentary press service is said to be of even less assistance to journalists covering domestic political topics. The press service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, by contrast, supplies information "occasionally"; the best-informed of all is the press service of the Ministry for State Security, but its staff are only prepared to answer very specific questions.

There are six or seven independent agencies, of which the most respected are Turan and Habar-Service. Both mainly operate for the benefit of foreign subscribers. Turan provides coverage of political developments in English, Habar-Service provides coverage in English and Russian.

19.4 Censorship

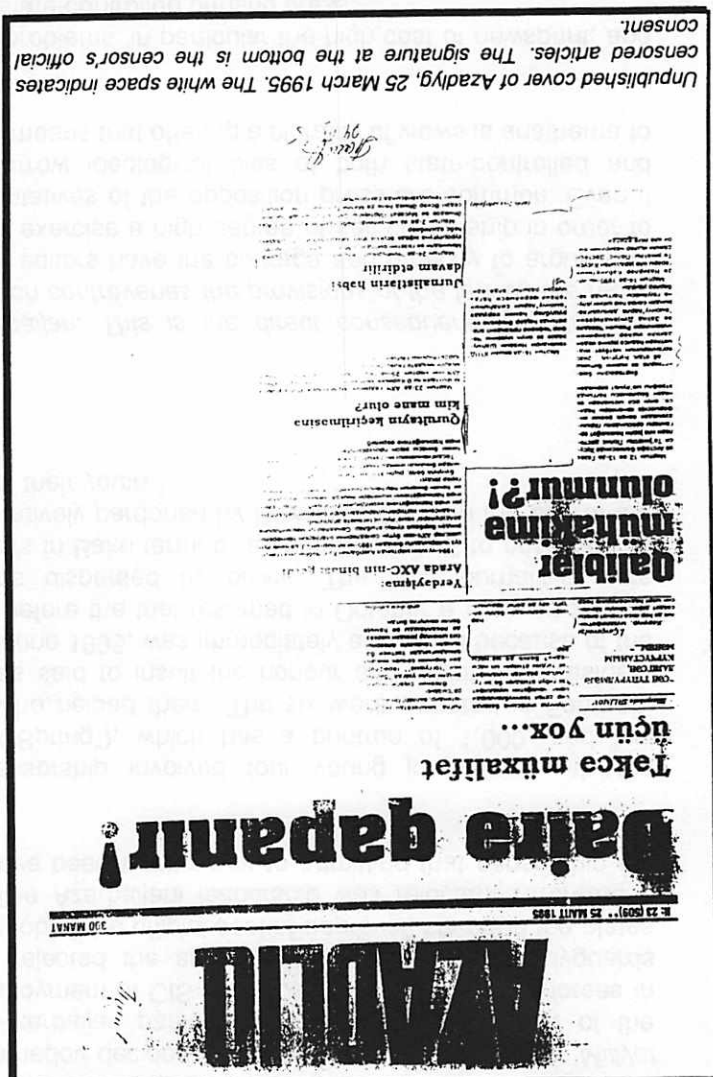
Theoretically, under the provisions of the Law on the Mass Media of July 1992 (one of the first laws to be passed after the advent to power of the Azerbaijan Popular Front), censorship of the mass media is prohibited. The Law guarantees freedom of information, and states that "monopolisation of the media is not allowed". Article 3 stipulates that censorship of the media is forbidden. Article 4 prohibits the use of the media "to slander the honour and dignity of citizens." (The article in the law on the media on protecting the honour and dignity of citizens apparently does not extend to the opposition, who are vilified with impunity by the state-controlled media). The law also enumerates the process for registration: media outlets are required to register with the State Committee for the Press (subsequently upgraded to a ministry); this registration must be renewed annually, and may be refused or revoked in cases of violation of article 4.

Although many journalists now look back to Elchibey's presidency as a brief "golden age" in which the media enjoyed unprecedented freedom, in one notorious incident in October 1992, the then Minister of Internal Affairs, Iskander Hamidov, beat up several members of the staff of the newspaper *Ayna*. More serious was the introduction in May 1993, in contravention of Article 3 of the law on the media, of military censorship after the Azeri armed forces suffered a series of defeats in Nagorno-Karabakh. Eighteen months later, Aliiev reintroduced a degree of political censorship in the wake of the purported attempted coup by Suret Huseinov. An attempt by Aliiev to extend this censorship to independent news agencies was unsuccessful.

Azadlyg's editor claimed that he has problems with the censors over every single issue, and that 20 issues had not been published between January and November 1995. (Four of these addressed the alleged Dzhabadov coup in March). Zerkalo's editor Raut Talyshinsky also said he has to "do battle" with the censors over every single issue, but sometimes succeeds in persuading them to pass materials they proposed cutting. (He cited the example of an article published after the October 1995 fire in the Baku, which reported the danger that persons who were exposed to the gases that escaped during the blaze could possibly suffer serious health damage later).

The censors refuse to condone the publication of any newspaper with blank spaces that would indicate where materials deemed inappropriate have been excised. Different editors devised varying solutions to this problem. Some have had anyone materials prepared which are then used repeatedly; Zerkalo initially inserted advertisements that were so outrageous as to be obviously fake (on the lines of "Baby elephants for sale, 1000 manats each") but later simply inserted the name of the paper in larger type. In cases where several articles are cut from one issue, it often proves impossible to fill all the resulting gaps, and consequently the entire issue fails to appear.

Military censorship is conducted by a special department attached to the office of the president. Political censorship is charged with protecting state secrets, but de facto is also controlled by the presidential apparatus. (There is no current law on state secrets). Several journalists expressed bewilderment at the inconsistent approach of the censors and professed to be unable to perceive any clear criteria for their decisions, other than to prevent the publication of any criticism of the president, prime-minister or government. One journalist with Azerbaijan cited an incident in which the military censor cut from material he had written on the basis of a direct quotation by a deputy to the Milli Mejlis. The state publishing house will not print any materials that do not carry the relevant seal of approval from the censor.



Some censorship stories have already passed into the realm of legend. In May 1994, National Independence Party chairman Etibar Mamedov decided to publish in the party's paper *Millyet* an article denouncing the signing by Azerbaijan parliament chairman Rasul Guliev of the Bishkek protocol which proposed the deployment of CIS (i.e. Russian) peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. When the censors rejected the article, Mamedov and his bodyguards stormed into the censorship office and grabbed the official seal of approval, stamped the plates and took them to the printing house. The Azerbaijani leadership was reluctant to create a scandal since to have done so would have been tantamount to admitting that censorship did exist.

The most serious recent case of censorship involved four young journalists with the unregistered satirical journal *Chesme* ("Spring"), which has a print run of 1,000, and two employees of the state printing house who helped them. The six were arrested in February 1995, for printing articles and caricatures said to insult the honour and dignity of President Heidar Aliyev. Their trial, which opened in June 1995, was immediately adjourned because of the absence of two key witnesses. The day before the trial resumed in October a planned protest demonstration by fellow journalists was dispersed by police. The four journalists were subsequently sentenced by what observers in Baku termed "a kangaroo court" to prison terms of between 2-5 years, but were demonstratively pardoned by President Aliyev on the eve of the parliamentary elections "on the grounds of their youth."

19.5 Conclusions

Media freedom does not exist in Azerbaijan. This is the direct consequence of stringent censorship, both political and military, which contravenes the provisions of the law on the mass media. Very few independent newspaper editors have the courage and tenacity to argue with the censors over rejected materials; most exercise a high degree of self-censorship in order to survive. Violent reprisals against representatives of the opposition press are common. Even if censorship were to be relaxed, the narrow ideological bias of both state-controlled and independent party-affiliated media outlets means that offering a plurality of views is anathema to almost all editors.

The situation is exacerbated by financial problems, in particular the high cost of newsprint, and by the lack of an alternative to the single state-controlled printing press.

As in many Soviet successor states, the upper management of Azerbaijan's state-controlled media are people in their 40s and 50s whose jobs depend on their continued absolute loyalty to the country's president. In such conditions, where originality or a penchant for analysis can prove a dangerous liability, the general level of professionalism is low. By contrast, several independent newspaper editors who spoke with the monitors considered the level of professionalism among journalists acceptable, but conceded that comparatively low salaries deter many talented would-be journalists from entering the profession. ANS-TV's Vakhid Nakhish was more scathing, and explained that his station refuses to hire any journalist who either graduated from the journalism faculty of Baku State University or has worked for the official Azerbaijani media. Instead, he prefers to hire talented young people and send them abroad to train; the average age of his staff is 25.

20 Media coverage of the elections

20.1 The electoral law and the media

The media coverage of the elections was officially governed by the Central Election Commission. The Law on the Elections set the length of the electoral campaign at 23 days (19 October - 10 November). It stated (Article 46) that pre-electoral propaganda may be carried out using any forms and any methods except those that violate the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan; and that citizens engaging in such propaganda were required to abide by "generally accepted standards of ethics". It should, however, be remarked that the CEC had no mechanisms to enforce their stipulations.

Article 47 made provision for the government to finance the printing of campaign posters, and stipulated that political parties and individual candidates were entitled to free access on state TV and radio and in the official press. Specifically, each of the 359 majoritarian candidates was entitled to one five minute slot on state TV (to be broadcast on prime time between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m.), which would be rerun on state radio, and one page in the press. (As a result of lobbying by the Party for National Independence, this allocation was increased to seven minutes). Each political party contending the party list seats was entitled to one 30 minute TV broadcast (also to be rerun on state radio) and 3 pages in the press. In total, this amounted to an average of over two hours of free political advertising on television and radio daily.

Any other campaign activity was to be privately financed, but the law laid down no guidelines or procedures for this, other than to stipulate that funds allocated by the Central Electoral Commission were not to be used for this purpose. The Central Electoral Commission was charged with monitoring compliance with this ban, and any candidate or party found guilty of violating it was to be barred from participating in the elections.

Candidates were prohibited, under threat of fine or punishment, from criticising each other during the course of the electoral campaign. There were no prescriptions concerning fair or balanced coverage. Although paid political advertising was in fact not allowed, some electoral associations did clearly avail themselves of the possibility.

20.2 Electoral coverage in the broadcast media

Majoritarian candidates had the choice of preparing their own TV footage, or of availing themselves of the studios and facilities of state television. The Party of National Independence prepared the video footage for all of its majoritarian candidates at party headquarters.

Of the 359 majoritarian candidates, some 80 per cent availed themselves of the free access to which they were entitled. This free access appears to have been more or less equally distributed between pro-presidential, independent and opposition candidates. (Yeni Azerbaijan and the parties aligned with it received 175 minutes 10 seconds; the opposition parties between them 265 minutes 25 seconds; "independent" candidates, who accounted for 81 per cent of the total number, and some of whom openly endorsed Yeni Azerbaijan's policies, received a total of 1,575 minutes 22 seconds.

Among the opposition parties, the Party of National Independence had by far the largest share with a total of 166 minutes 40 seconds. This is probably to be attributed 1) to the Party's ambiguous status as a "loyal opposition" party and two) to its ability to prepare footage for its own candidates.) The actual length of individual slots varied from three to nine minutes; the monitors were not informed of any complaints of broadcasts that exceeded the statutory 7 minutes being curtailed. In two cases, however, technicians at State Television refused to broadcast footage prepared by opposition candidates, although it is not known whether they did so spontaneously, at their own initiative, or on orders from above.

The one notable violation of the 7 minute maximum was an interview lasting one hour and 40 minutes by parliament chairman Rasul Guliev containing a number of extremely critical remarks about the Party of National Independence that was aired on 8 November and repeated the following day; it was also printed on 9 November in Azerbaijan. The party's leadership lodged an official complaint with the CEC, but received no response.

The political parties competing under the proportional system likewise duly received the two 30 minute slots allocated. This was the first time since the return to power of Heidar Aliev that either the Party of National Independence or Nemat Panahov's Party of National Statehood had been given the opportunity to propagate their views on the state-controlled media, and, according to Millyet's Jeyhoun Nasibov, the public response was very favourable.

There was no (designated) paid access on State TV or radio.

On 9 and 11 November, Azerbaijan State Television broadcast a 10 minutes programme demonstrating how to fill in the ballot paper. State TV and radio also broadcast a statement issued prior to the elections by the joint UN/OSCE monitoring mission with an interim assessment of the electoral campaign. On 9 November, State TV broadcast a 22 minute statement by the chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, Jafar Veliev, summarising the work of the Commission and the media's coverage of the electoral campaign. Veliev conceded that there had been "some violations" of the electoral law, but attributed these to "lack of experience."

The editorial coverage on Azerbaijan State Television was, it was noted above, devoted virtually entirely to the parties related to the president. "Haidar-TV" reported extensively on the activities of Yeni Azerbaijan and failed to provide a balanced coverage of the parties participating in the elections.

ANS-TV decided not to offer free access to individual candidates but proposed organising televised debates between the leaders of the various parties competing under the proportional system; this plan was thwarted by the refusal of some of the party leaders approached to participate. Besides, ANS did not cover the elections very thoroughly. The station devoted most time to American films, clips from MTV, etc. The news programme Haberchi did contain some political information, yet some sources alleged that the relation between Vahid Nachish (director of ANS) and Rasul Guliev (speaker of parliament, sponsor of ANS) minimised the editorial coverage on the channel.

20.3 Electoral coverage in the press

In contrast to the even-handed distribution of free access to the broadcast media, allocation of free access to majoritarian candidates in the state-controlled press was restricted to candidates from Yeni Azerbaijan and so-called "independent" candidates, with the exception of one opposition candidate (from the Party of National Independence). Granted, the total number of candidates in conjunction with the limited format of the newspaper and the comparatively brevity of the election campaign would have made it impossible to allocate free access to all candidates, but the available space could have been far more equitably divided between pro-government and opposition candidates.

Azadlyg, which considers itself not only a party but also a national paper, similarly aimed to provide up to 16 pages of free access to opposition candidates, but in fact failed to do so; whether or not this was because of censorship problems is not clear. Of the non-state controlled papers aligned with a specific political party, *Azadlyg*, *Millyet* and *Gunay* carried interviews with majoritarian candidates from their "own" party; *Azadlyg* and *Millyet* also carried some general editorial coverage of the electoral campaign. (They reported, for example, the ban on the Musavat Party, in connection with which *Azadlyg* carried an interview on 21 October with Isa Gambar). *Millyet* carried editorial coverage of the decision taken by the Popular Front and Musavat not to boycott the elections; *Millyet* also published an interview with the head of the OSCE monitoring mission, and information on the provisions made for refugees to vote. In keeping with the sophisticated approach to campaign advertising demonstrated by the Party of National Independence, on 7 November stylish plastic bags featuring the PNI logo were distributed free with the day's issue of *Millyet*.

The broadest coverage of the elections was provided by *Zerkalo*, which printed editorial coverage of Nemat Panahov's accusations that the election outcome had been determined in advance, reportage on the refusal of the CEC to register the Musavat Party to participate under the proportional system, an interview with Azerbaijan Popular front deputy chairman Asim Mollazade, comments by international observers on the electoral campaign, plus a statement by the Communist Party of Azerbaijan criticising the conduct of the electoral campaign. (This was the only coverage anywhere in the press of the Communist Party's election participation). *Zerkalo* also printed an in-depth interview with Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Hasan Hasanov, who was standing as a nominally independent candidate.

Zerkalo also carried a comparatively small amount of paid advertising for the Party of National Independence and the Azerbaijan Popular Front. The PNI had one full-page campaign advertisement (*Zerkalo*'s editor informed the monitoring team that this cost \$1,200) in the 4 November issue, and a second small advertisement on the front page of the 11 November issue. (This latter was technically a violation of the ruling that campaign propaganda was to end on 10 November). Also on 11 November, the Azerbaijan Popular Front published a one-page advertisement with photographs of the party's five top leaders.

20.4 Conclusions

The state-controlled broadcast media made a clear effort to comply with the electoral law provision guaranteeing free access to all parties and candidates. The amount of election-related coverage on prime time nightly, however -- between 10 and 20 campaign slots by individual candidates -- may have induced viewer fatigue. The state-controlled press made no such effort at impartiality, but this failure is unlikely to have detracted substantially from the overall amount of information available to the electorate given the very limited print run of the newspaper in question. The work of the CEC was reported objectively. The state-controlled media, both broadcast and print, devoted the bulk of their editorial coverage to the activities of the president and a few other top leadership figures, including Prime Minister Fuad Guliev.

The non-state-controlled press was largely partisan, focusing primarily on the policies and candidates of the political party with which any given newspaper was aligned. Editorial coverage of broader election-related issues was confined to *Millyet* and *Zerkalo*.

Journalists and political figures who spoke with the monitoring team all shared the perception that there had been a perceptible relaxation of censorship in the 3-4 weeks immediately preceding the elections; but all expressed the fear, and in some cases the conviction, that after the elections there would be a return to the status quo.

According to several interviewees, the audience was not particularly interested in politics or in the Azerbaijani media for three reasons. Firstly, the partisanship of most media outlets was probably too outspoken. The endless reporting on the president combined with the hours of free political advertising increased the audience share of Russian television (ORT and RTR) significantly. The popularity of *Zerkalo* illustrates that a similar uncomfortable feeling was applicable to the strongly aligned press. Secondly, the reduced spending power limited the sales of newspapers. Finally, the polarised and complicated political situation and the overkill of accusations induced a certain apathy towards politics on the part of the audience.

That said, even if there had been no restrictions whatever on political coverage, if the state-controlled press had made the allocated space available to majoritarian candidates, or if the media coverage would have attracted more interest from audience, it is unlikely that the outcome of the elections would have been different; i.e. the falsification of the actual voting rendered media coverage prior to the elections largely irrelevant.

21 Media outlets in Azerbaijan

21.1 State television

No data were available concerning the government owned television and radio channels in Azerbaijan.

21.2 Non-governmental television

Name of channel	Azerbaijan News Service - ANS
Director	Seifulla Mustafa
Address	Baku
Phone	(8922) 351710
Area covered	3,000,000
Note	Sophisticated station, part of a larger commercial structure. Their licence allows them to produce political news (normally not allowed), and therefore the station is in a sensitive position.

21.3 Press

Name of publication	Azerbaijan
Periodicity	five times weekly
Address	370146 Baku, Metbuat prospekti, 529 kvartal
Editor-in-chief	Amir Mustafaev
Circulation	12,223
Language	Azeri
Political orientation	pro-government, official paper
Funding	sales, subsidies

Name of publication	Azerbaijan
Periodicity	weekly
Address	370146 Baku, Metbuat prospekti, 529 kvartal
Editor-in-chief	Amir Mustafaev
Circulation	3,250
Language	Russian
Political orientation	pro-government, official paper
Funding	sales, subsidies

Name of publication	Azadlyg
Periodicity	3 times weekly
Founder	Azerbaijan Popular Front (1988)
Editor-in-chief	S. Guseinly
Circulation	14,398
Language	Azeri
Political orientation	Strongly oppositional, supports the Azerbaijan Popular Front
Funding	Azerbaijan Popular Front
Name of publication	Millyet
Periodicity	3 times weekly
Founder	Party of National Independence of Azerbaijan
Address	70146 Baku, Prospekt Metbuat, 529 kvartal
Editor-in-chief	Safer Unal
Circulation	8,900
Language	Azeri
Political orientation	Party of National Independence of Azerbaijan
Funding	Party of National Independence of Azerbaijan
Name of publication	Gunay
Periodicity	3 times weekly
Founder	Mahmud Mahmudov (August 1993)
Address	370122 Baku, ulitsa Zardabi 80
Editor-in-chief	Alekper Abbasov
Circulation	Azeri edition - 11,324; Russian edition - 6,837
Language	parallel editions in Azeri & Russian
Political orientation	Supports the Party of Democratic Property Owners of Azerbaijan (Chairmen: Mahmud Mahmudov)
Funding	Mahmud Mahmudov
Name of publication	Yeni Musavat
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	Musavat Party
Editor-in-chief	Rauf Shenol
Language	Azeri
Political orientation	Musavat Party
Funding	Musavat Party
Name of publication	Zerkalo
Periodicity	weekly
Founder	editorial collective, founded in August 1990
Address	370146 Baku Prospekt Metbuat 529
Editor-in-chief	Rauf Talyshynsky
Circulation	18,100
Language	Russian
Political orientation	Independent, neutral
Funding	sales and advertising

Name of publication	Panorama
Periodicity	three times weekly
Founder	Institute of Strategic & International Studies, founded 1906
Address	370146 Baku, Prospekt Metbuat 146
Editor-in-chief	A. Kyazimzade
Circulation	4,674
Language	Russian

Name of publication	Bakinsky rabochii
Periodicity	five times weekly
Founder	Founded in 1906, from 1920 organ of Central Committee of Azerbaijan Communist Party, now owned jointly by the office of the President of Azerbaijan and the paper's staff.
Address	370146 Baku Metbuat prospekti, 529 kvartal
Editor-in-chief	Irada Vekilova
Circulation	4,721
Language	Russian

Several smaller newspapers deserve to be mentioned:

Zaman. Founded in 1991, is subsidiary of Turkish paper of the same name which funds it. Editors change frequently.

Hurriyet. Founded in 1992, organ of the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan. Editor: Sardar Djalaoglu

Muhalifat Founded 1991. Chief editor: Agamalik Sadyk Effendi.

7 gun. Founded 1990. Chief editor: Emin Eminbeyli

Vestnik -- published in Russian by Centre for Slavic Culture, print run 6,056.

Sodruzhestvo, published in Russian by Russian community in Baku, print run 1,103.

Dengo Kurd, published in Kurdish and Azeri by Centre for Kurdish Culture, print run 2,000.

Talish Sedo, published in Talysh and Azeri by Talysh Cultural Centre, print run 2,000.

Aziz, published in Russian and Azeri by Community for Azeri-Israeli Friendship, print run 500.

Avar, published in Avar and Azeri by Centre for Avar Culture, print run 300.

22 Monitoring tables Azerbaijan

The following acronyms are used in the tables:

PDIA	Party of Democratic Independence of Azerbaijan
DPOPA	Democratic Property Owners' Party of Azerbaijan
NIPA	National Independence Party of Azerbaijan
PNSA	Party of National Statehood of Azerbaijan

22.1 Broadcasting

State television

Party	Editorial time	Per cent
Yeni Azerbaijan	122	27,6%
Alliance for Azerbaijan	8	1,8%
Anavatan (Motherland) Party	7	1,6%
PDIA	7	1,6%
DPOPA	32	7,2%
Azerbaijan Popular Front	54	12,2%
NIPA	167	37,8%
PNSA	6	1,4%
Communist Party of Azerbaijan	--	--
Social-Democratic Party of Azerbaijan	--	--
Musavat	38	8,8%
Total (parties)	441	100,0%
Nominally independent candidates	26 hours 15 minutes	
Grand total	32 hours 58 minutes	

Time (in minutes) devoted to election related material by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

State radio

Party	Editorial time	Per cent
Yeni Azerbaijan	87	32,5%
Alliance for Azerbaijan	--	--
Anavatan (Motherland) Party	7	2,6%
PDIA	7	2,6%
DPOPA	17	6,4%
Azerbaijan Popular Front	49	18,3%
NIPA	95	35,4%
PNSA	6	2,2%
Communist Party of Azerbaijan	--	--
Social-Democratic Party of Azerbaijan	--	--
Musavat	--	--
Total (parties)	268	100,0%
Nominally independent candidates	20 hours 5 minutes	
Grand total	24 hours 33 minutes	

Time (in minutes) devoted to election related material by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

22.2 Press

Azerbaijan

Party	Editorial	Per cent	Free	Per cent
Yeni Azerbaijan	5643	42,9%	6185	50,3%
Alliance for Azerbaijan	--		--	--
Anavatan (Motherland) Party	--		72	0,6%
PDIA	--		--	--
DPOPA	--		--	--
Azerbaijan Popular Front	--		--	--
NIPA	--		144	1,2%
PNSA	*1208	9,2%	--	--
Communist Party of Azerbaijan	--		--	--
Social-Democratic Party of Azerbaijan	--		--	--
Musavat	--		--	--
Nominally independent candidates	168	1,3%	5894	47,9%
Various (including sessions of CEC)	6128	46,6%		
Total	13147	100,0%	12295	100,0%

Editorial and free space (square centimeter) by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

* all negative

Azadlyg

Party	Editorial	Per cent
Yeni Azerbaijan	*182	1,2%
PDIA	48	0,3%
Azerbaijan Popular Front	10,798	69,4%
PNSA	1,034	6,6%
Musavat	546	3,5%
Nominally independent candidates	394	2,5%
Various (including sessions of CEC)	2,565	16,5%
Total	15,567	100,0%

Editorial space (square centimeter) by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

* all negative

GuNay

Party	Editorial	Per cent
DPOPA	9,508	59,4%
Nominally independent candidates	4,711	29,4%
Various (including sessions of CEC)	1,783	11,2%
Total	16,002	100,0%

Editorial space (square centimeter) by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

Millyet

Party	Editorial	Per cent
Yeni Azerbaijan	336	2,3%
Alliance for Azerbaijan	*260	1,8%
PDIA	11,993	81,7%
Azerbaijan Popular Front	160	1,1%
PNSA	272	1,9%
Musavat	260	1,8%
Nominally independent candidates	30	0,2%
Various (including sessions of CEC)	1,377	9,4%
Total	14,688	100,2%

Editorial space (square centimeter) by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

Zerkalo

Party	Editorial	Per cent	Paid
Yeni Azerbaijan	56	1,1%	
Azerbaijan Popular Front	407	8,0%	875
NIPA	90	1,8%	791
PNSA	831	16,3%	
Communist Party of Azerbaijan	18	0,4%	
Musavat	48	0,9%	
Nominally independent candidates	1,608	31,6%	
Various (including sessions of CEC)	2,029	39,9%	
Total	5,087	100,0%	1,666

Editorial and paid space (square centimeter) by political parties - © European Institute for the Media 1996

23 Media in the Transcaucasus - Conclusions

The combination of information concerning the political situation, the democratic conduct of the elections and the situation of the media enable both “in-country” and comparative conclusions. The state of the media in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan can be assessed, compared and linked to the political and economic situation in the countries.

Firstly, attention will be devoted to the democratic conduct of the elections in the three republics. Subsequently, it will be made clear that there appears to be a parallel between procedural violations in the course of the electoral process as observed by international organisations and the freedom and independence of the media as observed by the European Institute for the Media.

Secondly, some remarks regarding the regulatory framework for the media will be made. Thirdly, and rather importantly, the structural difficulties for the media will be outlined. This mainly concerns the financial problems for independent outlets and the influence of the authorities on the state-owned media. Finally, the nature of the editorial coverage and the professionalism of the journalists will be addressed.

Democratic elections and the media

The conduct of the elections in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan was observed by various international organisations (EU, OSCE, UN). Their conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- The elections in Armenia were marred by the suspension of the Dashnaktsutyun party, by the manipulations of the elections of chairmen of the Regional Electoral Commissions and by the large number of votes rejected as invalid. Although imperfect, the elections were considered free and there was no strict condemnation.
- The elections in Georgia were generally considered to be democratic, free and fair. There were no problems regarding the registration of parties/candidates, and the counting of votes was also deemed to have been conducted in a correct manner.
- The Azerbaijan elections, in contrast, were openly denounced even before the arrival of most observers. This was mainly due to the large number of parties/candidates whose registration was refused. The procedural violations on election day merely exacerbated the assessment of the observers.

In summary, on a sliding scale of democratic conduct, Georgia tops the list, followed by Armenia and then Azerbaijan.

This order parallels the freedom of the media and the absence/presence of interference by the authorities as observed in this report. The (independent) media in Georgia were hardly pressurised. Some degree of self-censorship (see below) did exist according to most interviewees, yet genuine fear of pressing reprisals or interference was not apparent.

The situation in Armenia is somewhat more ambiguous. Editorial offices of independent papers were destroyed, set on fire or visited by certain uninvited individuals; several journalists were beaten up. However, the authorities are most probably not responsible for these acts. It can, on the other hand, be attributed to the government that the perpetrators were never found; that nine newspapers and one news agency were closed down in conjunction with the suspension of the Dashnaktsutyun party; that the independent opposition paper *Golos Armenii* had continuous

problems with the state printing house Periodika, which has a monopoly; and that the Director of the state TV channel was dismissed the day after the elections.

These incidents illustrate the dual situation for the Armenian media. On the one hand, media outlets enjoy autonomy and immunity, and some opposition papers actually go rather far in their criticism of the government. On the other hand, the climate for the media is significantly hampered by a series of attacks and hindering activities, which, it should be mentioned, cannot all be attributed to the authorities.

The situation in Azerbaijan is not quite so ambiguous. Editorial offices are regularly raided by the police and reprisals against journalists have become routine. In addition, military and political censorship have been institutionalised. Consequently, issues of opposition papers such as *Azadlyg*, yet also of independent quality papers like *Zerkalo*, regularly appear with surrogate material (or white space), or even fail to be published altogether. State television devotes the lion share of the editorial coverage to the activities of the president and his associates.

The above indicates indeed a relation between the procedural violations in the course of the respective elections, and the freedom of the media to cover these elections. This, in turn, may imply that the situation of the media is indicative for the progress towards a democratic state.

Regulatory framework for the media

The observed interference in the media in Azerbaijan contravenes the provisions of the law on the mass media. In fact, Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan all have a media law and a constitution which state freedom of speech and deem censorship impermissible. The incorporated exceptions - protection of state security, social order, mores of society, slander etc. - can apparently be subject to opportunistic interpretations.

The legal and regulatory framework for the media coverage of the elections in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan provided free access for all parties/candidates. The broadcast media in the three republics made a clear attempt to allocate the free time equally. Although this attempt at fairness is laudable, the hours of political advertising on television and radio daily (particularly in Georgia and Azerbaijan) may have saturated the audience and induced fatigue, rather than contribute to viewers enlightenment. It is, therefore, recommendable to limit the free time to perhaps one hour a day in future elections.

The free space in the state-owned newspapers was allocated equally in Armenia and Georgia, yet not in Azerbaijan.

The regulations governing the media coverage in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan did not contribute to even and fair reporting. The necessity of balanced coverage in newscasts, documentaries or analytical programmes was not stipulated in any of the guidelines for media coverage. The unbalanced reporting of state-owned outlets combined with the dominant position of government controlled TV, indicated the importance of such guidelines (and, for that matter, the adherence to them).

Financial constraints

The occasional problematic political situation for media outlets in the Transcaucasus is exacerbated by severe structural economic difficulties. The dismal picture of the interrelated problems for the printed press can be summed up in the following examples: the cost of newsprint has become unbearable (as much as \$1,200 per ton in a country where the average wage is \$6); the circulation of newspapers has decreased (from 15,000 to 3,000); there is habitually no alternative to the state controlled printing house; the advertising market is underdeveloped; equipment is often obsolete; and distribution is monopolised by the state, is too expensive and has consequently virtually ceased to exist outside the capital.

The independent broadcasting outlets struggle due to a reduction in energy resources. Moreover, there is a strong connection between the authorities and the energy supply. Furthermore, the number of hours of electricity per day allotted to citizens has diminished; there is scarcity of video, filming and editing equipment; the financial situation is precarious at best; advertising rates are largely symbolic and some potential advertisers are unwilling to advertise since they fear subsequent tax inspection.¹²

In summary, the financial situation of virtually all official and (especially) independent media in the Transcaucasus is catastrophic.

Nature of editorial coverage

In general, the political and economic situation in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan have created a polarised press and a one-sided broadcasting landscape. The print media are either government supported or strongly aligned with opposition parties. In these papers, no priority is given to separating reporting from commentaries, and objectivity is not the most highly prized journalistic virtue. Quality papers, which provide balanced and more or less neutral information, are an exception rather than a rule. Nevertheless, the popularity of such papers as *Rezonansi* in Georgia and *Zerkalo* in Azerbaijan indicate the demand for professional, independent and good-quality newspapers.

None of the state-owned broadcasting media, in all three of the republics, could fulfil the role of a "public service". Radio and television were largely subservient to the authorities. In Armenia and Azerbaijan, this was illustrated by the openly pro-government stance, some blatantly biased programmes and the quantitative dominance of coverage of the activities of the parties and candidates related to the president. Although a parliament decree enacted during the summer of 1995 did stipulate detailed guidelines for the coverage of internal political developments¹³, the situation in Georgia was somewhat different. In the course of the campaign, the free time for parties and candidates consumed most of the daily airtime on the first channel and editorial coverage was reduced to a minimum. Whether this approach is particularly desirable remains debatable. The independent broadcasting media could not (yet) act as a purposeful antidote in Armenia, Georgia or Azerbaijan.

In a country where the circulation of newspapers is low and their distribution outside the capital virtually non-existent, the national television has an increased responsibility in informing the audience. The situation described above therefore was a concern for the monitoring teams.

¹² Greenberg, Paul (1995). *Non-governmental television in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan*. Intermews Network.

¹³ The instructions are outlined in section 13.4 of this report.

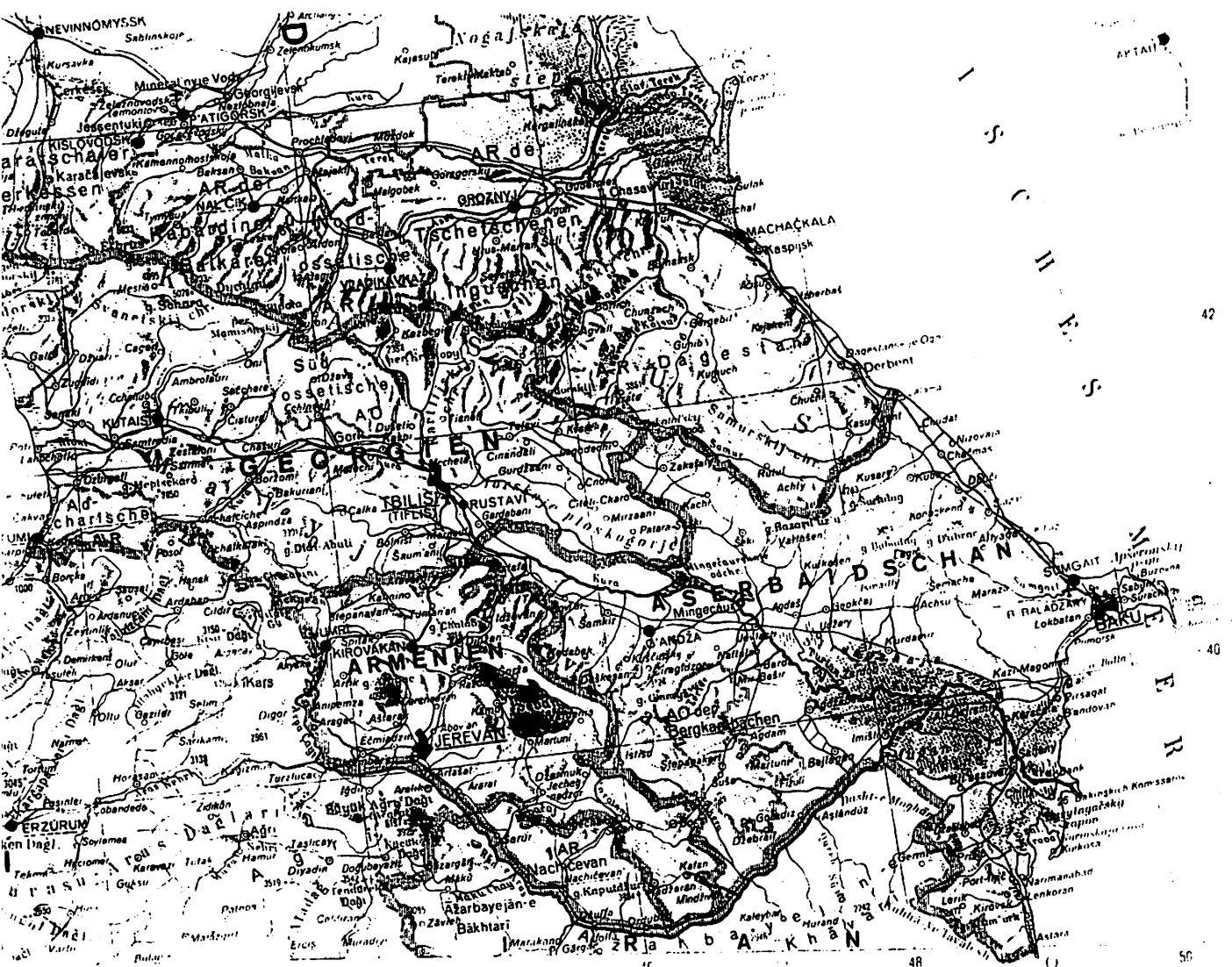
The financial constraints have an influence on the nature of the editorial coverage as well. Firstly, low salaries and lack of liquid assets make media outlets liable to influences from sponsors and concealed advertising. The extent to which this influenced the coverage of the campaign is, however, virtually impossible to determine. Secondly, the low salaries deter many talented would-be journalists from entering the profession.

Another factor influencing the nature of the editorial coverage is the rather deeply institutionalised self-censorship in all three republics. In Azerbaijan, few independent outlets have the courage and determination to argue with the censors or run the risk of reprisals. In Georgia and Armenia, the self-censorship within the state-owned media is due to the remaining control of the authorities. Nevertheless, also independent outlets exercise a certain degree of self-censorship, due to the government monopoly over facilities and the fear of running foul of other influential forces in society.

It is understandable that in the climate described above, independent analysis, investigative journalism, balanced reporting, etc. may be too much to ask. Nevertheless, the monitoring teams met in each of the republics with professional journalists and editors, determined to provide sound coverage of the events influencing the course of their country. With remarkable ingenuity and tenacity, they managed to circumvent some of the problems they face in informing their audience. Such initiatives are not only laudable and promising, they also deserve support.

The elections in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan provided an indication of the democratic calibre of the three Transcaucasian republics and of the attitude of the different governments towards the media. Considering the media proved to be an integral part of the economic and political developments in a country, improvement of their position depends on a delicate transitional process. Ergo, merely economic growth and a stimulating rather than a hindering role of the authorities can guarantee a lasting improvement of the independent working conditions for the media. The intricate yet vital (geo)political, economical, ethnical and social situation in the region without any doubt deserves this.

Annex I - Map of the Transcaucasus



Annex II - Code of ethics of the Yerevan Press Club

We, the journalists of Armenia, bearing in mind the international standards of journalistic ethics, adopt the conditions of this code of professional ethics and are willing to follow it in our work. We call on our colleagues to follow these provisions regardless of their outlets' party affiliation and political stance.

We, united as journalists, endorse the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of receipt and dissemination of information as the basis for our activities. We strive for establishment of free and democratic press, and we are guided by the Code of Professional Ethics, which includes:

The most important ethical principle which journalists should follow is the principle of objectivity - the unprejudiced provision of information about the activities, approaches, and views of both the majority and the minority.

The journalist has the right to choose the way in which information is presented; but he/she must ensure that neither content nor objectivity are negatively affected by the manner of presentation.

The journalist may collect information in the following ways:

- from official sources;
- through journalistic inquiry;
- by purchasing information.

The object of any transaction can only ever be information - never the position of the journalist.

The journalist should oppose extremism and restrictions on civil rights.

The journalist should be aware of the social and political consequences of his activities and bear moral responsibility for them;

The journalist should understand that his professional activity ceases when he/she takes up arms.

The journalist regards the following as incompatible with his/her professionalism:

- libel and slander;
- forgery and concealment of information;
- plagiarism;
- hidden advertising;
- use of professional position, rights, and authority for personal economic gain.

The journalist should respect and protect the professional rights of his colleagues, and respect the rules of open competition.

The journalist should reject any mission which violates one of the above principles.