1 Introduction

The European Institute for the Media (EIM), a non-profit, non-government, policy-oriented research institution, has carried out a mission to monitor media coverage of the Russian parliamentary elections. The mission was partly funded by the European Commission through the Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (Budget line B7-701). Since 1992, the EIM has carried out more than 40 media monitoring missions during parliamentary and presidential elections in countries of east and central Europe and the former Soviet Union. This is the fourth EIM media monitoring mission in Russia. This report remains the sole responsibility of the EIM and reflects only the views of the Institute.

The mission sought to evaluate whether the media provided impartial and balanced coverage of the issues to be addressed and the political choices facing the electorate. Monitoring was carried out from the 28th of November to the 17th of December and included observation of adherence of the authorities and the political parties and blocs to the recognised democratic norms concerning the media.

Monitoring was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. Quantitative analysis measured the amount of time and space devoted to political candidates on five national television channels, twenty national newspapers and of regional media in St. Petersburg, Samara, Yekaterinburg and Vladivostok. The Moscow-based company Russian Research carried out the quantitative analysis under EIM supervision. Qualitative analysis consisted of a series of interviews with representatives and employees of media organisations, regulatory bodies, electoral authorities and political parties/blocs.

The EIM team consisted of the following members:

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Summary of preliminary findings

- The EIM found that coverage of the elections in the most important sections of the Russian media was biased.

- ORT and RTR, state broadcasters with the greatest audience reach in the country, had a particular responsibility to provide impartial and fair information about the political choice on offer to the electorate and did not live up to it. Bias was visible in news programmes and through attacks on political opponents in analytical programmes. In showing coverage which was heavily biased against the Fatherland-All Russia alliance and biased in favour of the pro-government Unity (Yedinstvo or Medved), they failed to live up to the standards set either in Russian law or in international agreements and conventions signed by the leaders of the Russian Federation. ORT devoted more than a quarter of its election news coverage to Unity with 28% and Fatherland-All Russia received half that coverage (14%) and less than the Zhirinovsky Bloc (15%). The tone of coverage of Fatherland-All Russia was overwhelmingly negative, while the tone of coverage of Unity was positive.

- In all, no national commercial broadcaster sought to provide impartial coverage of the elections. TV Centre clearly supported Fatherland-All Russia in large amounts of coverage particularly devoted to Luzhkov. TV 6 was supportive of the government and low on election coverage in general. NTV explained its support of Fatherland-All Russia as being necessary to balance the biased coverage on ORT and RTR, although NTV coverage was considerably more balanced than that of those channels. Still, the overall focus of both state-owned and commercial broadcasters on Unity and Fatherland-All Russia severely limited the coverage of other serious contenders.

- EIM observed a high level of professionalism and sophistication in the technical production and in the variety of programmes on the elections. Political advertising on television was generally clearly marked as such and the quality of production was much higher than has been the case during previous parliamentary elections.

- The focus on smear campaigns conducted by media has been a regular feature of the Russian information sphere for over a year. On the one side were the media controlled by the government and by businessman Boris Berezovsky and on the other those controlled by Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov and media entrepreneur Vladimir Gusinsky. Nevertheless, the “information war” grew fiercer during the election campaign.

- Many print media were also partisan and hidden advertising was once again a common feature of newspaper coverage. Nevertheless, a broader pluralism of opinion was apparent in newspapers which was mainly the result of having a variety of different commercial, political and party sponsors of the print media.

- The regulatory framework for the elections contained many inconsistencies and contradictions which remained unresolved during the campaign. This caused widespread confusion.

- The lack of appreciation of journalistic ethics, and the lack of legal and political support for the protection of journalists and their independence, the weak

financial position of the mass media and its employees all mean that current legal measures, even if implemented, would not be sufficient to guarantee a fair spread of information and analysis about different parties and blocs in Russia.

Professor Dr. Jo Groebel Düsseldorf
March, 2000

2 Political background

Stephen White
Margot Light

2.1 The context of the elections

The 1999 Duma election took place against a background that would ordinarily have been expected to favour parties and candidates opposed to President Yeltsin and his government. National income had declined steadily since 1990, improving slightly in 1997 but then plunging again in August 1998 when Russia defaulted on its international obligations and the rouble dropped sharply against the dollar. Over the year, according to official estimates, more than two-thirds of the population experienced a decline in living standards, and about a third were living below subsistence levels. Russians, according to the National Public Opinion Centre (VTsIOM), were worried more than anything else by high prices, but unemployment and unpaid wages were also widespread concerns. Nor was there much confidence that the Russian government would be able to resolve these difficulties. There were five different prime ministers between March 1998 (when long-serving premier Viktor Chernomyrdin was dropped) and August 1999 (when security chief Vladimir Putin replaced Sergei Stepashin, becoming at the same time Yeltsin's designated successor). Putin, Yeltsin suggested, would be 'able to consolidate society' and to 'ensure the continuation of reform in Russia'. Stepashin, in a newspaper interview after his dismissal, suggested that the real purpose had in fact been to appoint a loyalist who would protect the President and his immediate entourage – widely known as 'The Family' – from the possibility of criminal prosecution over corruption charges.

By the time of the election much had changed, though much remained the same. The President himself, who continued to be affected by periods of ill-health, had the support – VTsIOM suggested - of only eigth per cent of Russians, with 91 per cent against. The overwhelming majority of Russians thought the country's economic situation was 'bad' (50 per cent) or 'very bad' (31 per cent), and few expected an early improvement (12 per cent; 53 per cent thought things would get even worse). Russians, as they came to cast their ballots, were still concerned about rising prices, unemployment and the country's economic difficulties. But by December the Putin government had established a surprisingly strong position, assisted by the premier's apparently decisive action in the North Caucasus, which was itself covered uncritically by the Russian (but not by the foreign) media. Indeed it was the developing crisis, both in the region itself and its implications for the rest of the country, that came to dominate the entire campaign.

The crisis was precipitated by an incursion of Islamic fundamentalists from Chechnya into Dagestan in early August. Russian forces began to retaliate and the Chechens were forced to retreat, but their leader Shamil Basaev promised that they would switch to 'military-political' methods, widely understood as a threat of terrorism. A bomb exploded in the Manezh shopping centre in central Moscow on the night of 31 August, injuring 30 (one died later); an army hostel in Dagestan was bombed in early September, killing 36 servicemen. Further explosions ripped apart two residential blocks in Moscow, killing more than eighty with hundreds more injured. There was another residential explosion in the southern town of Volgodonsk, killing seventeen, in the middle of the month. Under these circumstances there was considerable

popular support for the resumption of hostilities against the breakaway republic in what the Russian government insisted on describing as an 'anti-terrorist operation'. Air strikes were launched against supposed rebel strongholds in late September, and ground forces began to advance across the border. Meanwhile, a range of security measures were taken against resident aliens in other parts of the country, and many thousands were forced to leave Moscow after a re-registration exercise that targeted Caucasians in particular.

As voting took place, federal troops were on the outskirts of Grozny; abroad, Russian spokesmen were rebuffing Western objections to their military actions, insisting that they had every right to restore federal authority on their own territory. Western criticism, indeed, served if anything to strengthen the more assertive, Russia-first approach in foreign policy that had been apparent since Yevgenii Primakov took over the foreign ministry in early 1996. Yeltsin, attending a summit of the OSCE in Istanbul in mid-November, insisted that the West had 'no right to criticise us for Chechnya'. And during a visit to Beijing on the eve of the election he saw fit to 'remind' President Clinton that Russia was still a great power with a 'full arsenal of nuclear arms'. In their joint statement the two presidents insisted on a multipolar world in which the United States could not impose its wishes unilaterally. 'Not since the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall', *Izvestiya* commented on 19 November, had 'Moscow and the West been so far apart'. By contrast, the pre-election period saw a strengthening of relations with the other CIS states, particularly the signing and all but unanimous ratification of a new union treaty with Belarus.

2.2 The election law

Yeltsin, together with his nomination of Putin to the premiership, had announced that the Duma election would take place at the constitutionally proper time, on 19 December. The election law that had been approved in 1993, and which had served as the basis of the December 1995 election, established a mixed system; and it was this mixed system that once again served as the basis of the December 1999 Duma election. Under the terms of the law, half of the Duma's 450 seats would be distributed on the basis of a nation-wide contest between party lists; seats would be awarded on a proportional basis to all that secured at least 5 per cent of the total vote. The other half of the seats would again be allocated to individual constituencies, within each of which the result would be determined by simple majority. The entire exercise, in order to be valid, would need the participation of at least 25 per cent of the registered electorate [Arts 79:2, 80:11].

The elections of 1995 had given rise to some criticism and indeed to legal challenge as only four of the forty-three competing parties and movements had secured representation through the party-list contest. Taken together, their vote accounted for just over half (50.5 per cent) of the total; this meant that nearly half of all those who voted had been denied the opportunity to be represented in the Duma by the party of their choice. It also meant that the four successful parties could share out all the seats among them, securing almost twice as large a share of the party-list seats as their share of the party-list vote would have suggested. The election law that was approved in early June 1999 introduced a number of innovations to take account of these criticisms. One of these was to provide for the representation of parties that had secured less than five per cent of the vote. The precondition was that the parties or movements that had secured more than five per cent had among them secured

less than half of the total party-list vote. Under the new law, parties or movements that had secured at least three per cent would be successively added to the allocation of seats in such circumstances. The allocation would start with those that had come closest to the threshold, until the total vote for all the parties represented reached at least 50 per cent of the total party-list vote [Article 80(4)]. Similarly, if a single party took more than 50 per cent of the national party-list vote and no other party reached five per cent, the party with the second largest total would be added to the allocation of seats [Article 80(5)]. There would, in other words, be a 'floating' rather than a fixed threshold.

There were several other new features. Candidates and parties, for instance, were allowed to register their candidacies, not only by collecting signatures in their support, but also by paying a deposit. For an individual, the deposit was set to be a thousand times the minimum wage; for a party, twenty-five times the minimum wage, or about $82,000 at the prevailing rate of exchange [Art. 64(4)]. Deposits would be returned if individual candidates secured at least five per cent of the vote in their constituency, and if parties won at least three per cent nationally, but would otherwise be forfeit [Art. 64(9)]. There would, *Izvestiya* predicted on 14 December, be at least twenty bankrupted parties and 'thousands' of ruined candidates after the elections as a result of these new provisions. Nominations could also be made, as in the past, by collecting the signatures of electors: at least one per cent of the registered electorate, in the case of a candidate standing in an individual constituency. And at least 200,000, with not more than 14 per cent from any one region of the federation, in the case of a national party list [Arts. 43(1 and 2)].

In another innovation candidates were obliged to declare any court sentence they had not completely discharged, and had to make clear if they had foreign citizenship (although neither was necessarily an obstacle to their candidature) [Arts. 37(8) and 40(4)]. Candidates were also obliged to make a public statement about their income, in the form of a tax return for the previous year, and their property [Art. 45(3)]; this, together with the declaration about their legal record, was intended to reduce if not eliminate the risk that criminal elements would be able to secure election and accordingly claim immunity from prosecution . The law, at the same time, gave no guidance on the basis on which 'substantial' violations would be distinguished from less important violations [Art. 47(6)]. Yabloko's leader Grigorii Yavlinsky, for instance, was pardoned for a failure to report a part of his income, while others were not so fortunate – and this meant that decisions taken on this basis could appear arbitrary.

The 1999 election law, in fact, made almost no direct reference to parties. Under the terms of the law, the contest would take place between electoral associations (a political party or movement registered with the Ministry of Justice at least a year before polling day, which had the explicit purpose of contesting elections) and electoral blocs, which were temporary groupings of two or more electoral associations. In 1995 there had been 273 such associations, prompting fears that Russia might set a 'world record for the number of electoral associations per head of population'. In 1999, following a re-registration exercise, there were rather fewer – 139. All of these could nominate up to 18 candidates on the federal part of their list, including their three most important candidates, and not more than 270 altogether including those that had been nominated to regional sections of their list. Candidates on the national list could be nominated, in addition, for a single-mandate constituency.

The Duma, under the 1993 Russian Constitution, enjoys considerable powers, although it is clearly subordinate to the powerful Presidency. It is the Duma, first of all, that approves candidates for the prime ministership on the nomination of the

President. If it fails to do so three times in a row the President is obliged to appoint his own candidate, dissolve the Duma, and call fresh elections. The Duma, equally, can express its lack of confidence in the government as a whole; if it does so twice within three months the President is obliged to announce the resignation of the government or the dissolution of the Duma itself. Both of these powers were relevant to the struggle for influence that took place between President and parliament over the months that preceded the December 1999 election. For the first year after it has been elected, the Duma cannot be dissolved because of a no-confidence vote. Neither the President in the last six months of his term of office, nor an Acting President, can dissolve it. The Duma, in practice, is for the most part a lawmaking body; its decisions have to be confirmed by the Federation Council and by the President, but it can override any objections provided a two-thirds majority are in favour of doing so. For many of the parties that took part in the election, particularly those were broadly in opposition to the Kremlin, it was time to shift even more power into the hands of the Duma and in particular to give it a greater degree of influence over the composition and conduct of the Russian government.

2.3 The parties and their programmes

Political parties had been legalised towards the end of the Soviet period, when in March 1990 the Communist Party's political monopoly was removed from Article 6 of the Constitution. In October 1990 a new law on public organisations was adopted under which parties could be registered with the Ministry of Justice provided they had at least five thousand members and satisfied a number of other procedural requirements. The USSR had, in fact, become a multiparty society even before the law had been adopted, and the early post-communist years saw the formation of hundreds more – many of them with a tiny membership and a short life dominated by splits and recriminations. The Communist Party, which had been suspended after the attempted coup in August 1991 and then banned the following November, was allowed to reconstitute itself following a decision of the Constitutional Court in late 1992. It remained by far the most substantial of the parties in terms of membership and organisation. Some, indeed, held that it was Russia's *only* political party in the terms in which a party would have been understood in the West.

Political parties were still weakly articulated by the time of the 1999 Duma election. They were, for instance, the most distrusted of all public institutions, according to VTsIOM polls. They continued to appear and disappear with alarming rapidity, and voters (with the partial exception of Communist voters) displayed little long-term attachment. There was also a much greater tendency than in Western countries for voters to split their ticket, favouring one party in the national party-list contest but another (or an independent) in their local constituency. Russian parties were typically centred on an individual leader, or a small group of leaders: Yabloko, for instance, was identified with its leader Grigorii Yavlinsky (the party name incorporated the first two letters of his surname), and the Liberal Democrats with their flamboyant standard-bearer Vladimir Zhirinovsky. Some of the parties that had taken part in the 1995 election were known simply as the 'bloc of' a particular leader, and the same was true in 1999: there was the Zhirinovsky Bloc, and the Bloc of General Nikolaev and Academician Fedorov. Many more avoided the word 'party' altogether in their title, reflecting the long period of Soviet rule during which there had been a single party that had clearly abused its position. The weakness of Russian parties also

reflected a political system that gave few incentives to win a parliamentary majority, as it was the President who formed any new government rather than the Duma itself.

Russian parties represented a spectrum of opinion, although it was difficult to place them in conventional left-right terms. The Union of Right-wing Forces (Soyuz pravykh sil, or SPS), however, identified itself explicitly with the (i) *political right*. It was formed in late August 1999; its leaders were the former prime-minister Sergei Kirienko, former deputy premier and Nizhnii Novgorod governor Boris Nemtsov, and the leader of Common Cause, businesswoman Irina Khakamada. The SPS drew also upon organisational skills of reformer Anatolii Chubais (associated with the programme of privatisation, and now head of the electricity industry), and former acting prime minister Yegor Gaidar, who had led his Russia's Democratic Choice party into the 1995 election. The SPS, in its programme, stood for the 'values of a free society', and for a 'European capitalism' in Russia. Its other priorities were private property, public order, the targeting of social benefits to those who really needed them, and the separation of business and government as it was the market itself that would guarantee development and prosperity. The party's full economic programme, a document of over 1300 pages, was intended to provide the guidelines for a rather longer period of government. It was handed over to prime-minister Putin at a well-publicised meeting shortly before the election, at which the premier endorsed substantial parts of it; Kremlin strategists were apparently determined to extend their support to the SPS so as to ensure that it reached the five per cent threshold. The SPS, in turn, gave unstinting support to the government's policy in Chechnya.

Yabloko (Apple) was another party that identified itself as 'democratic', or broadly supportive of the political and economic reforms that had taken place since 1991. It aimed, however, to provide a 'democratic opposition to the current regime', and emphasised the respects in which it stood for a different set of values and policies. Yabloko promised to 'clear corrupt elements out of the state apparatus' and replace them with 'honest professionals, ready to look after the public good'. In the economy, there would be a greater emphasis upon the state as the 'main representative of national interests', but taxes would also be reduced and the shadow economy would be reduced if not eliminated. Social benefits would be improved, including health, education, pensions and a 'happy childhood for all whatever their parental income'. Russia would meanwhile return to a worthy place among the nations, united with Belarus in a treaty that was open for the other former Soviet republics, and integrated into the world economy but on the basis of Russia's own interests and without the 'shameful dependence on the IMF' that had developed in recent years. Yabloko's list was headed by Yavlinsky, the party's long-standing leader and its presidential candidate in 1996; second place went to former prime minister Sergei Stepashin, who announced his adhesion in late August and stood, in addition, in a St Petersburg constituency (this meant, some suggested, that 'Yabloko' should now become 'Yasloko').

The (ii) *'centrist' parties* were those that broadly supported the Kremlin, and the policies of the Putin government. Our Home is Russia (Nash dom – Rossiya, or NDR) was associated with former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, and had originally been formed in 1995 to enable him to campaign for a pro-government majority in the Duma election of that year (in the end it took a disappointing 10 per cent of the party-list vote). The second position on its list was held by the youthful leader of its Duma fraction, Vladimir Ryzhkov. NDR promised a 'new level of responsibility of the state before society', including a balanced budget and the prompt payment of social benefits. There would also be an emphasis on job creation, and a programme of legislation that would restore the faith of domestic and foreign investors; there would be a campaign against crime and corruption, and a

constitutional reform that would increase the role of parliament. Chernomyrdin, speaking to the NDR congress in August, declared that the movement had acquired a 'new inspiration', and the party enjoyed considerable resources as the historic 'party of power' with close ties through Chernomyrdin to the gas industry. But its rationale had become doubtful after Chernomyrdin left the government in the spring of 1998, and the party could thereafter present itself as no more than a 'party of influence on power'.

The most intriguing of the new parties was the Inter-regional Electoral Association 'Unity' (Yedinstvo), known also as Medved' (Bear). Unity had come into existence in late September as a movement of governors through which the Kremlin could seek to influence the composition of the new Duma in its favour. The new grouping was evidently intended to counter the support that was being enjoyed by the oppositional coalition, Fatherland-All Russia; it was also thought to enjoy the support of financier and Kremlin insider Boris Berezovsky. For *Segodnya*, Unity was simply an 'anti-Fatherland bloc, a sort of disposable kamikaze party, whose one and only task [was] not to win the elections, but to prevent disagreeable political groups from going so'; for *Kommersant* it was the 'Kremlin's final attempt to get a successful "party of power" of its own'. The party's list was headed by emergencies minister Sergei Shoigu, who enjoyed numerous opportunities to appear on the television screen in connection with his official duties (many of which, for example, looking after refugees, only became the business of his ministry during the election campaign). The other leading positions went to Alexander Karelin, an Olympic wrestling champion, and Alexander Gurov, former head of the organised crime division of the interior ministry. For Shoigu, Unity was 'not a political party' but an 'association of sensible people, fed up with seeing others decide their fate'. Its ideology, he said, was actually 'the absence of ideology'. Was Unity, for instance, in favour of capitalism or of socialism? They were, it seemed, in favour of a 'normal society with a normal mixed economy, and guaranteed rights and freedoms'. Unity did not campaign on the basis of a programme. Instead it offered the government complete support. For what mattered was that Unity was very closely associated with the Putin government. Putin himself declared that 'as a citizen' he would be voting for it (its ratings immediately improved), and Unity itself accepted that it might be called 'the party of Putin'.

The parties that were (iii) ranged on the *left-centre* were represented above all by another new grouping, Fatherland – All Russia (Otechestvo – Vsya Rossiya, or OVR). OVR was also an association that had no other purpose than to fight the coming elections, but it drew upon two main and continuing components: the Fatherland party that had been founded in late 1998 by Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, and a movement of governors and regional elites known as All Russia. Its list was headed by former prime minister and foreign secretary Yevgenii Primakov, followed by Luzhkov and St Petersburg governor Vladimir Yakovlev; fourth place went to Yekaterina Lakhova, leader of 'Women of Russia' (which nonetheless contested the election independently because it had been offered too few well-placed positions on the OVR list). OVR, according to its programme, was a party that favoured a strong state, which alone could establish conditions for the development of the whole society and of its individual members. OVR also favoured a 'socially oriented market economy', in which particular attention would be paid to the 'real sector' (or productive sector) and the development of domestic producers. Like others, they promised the timely payment of social benefits, and a determined onslaught upon terrorism and organised crime. OVR proclaimed itself 'neither on the right nor on the left', and it opposed 'pseudoliberal reforms' and a 'return to the totalitarian past' equally.

The parties of (iv) the *orthodox left* included, most notably, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. The list was headed by the party's long-term leader, Gennadii Zyuganov, by the Speaker of the Duma Gennadii Seleznev, and by Vasilii Starodubtsev, a farm manager who had taken part in the attempted coup of August 1991. The fourth position was held by Aman-Geldy Tuleev, governor of the Kemerovo region and another former presidential candidate who had founded his own Revival and Unity Movement in June. The CPRF, however, failed to enlist the parties that had previously supported it, including the Agrarian Party, led by Mikhail Lapshin (who joined OVR's federal list), and the Movement in Support of the Army, Military Science and the Defence Industry, led by Duma deputy Viktor Ilyukhin (which contested the election independently). In addition, the leader of the Spiritual Heritage movement, Aleksei Podberezkin, was expelled from the Communist faction in the Duma on 16 August on the grounds that he was planning to advance a separate list in the election, and he eventually did so. The Communist ideal, according to their programme, was a 'society that harmoniously combined social justice with dynamic economic development'. This meant the establishment of a 'renewed socialist system', including a 'powerful public sector of the economy' that would sustain social benefits, education, culture and science. But it also meant a 'spiritual revival', and a strengthening of the state itself. Unlike in 1995, the CPRF did not propose the wholesale re-nationalisation of the economy.

There were also (v) *nationalist parties*, including Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party, which had been the surprise winner of the party-list contest in 1993 and finished second in 1995. The Liberal Democrats were nationalist and anti-Western in their foreign policy, strongly in favour of the restoration of federal control in Chechnya, and pro-market but also protectionist in their economic strategy. They called for the USSR to be restored within its earlier boundaries or 'ideally' the boundaries the Russian Empire had enjoyed after the Crimean War, including Finland, the Baltic states, and Alaska. The Liberal Democrats were well financed, had a national network of activists, and enjoyed a high level of support within the armed forces; but they owed most to their leader, a charismatic campaigner who successfully identified the problems of ordinary Russians and suggested simplistic ways of dealing with them, like shooting the leaders of organised crime. In spite of their oppositional rhetoric, the LDPR tended in practice to support the government in the Duma: they voted in favour of the budget and prime ministerial nominations, and opposed the attempt that was made in the spring of 1999 to initiate the impeachment of President Yeltsin. The LDPR's ratings had certainly sagged since the last election; but it regularly did better than the opinion polls suggested, and the Kremlin had every reason to support it so that another broadly pro-government fraction entered the new Duma, either under its own auspices or (as it turned out) as the 'Zhirinovsky bloc'.

In all, 26 blocs were listed on the ballot paper in the federal-list competition, with a total of 3736 candidates on their lists; a further 2300 sought election as independent or party-sponsored candidates in single member constituencies. There was a modest sensation in mid-October when the Central Electoral Commission ruled that two of the Liberal Democrats' top three list candidates were ineligible, having failed to declare some of their assets (Zhirinovsky himself had 'forgotten' his Volga and Mercedes). Zhirinovsky, however, was able to create and register a new 'Zhirinovsky bloc' on the basis of three other parties headed by loyalists that had prudently been registered the previous year. Of the 35 electoral blocs and associations that had sought to register, the Central Electoral Commission had originally registered 28; but the right-wing nationalist movement 'Spas' was removed when it was found that most of its regional sections had existed only on paper when the party itself was registered with the Ministry of Justice. The 'Cedar' Ecological Party had to withdraw under the rules when two of its leading three candidates decided to stand for other parties.

2.4 The parties and the campaign

Overall, EIM interviews revealed little criticism of the formal aspects of the electoral campaign. Free time, in the view of the party representatives spoken to, had been fairly distributed; the Central Electoral Commission had operated conscientiously, or even helpfully. But there were repeated criticisms of the electoral law itself, particularly of the provision in Article 55:6 that bans party-sponsored candidates standing in single-mandate constituencies and also in their party's federal list from taking part in the national media campaign. Equally, there was too much ambiguity about the kind of failure to report income and property that could properly disqualify candidates from the campaign.

Beyond the formal provisions, nearly all parties and movements – particularly the smaller ones – complained about the expense of political advertising, particularly on television. Apart from Unity and Yabloko, most parties complained that larger parties with connections to the major financial-industrial groups, or with the government itself, or with regional governors, had the greatest access to the media. Moreover, the negative campaign that was waged in the media between those close to the Kremlin and OVR dominated the campaign and effectively squeezed other parties out of the media. The Communist Party, for example, was effectively marginalised by the media. There were many complaints about the unethical nature of this 'information war' and its exploitation of the opportunities that the electoral law appeared to afford. Many parties, and particularly the smaller ones, stood to lose substantial sums of money if they secured less than two per cent of the party-list vote and were therefore obliged, under article 67(5) of the election law, to pay back the entire cost of their free time and space in the media.

2.5 The results

The final results took some time to emerge, but from an early stage on election night it was apparent that pro-Kremlin parties – and particularly Yedinstvo – had performed much better than expected (see Table). The winner, as in 1995, was the Communist Party, and with a larger share of the vote. But Unity followed closely and secured almost as many party-list seats in the new Duma. Fatherland-All Russia came third, but with a smaller share of the vote than the polls had predicted, and the Union of Right-wing Forces did rather better than expected, helped (it was thought) by an energetic and imaginative campaign as well as the implicit support of the prime minister. Yabloko failed to achieve the breakthrough it had hoped for (indeed its vote was slightly down on its 1995 result); Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democrats came in fifth with scarcely more than half of its 1995 vote but still above the five per cent threshold. The six parties that reached the threshold accounted, among them, for 81.4 per cent of the party-list vote, a result that gave few grounds for challenging the representivity of the result. Our Home is Russia took just 1.2 per cent, fewer than had voted against all the parties on the ballot (3.3 per cent); a further 1.2 per cent cast invalid ballots. Turnout, at 60.1 per cent, was slightly down on 1995 and still more so on the level of turnout that had been achieved in the presidential elections of 1996.

Parties were also able to sponsor candidates in the single-mandate constituencies, but not all of them did so. As in previous elections, independents - some of whom had a well-known party affiliation but who preferred to stand on this basis – were

more successful than any of the parties, winning close to half of all the seats available. Even when the results from the party-list election were added, independents were still more numerous than all but one of the parties. Few of them, however, were expected to remain independent in the new Duma, and the pro-government parties were normally in a position to offer them the most substantial inducements for their support. The outcome was a new Duma that was expected to be much more supportive of the new prime minister and his policies: *Izvestiya*, for instance, estimated that half of the new Duma would be relatively 'loyal'. Much, however, depended on the independents, and as the year ended they were being energetically courted by both sides.

TABLE

The December 1999 Duma election: final results

	Party list vote (%)	Party list seats	Constituency seats	Total seats
Communists	24.3	67	47	114
Unity	23.3	64	9	73
Fatherland-All Russia	13.3	37	29	66
Union of Right-Wing Forces	8.5	24	5	29
Zhirinovsky Bloc	6.0	17	0	17
Yabloko	5.9	16	4	20
Other parties	15.3	0	17	17
Against all	3.3			
Independents	-	-	105	105

3 Regulatory framework

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3.1 The Russian Constitution

The Russian Constitution was adopted by national referendum on 12 December 1993. Article 29 states that: "everyone has the right to freely seek, obtain, transmit, produce and disseminate information by any legal method". Article 32 states that: "citizens of the Russian Federation shall have the right to participate in the administration of the affairs of the state both directly and through their representatives. Citizens of the Russian Federation shall have the right to elect and to be elected to bodies of state governance and to organs of local self-government, as well as take part in a referendum. Citizens who have been found by a court of law to be under special disability, and also citizens placed in detention under a court verdict, shall not have the right to elect or to be elected."

3.2 Mass media law

3.2.1 Federal statutory legislation

Since the adoption of the Media Statute by the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation in 1991 more than thirty statutes and dozens of decrees were put into force in Russia that affect the mass media. Below is a basic enumeration of the applicable federal statutes.[1]

The Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, which came into force 1 January 1997 and replaced the previous Criminal Code of 1962, defines slander as "dissemination of false information which defames other persons" (Article 129). The Code introduced for the first time into Russian law criminal liability for offences related to the audio-visual sector and new media. Article 146 of the Code stipulates that if an abuse of copyright or neighbouring rights, as well as plagiarism inflict substantial damages, violators are subject to either fines from 200 to 400 minimum monthly wages (in November 1999 that amounted to approximately USD 1,300 to 2,600), forced labour of 180 to 240 hours, or a jail term of up to two years.

Article 151 of the 1995 Civil Code and Article 43 of the Statute on the Mass Media lay the responsibility for the correctness of the information with the defendant (i.e. the journalist or the media outlet). This has created problems for many media outlets, which have to prove the accuracy of the allegations in order to avoid liability.

The Statute on the Mass Media was adopted by the legislature of the Russian Federation on 27 December 1991 and went into force on 8 February 1992. It reinforces the inadmissibility of censorship and includes basic provisions on freedom of information, and on the activity to seek, obtain, produce, and disseminate information, on the possibilities to found, own, use, and manage media as well as prepare, acquire, and operate technical devices required for the functioning of media.

1 For the texts of the relevant legislation in Russian, see the web-site of the Moscow Media Law and Policy Center www.medialaw.ru

Article 18 of the Statute states that founders of media outlets shall not interfere in editorial practice. An exception applies if the agreement, which the founder and the editorial staff shall execute to regulate their relation, expressly allows interference for the case in question.

In today's practice, however, (unlike at the time of the Statute's adoption) founders are also major sponsors of the print media, which leads to violations of this provision. In some cases, the editor-in-chief, the founder (co-founder), and the main shareholder is the same person.[2] In other cases, the financial dependence of media outlets on their sponsor turns editorial independence into a distant goal. Finally, state bodies actively interfere in the activity of the mass media that they found or co-found. The Statute on Mass Media allows private broadcasting and prohibits ownership (founding) of mass media by foreign citizens — but not by foreign companies.
The Statute on State Secrets was adopted by the parliament on 21 July 1993. The statute defines a state secret as "... information protected by the state in the area of defence, foreign policy, the economy, intelligence, counter-intelligence and the activity of operational-criminal investigations, the dissemination of which can damage the security of the Russian Federation." It makes the disclosure of state secrets subject to penalties.

The 1994 Federal Statute on the Coverage of the Activities of State Agencies in the State Media is of high importance due to the fact that a major slice of the mass media in Russia belongs to state bodies of different levels. The statute specifies a number of state functions that the relevant state media must broadcast. They are appeals and statements made by the President of the Russian Federation, the Council of the Federation, the State Duma, the Duma deputies, and the government; the opening of the first official sessions of the houses of the parliament and the new government; and the inauguration of the President.

The Federal Statute on Communication was adopted by the State Duma on 20 January 1995. The Statute establishes the legal basis for activities conducted in the area of communications, confers upon the organs of state power the authority to regulate such activities, and determines the rights and obligations of physical as well as legal entities participating in, or availing themselves of, the services of communication. It regulates the procedures for broadcasting stations to obtain a license to transmit their signals. The statute provides for the representatives of the state "to have priority use… of any network and means of communication irrespective of their affiliation or form of property".

The Federal Statute on Information, Informatisation, and Protection of Information was adopted by the State Duma on 25 January 1995 and came into force on 20 February the same year. The statute is important since it defines many relevant categories and tasks connected with information. It deals mainly with the governmental rights on possession and storage of information, but also has provisions for access to data and information.

The Federal Statute on Advertising was adopted by the State Duma on 14 June 1995 and came into force in July 1995. The Statute defines advertising and legal subjects in this field and places emphasis on terms such as "authenticity," "conscientiousness" and "decency" in advertising. It determines the peculiarities of various forms of advertising and suggests instruments for the governmental and public control of advertising. By amendment, the ban on commercials for liquor and tobacco products was introduced on 1 January 1996.

2 Post-Soviet Media Law and Policy Newsletter, Issue 32, 5 September 1996, supplement p. 7.

The Federal Statute on the State Support of the Mass Media and Book Publishing was adopted by the State Duma on 18 October 1995 and came into force on 1 January 1996, in conjunction with a number of amendments to the existing tax and customs regulations. The amendments provide tax and other relief to the media without distinguishing between state-run and private publications, publishers, news agencies, or broadcasting entities. Erotic and advertising publications and programmes are excluded from the benefits. Media organisations that produce and distribute publications, books, and other products related to education, science, and culture are exempted from VAT and their profits not taxed by the federal authorities. Other federal tax and customs benefits, reduced rates for the rent of offices (if federal property), and lower communication rates are envisaged in the statute.

In 1998 the State Duma adopted a package of statutes to extend till January of 2002 the statute on state support of the mass media in Russia. The statutes were supported by all factions in the Duma and were adopted by an overwhelming majority of the deputies. The statutes extend for another three years the Statute On State Support to the Mass Media and Book Publishing in the Russian Federation which was to expire on 1 January 1999. Despite an acute economic crisis in Russia the President signed the law into action after it had passed parliament. With the deteriorating financial infrastructure and a rapidly shrinking advertising market the broadcasters and publishers more heavily than before depend on the government provided uniform tax and customs relief, reduced electricity and communications tariffs, low charges for the rent of the state property — all provided by the current statutes. According to the explanatory memorandum that accompanies the bills the statutes have slowed the decrease of the share of the informational publications and programs among the mass media and the decline in book printing.

The Federal Statute on Participation in International Exchange of Information adopted by the State Duma on 5 June 1996 and signed by the President of Russia on 4 July 1996 is the basic statute that regulates issues of international exchange of information, including mass information. The statute aims to secure effective participation and a strong position of Russia in the international information infrastructure. It lists as responsibilities of the government to provide the subjects of the Federation with information from abroad, to update and protect information resources (data banks, archives, etc.), introduce modern technologies, and facilitate exchange of information across national borders. According to the Statute, export of mass information documented in material and identifiable form from the Russian Federation shall not be limited. The Statute confers upon several governmental institutions specific rights to control different aspects of international exchange of information under the overall supervision of the Committee on Informatisation Policy at the office of the President of the Russian Federation. The Statute introduces licensing of international information exchange activities in the two cases where state information resources are exported from Russia and where the state pays for the information imported into Russia to supply national data banks.

On 16 September 1998, the Russian Parliament adopted the Statute on Licensing of Certain Types of Activities. From the moment of its entering into force, all legal acts of licensing of any types of activities to be adopted by the Parliament or by the Government shall correspond to this act. The statute enumerates activities on Russian territory, for which the license is needed. These activities include: television and radio (sound) broadcasting; broadcasting of additional information; provision of services in the field of informational enciphering; manufacture and distribution (except retail trade) of any phonograms and audio-visual products; public demonstration in cinema of any audio-visual products (exhibition of films).

The main provisions of the Act are as follows:

- the maximum amount of the licensee fee cannot be more than equivalent of 10 minimum monthly wages (approximately USD 30 as of November 1999)
- the term of license cannot be less than 3 years, unless the license seeker asks for a shorter term;
- the request for issuing of a license shall be reviewed within 30 days (or less) from the moment of the official presenting of the request;
- the licensing bodies shall list united registers of issued licenses, and those registers shall be open to the public;
- the licensing bodies can suspend the implementation of a license, if there is a violation of the conditions (clauses) of the license, which damages health, public morals or interests and state security;
- the license can be annulled by the court upon a petition of the controlling governmental body; reasons of annulment are: (a) presenting false information in the claim for issuing of the license; (b) the repeated or gross violation of clauses of the license; (c) illegal decision of the state body on issuing of the license.

Russian experts note that this statute is necessary for an effective business in Russia, because many current governmental decisions on licensing of certain types of activities are in contradiction to federal statutes and with each other. The act strictly limits any kind of arbitrariness of government bodies and its officials responsible for licensing procedure. This act will stand in for the still not adopted Broadcasting Act (see below), which, once in place, will regulate the procedure of licensing in the broadcasting sphere in Russia.

3.2.2 Major Bills

The Russian legislative framework for the media still lacks a Statute on Television and Radio Broadcasting. Work on it started more than six years ago, in spring 1993. Parliament adopted a draft act on 12 May 1995, but it was vetoed by President Yeltsin. The new parliament (elected in December 1995) sought to overcome the veto in March 1996 (by approving an earlier edition), yet the Federation Council of the Russian parliament rejected the draft on 10 April 1996, even though the Council had approved it once before. On 3 September 1997 the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (the lower house of the parliament) adopted in the first reading a new Bill “on Television and Radio Broadcasting”. In 1998 the parliament was working on amendments to the bill. The bill will probably go to the second reading in 2000.

On 3 September 1997, the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation adopted in the first reading the Bill on the Right of Information, which had been submitted by the President of Russia. The act guarantees to everyone the freedom to seek, receive and impart information. State departments and bodies of self-government shall provide for free information related to the rights and liberties of the applicants within 30 days after their request. In case the department does not possess the information requested, they shall pass on within seven days directions as to where such information is held. If the requested document is classified as secret, those parts which are not secret shall be provided. In 1998, amendments to the bill were discussed in the parliament, and the second reading is planned for 2000.

3.2.3 Local statuary legislation

In addition to federal statutes and decrees, there is an array of local legislation that governs the press in Russia. All 89 subjects of the Federation have the constitutional right to issue statutes regulating different areas under their jurisdiction. Local legislation on the mass media deals with the following issues:

- additional subsidies to the local media: relief from local taxes, etc.,
- campaign regulation during local elections,
- regulation of pornography and erotic publications and programs,
- broadcasting and cable.

For example, on January 28, 1998 the Statute of the City of Moscow "On cable television in City of Moscow" was adopted. It determines basic principles of the functioning of cable television in Moscow, the order and operating conditions of cable systems and an order of a protection from illegal operations and encroachments in the sphere of cable television. The Statute consists of 28 Articles and 8 Chapters. The Articles of the Statute do not only establish the basic principles of regulation of cable television in City of Moscow but determine the conditions of managing, production, and distribution of audio-visual services. Chapter 3 of the Statute is devoted to the regulation of relations between the proprietors of cable networks, products, and services, the consumers of the services, and the cable television studios.

In a number of cases local legislation contradicts federal legislation, that creating an additional problem for establishing the rule of law in Russia.

3.3 Legislation of the executive branch

The Ministry for the Press, Television and Radio Broadcasting and Mass Communications (formerly Federal Service of Television and Radio Broadcasting, or FSTR) is a governmental agency that supervises the mass media in the country. Its chair is appointed by the President. It was established by Decree of the President No. 885 of 6 July 1999. The statute of the Ministry was approved by the Government on 10 September 1999. The Ministry has territorial administrations in the key areas of Russia. It is authorised to license broadcasters. It has the authority to issue warnings to media outlets for misuse of the freedom of the press in conformity with Art.16 of the Statute on the Mass Media, which says:
"Repeated breaches by editorial office, in the course of 12 months, of the requirements of Article 4 of the present Statute, concerning which the registering agency or the RF Ministry of the Press and Information has served written warnings on founder and/or editorial office (editor in chief), or failure to abide by court order on suspension of mass medium activity shall be grounds for termination by court order of mass medium activity."

On 26 June 1999 the Government of the Russian Federation adopted the Decree "On competitions on obtaining of the broadcasting right and on development the recent radio-frequency channel for broadcasting" which set a new procedure of licensing in Russia. From that time on obtaining the broadcasting license and license in field of the communication for broadcasting had to be done on a competitive basis in the capitals of the subject of the Russian Federation and in cities with a population of more than 200,000 people. What is now the Ministry for the Press, Television and Radio Broadcasting and Mass Communications must make the decision about the conditions of the competition and the information announcement is published in the

mass media no later than 60 days prior to the competition. In order to hold the competition and the summation of the results of the competition, the Federal Broadcasting Competition Committee (FKK) was established -- 9 to 12 in number.

Legal entities and registered employers must take part in the competition. Each participant of the competition pays a competition fee (no more than two per cent of the fixed broadcasting rights fee) and will also submit an application and all the necessary documents to FKK. The numerical strength and the grand total of the competition must be published in the mass media. FKK must award the winner of the competition to that participant which produced the best broadcasting concept and economic substantiation of the concept. The Ministry and the State Telecommunications Committee issue the broadcasting license and license in the field of communication for broadcasting to the winner of the competition if they will pay for the broadcasting rights fee within 10 banking days from the day of the closure of the competition.

The executive is not always formally involved in the licensing procedure. For example, national Channel 5 was taken by the Decree of the President from the authority of St. Petersburg state TV company and allotted to a VGTRK state company to start Kultura-TV (Culture) channel, which has been broadcasting since 1 November 1997.

The State Committee on Telecommunications (*Goskomtelekom*), before 1997 — Ministry of Communication, has formed two bodies which are responsible for frequency allocation. The State Commission on Radio Frequencies designates specific bands of the spectrum for the use of specific services. The State Inspection of Electrical Communication is responsible for spectrum management.

The Russian Federation Government's Ordinance of 3 June 1998 No. 564 on Endorsing the Regulation on Licensing Activity in International Information Exchange was issued in accordance with Article 18 of the Statute on Participation in International Exchange of Information, and defines in what ways licensing activity in international information exchange is to be carried out by legal entities as well as by individuals engaged in business activity without forming a legal entity. The object of licensing activity in international information exchange is to prevent state information resources from being illegally exported out of the territory of the Russian Federation and to exercise state regulation of exportation of documented information. Subject to licensing are such activities (operations and services) in international information exchange that may result either in exporting state information resources or in importing documented information to supplement state information resources if funded from the federal budget or the budgets of the subjects of the Russian Federation. The concrete procedure of licensing is defined in the act.

The Russian Federation Government's Ordinance of 6 August 1998 No. 895 on Endorsing the Regulation on Payment for Uses of Radio-Frequency Spectrum in the Russian Federation establishes major principles and general conditions of payment for the use of radio-frequency spectrum and for the allocation of radio-frequency channels for all organisations irrespective of their ownership form. Its rules also apply to individual entrepreneurs who use radio-electronic hardware on the territory of the Russian Federation for commercial purposes in order to render communications services as provided for by the Russian Federation Government's Ordinance of 2 June 1998 No. 552 "on Introducing Charges for Use of the Radio-frequency Spectrum". According to the act, the radio-frequency spectrum is an exclusive state resource. Charges for use of the radio-frequency spectrum shall be set individually for each user permit. The transfer of radio-frequency spectrum as

property or perpetuity to individual entrepreneurs or to organisations is prohibited irrespective of the ownership form.[3]

In December 1998, the Federal Service on Television and Radio Broadcasting (FSTR) of the Russian Federation issued two decrees directed at introducing strict control over operations of the broadcasting companies. The first was on strengthening state control over broadcasters' compliance with the legislation of the Russian Federation relating to television and radio broadcasting, mass media and conditions of the broadcasting licenses. The new form of control entails that the Department of State Inspection on TV and Radio Broadcasting of the FSTR will prepare a warning to broadcasting companies in cases of violations of national legislation on mass media and broadcasting license conditions. In case of repeated violations this department shall issue a warning on license suspension or annulment. The Department also prepares writs for law suits if false data is used in license applications, license conditions are repeatedly violated, or a license was issued by mistake. A broadcasting company can be deprived of its license in case the broadcasting format, the total advertising time, or other license conditions were changed without re-registration of the license. Another Decree on the inclusion of the programme concept in television and radio broadcasting licenses provides for inclusion of the "Programme Concept" as an integral part of the broadcasting license. Broadcasting companies shall indicate the topics and specialisation of the mass medium, the volume of broadcasting by categories per week (in percentage) and volume of advertising time when applying for a license.

On 8 May 1998, the President signed Decree No. 511 on Improvement of Performance of the State-owned Electronic Media which assigned the Government to form a media holding based on the All-Russia State Television and Radio Company (VGTRK). The decree paved the way for transforming state-owned electronic media in the regions into affiliates of the VGTRK. The holding company now includes state-owned facilities, such as TV towers.[4]

3.4 Case law

The Judicial Chamber on Information Disputes under the President of the Russian Federation was created by presidential decree on 31 December 1993. The President appoints its chair and members. It assists the President in executing information policy by means of monitoring developments in the media field, preparing an annual report, and solving disputes that arise. In the course of the parliamentary and presidential election campaigns its role increases since the Chamber receives complaints (mainly defamation related) and may call for a retraction. However, it cannot fine or otherwise punish an outlet which ignores the ruling. Its decisions are of moral significance mainly, though the official *Rossiyskaya gazeta* daily is obliged to publish the most important resolutions of the Chamber. Also, within two weeks of having received a Judicial Chamber ruling, governmental bodies and officials to which the ruling applies are to notify the Chamber about its implementation.

What follows is an example of decisions of the Chamber. On 18 December 1997 the Judicial Chamber adopted the Recommendation on the Application of the Principle of Presumption of Innocence for Journalists' Activity in reply to an inquiry by the

3 For the full text of the Statute, see Post-Soviet Media Law and Policy Newsletter. #48-49, 15 September 1998. P.34-35.

4 More on that, see Post-Soviet Media Law and Policy Newsletter. #47, 15 June 1998. P.2-16.

Moscow Media Law and Policy Centre concerning the draft statute "On Television and Radio Broadcasting" that passed its first reading in the State Duma in September 1997. Article 18 of this draft statute prohibits broadcasters from disseminating information that would violate the presumption of innocence. The principle of presumption of innocence is laid down in Article 49 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The Judicial Chamber concluded that only governmental bodies and those government functionaries with power to restrict the rights and freedoms of individuals are subject to the constitutional obligation of respecting the presumption of innocence with regard to third parties. This obligation does not apply to the journalists who investigate and report or cover criminal investigation as part of their constitutional right of the freedom of information and as a part of their professional duty to disseminate information of public interest. Therefore journalists' opinions expressed in the mass media are not of the kind that influence the right of a person to be considered innocent in the legal sense. Thus the draft statute would unnecessarily limit the freedom of mass information as set by the Constitution of the Russian Federation. The Judicial Chamber concluded that the existing legislation on the responsibilities of the journalists is sufficient enough to protect the rights and legal interests of persons from abuse of the freedom of mass information. Therefore the Chamber appealed to the State Duma with a recommendation to review the norm of Article 18 of the Broadcasting Bill. The appeal was taken into account by the Duma and Article 18 was redrafted.

3.5 Election law and the media

Legislation on the election of deputies of the State Duma comprises of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the Federal Statute “On Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens of the Russian Federation to Participate in a Referendum”, the Federal Statute “On the Election of Deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation”, and other federal statutes.

On 5 September 1997 the State Duma adopted the Federal Statute on Basic Guarantees of the Electoral Rights and the Right of Citizens of the Russian Federation to Participate in a Referendum (further on — “On Basic Guarantees…”). It was signed by President Boris Yeltsin on 19 September 1997 and came into force on 30 September, 1997. The statute was amended on 30 March 1999. The statute says in its preamble:
“Democratic free and periodical elections of bodies of state power, bodies of local government, as well as referenda shall be the supreme direct expression of power that belongs to people. The state shall guarantee the free expression of citizens' will at elections and referenda, the protection of democratic principles and norms of electoral rights and the right to participate in a referendum.”

Federal Statute “On the Election of Deputies of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation” (further on — “On the Election of Deputies…”) was adopted by the State Duma on 2 June 1999 and entered into force on 24 June 1999.

It should be noted here that the Statute “On Basic Guarantees…” provides (in Article 1) that: “Federal statutes, statutes of Subjects of Russian Federation, normative legal acts on elections and referenda adopted in the Russian Federation shall not conflict with this Federal statute. Should federal statutes, statutes of Subjects of Russian

Federation, normative legal acts on elections and referenda adopted in the Russian Federation conflict with this Federal Law, the norms of this Federal Law shall apply."
In fact, however, the other principal statute that should be dealt with in the context of these elections — "On the Election of Deputies…" is not in full conformity and yet is at the same time given greater prominence than the Statute "On Basic Guarantees…".

3.6 Concepts and notions

The concept of *election campaigning* (or canvassing, or propaganda) is defined by the Statute "On Basic Guarantees" as "activities of citizens of the Russian Federation, candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs, public associations, permitted by law and conducted by legal methods which are aimed at encouraging votes to participate in the election and to vote for or against certain candidates (lists of candidates)".

On the other hand, the Statute "On the Election of Deputies" under election campaigning understands "the activities aimed to encourage or encouraging voters to participate in the election and to vote for or against any registered candidate, for or against any federal list of candidates registered with the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation." Thus the latter puts a special stress on the fact of *registration* of those who are being promoted or discouraged in the canvassing. That led to a wide-spread practice of unregulated campaigning by the yet unregistered candidates and parties. This conflict seems to be taken care of in the draft statute on elections of the President, which speaks of election campaigning as canvassing that has *time* limits from the official announcement of the election till the day before the election day.

Propaganda materials are defined here as "printed, audio, video and other materials containing signs of election propaganda, propaganda on referendum issues designed for public dissemination during the election campaign or during the referendum".

Despite the fact that *political advertising* has already been regularly appearing on the air and on the pages of print media for the past nine years, from a legal standpoint, the concept is completely undefined. Elections legislation only mentions political advertising once, and even then only in passing, simply as one of the possible methods of conducting an election campaign in the mass media. It is obvious this single mention is hardly sufficient.

The Statute on Advertising also cannot solve the problem of legal regulation of political advertising. For the past four years, the law has successfully served as the fundamental normative document for all advertising legislation, however its first article makes the following proviso: "this law does not apply to political advertising". This means that all the measures the law stipulates to protect citizens from unscrupulous, unreliable, unethical and hidden advertising apply only to commercial, and not to political advertising.

Criminal law also runs contrary to punishment for inappropriate political advertising. Article 182 ("Knowingly False Advertising") of the Criminal Code establishes rather harsh punishment (up to three years in prison), but it can only apply to "knowing use, in advertising, of false information in relation to products, work, or services, and also

their manufacturers (providers, sellers)." The activity of political parties is neither a product nor a service.

Lawmakers understand the danger lurking in the absolute legal vacuum surrounding political advertising. But for some reason, passage of the Statute on Political Advertising is constantly stalled. The last time it was introduced for discussion was in the Duma Council of April 1996, but to this day it has not even made it through the first reading.

3.7 Major principles

The Statute “On the Election of Deputies…” stipulates that election campaigning through the mass media shall be conducted in the following forms: public debates, discussions, “roundtables”, press conferences, interviews, speeches, political advertising, demonstration of TV stories and video films about a registered candidate, an electoral association, electoral bloc and in other forms which are not prohibited by law. Generally, a “registered candidate, an electoral association, electoral bloc shall be entitled to select the form and nature of their election campaigning at their own discretion”.

The Statute “On Basic Guarantees…” regulates canvassing during election and referendum campaigns. It guarantees to all registered candidates, electoral associations, and electoral blocs equal rights of access to the mass media in the form and manner that they independently determine. The statute establishes uniform time limits for the campaigning: it shall start on the day of registration of a candidate and end 24 hours before the election day.

Within three days before the election day and on that day itself no public opinion polls and forecasts concerning the election results, or any other research related to the election or referendum’s possible outcome shall be released by the mass media. When permitted the results of public opinion polls related to the election in the mass media shall indicate the agency which conducted the poll, the time when it was conducted, the number of respondents (sample), the method for the collection of information, the precise formulation of the question, the statistical assessment of a possible error.

There are special provisions regarding the propaganda materials produced (printed, filmed, recorded, etc.) by the candidates. Article 59 of the Statute “On the Election of Deputies…” stipulates in particular that: “Advertising agencies which are founded (co-founded) by state or municipal bodies, organisations, institutions of which were financed by not less than 15 percent of their budget in the year preceding the year of official publication of the decision to call the election from the funds allocated by federal bodies of state power, bodies of state power of Subjects of the Russian Federation, bodies of local self-government shall publish propaganda materials of candidates registered in single-mandate electoral districts as well as electoral associations, electoral blocs on equal terms and conditions”.

Thus this puts them into the “Group A” category described for the mass media below. All printed, audio-visual and other propaganda materials produced for the election shall contain the names and legal addresses of the organisations (the first, middle and last names and the places of residence of the persons) that prepared printed

materials, the name of the organisation (the first, middle and last name of the person) that placed an order for printing the given materials and information about the number of copies printed and the date of publication.

In a strange and hardly practical demand (especially for the audio-visual materials) the Statute "On the Election of Deputies…" stipulates that prior to their distribution, printed, audio-visual and other election propaganda materials or their copies shall be submitted to the appropriate election commission by an electoral association, electoral bloc.

3.8 Distribution of the mass media into two major groups

Article 39 of the Statute "On Basic Guarantees.." sets aside one important group of the mass media, for convenience it will be referred to as "Group A". It includes TV and/or radio broadcasting organisations and editorial offices of periodicals which are founded (or co-founded) by state or municipal bodies, organisations, institutions and/or which, in the year preceding the day of the official publication of the decision to set the elections, were financed by at least 15 percent of their budget from the funds allocated by the federal bodies of state power, bodies of state power of subjects of the Russian Federation, bodies of local self-government. This large group of the mass media, according to the Statute "On Basic Guarantees…", "shall provide equal conditions for registered candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs to conduct their election propaganda". The TV and/or radio broadcasting organisations and editorial offices of periodicals which do not come under these criteria (and thus come under "Group B") may provide air time, space in printed media to registered candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs, referendum initiative groups on a contractual commercial basis.

At the same time the Statute "On Basic Guarantees…" stipulates that a registered candidate or electoral bloc must pay for air time and printing space and that TV and/or radio broadcasting organisations must provide air time on equal terms and conditions. The full payment shall be made before the provision of air time and printing space, exclusively through election funds.

3.9 Campaigning in broadcasting media

Moreover, regarding electronic media, under Article 40 of the Statute "On Basic Guarantees…", registered candidates and electoral blocs are entitled to free air time on the channels of TV and/or radio broadcasting organisations coming under "Group A". The said air time shall be provided during prime time, i.e. when TV and radio programs are viewed and listened to by the largest audience. The total free air time provided by each Russian national TV and/or radio broadcasting organisation for campaigning in elections to federal bodies of state power shall be not less than one hour on week days. The total free air time provided by each regional TV and/or radio broadcasting organisation for election campaigning in elections to federal bodies of state power and in elections to bodies of state power of a subject of the Russian Federation shall be not less than 30 minutes on week days and, if the total broadcasting time of the TV and (or) radio broadcasting organisation is less than two

hours, no less than one-fourth of the total broadcasting time. The said free air time shall be distributed between registered candidates and electoral associations on an equal footing.

No less than one-third of the total free air time shall be given to candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs specifically for joint discussions, roundtables and similar events. This part of the free air time must be accessible to all registered candidates, electoral associations and electoral blocs on an equal footing.

TV and/or radio broadcasting entities coming under “Group A” must also reserve obligatory paid air time for election campaigning of candidates and blocs. This air time shall be made available for a charge on a contractual commercial basis to candidates, electoral associations and electoral blocs upon their request. The charge shall be the same for all candidates and announced no later than the day on which nomination of candidates or lists of candidates begins or no later than ten days after announcement of the voting day in a referendum. Each candidate and electoral association is entitled to a part of the total reserved air time given by division of this time by the total number of registered candidates (electoral associations, electoral blocs). The total reserved air time shall not be less than the obligatory total free air time as described above.

In the newscasts of TV and/or radio broadcasting organisations no preference shall be given to any candidate, registered candidate, electoral association, electoral bloc, specifically with regard to the time devoted to highlighting their propaganda activities.

3.10 Campaigning in the print media

Terms and conditions for campaigning through printed mass media are generally described in the Statute “On Basic Guarantees…” more vaguely than those in electronic media. Article 41 stipulates that editorial offices of a periodical publication (that is a newspaper, magazine, etc.) coming under “Group A” but intended exclusively for publication of official reports and materials, normative and other acts are excepted from participating in election campaigning. Specialised publications (children's, technical, scientific and others) may refuse to publish any propaganda materials whatsoever provided they completely abstain from any participation in the election campaign. The requirement that printing space should be provided free and/or on equal terms and conditions shall not apply to editorial offices of periodicals founded by registered candidates or electoral associations.

All materials published in periodicals and paid for from the electoral fund of a candidate or an electoral bloc shall indicate the candidate or the bloc that paid for the publication of this material from their electoral fund. If the material was published free of charge in accordance with the provisions of the Statute “On Basic Guarantees…” concerning free provision of printing space for the publication of materials of registered candidates and blocs, the material shall indicate that it was published free and shall mention the party that was given the opportunity to publish the given material.

Terms and conditions are more specific in the Statute “On the Election of Deputies…” (Article 57). The total minimum weekly printing space which each editorial office of periodicals coming within “Group A” to be provided free of charge to registered

candidates, etc. shall account for not less than 10 percent of the total printing space of the given periodical within the period which starts 40 days before voting day and ends one day before voting day. The total printing space which the given periodical provides free of charge for election campaigning within this period shall be announced by the editorial office of the periodical not later than 20 days after official announcement of a decision to call the election.

The printing space to be provided in each subject of the Russian Federation to a regional group of candidates by the editorial office of a periodical coming within "Group A" shall be calculated by multiplying the printing space provided by the given editorial office of a periodical to a candidate registered in a single-mandate electoral district in the given subject of the Russian Federation by the number of single-mandate electoral districts in the given subject of the Russian Federation but shall not exceed the space thus calculated by more than three times. The said editorial offices of periodicals shall provide an equal amount of printing space to candidates registered in single-mandate electoral districts and to regional groups of candidates with due account to the said ratio.

Statute "On the Election of Deputies…" stipulates that the total size of free printing space shall be distributed in equal portions between registered candidates, etc. by dividing the total size of the allocated printing space by the total number of registered candidates, etc. that are entitled to free publication of their propaganda materials in the given periodical.

Editorial offices of periodicals coming within "Group A" shall reserve printing space for election propaganda materials to be published by registered candidates, regional groups of candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs on a paid basis as well. The rates of payment for printing space shall be the same for all registered candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs and shall be announced by the editorial office of a periodical not later than 20 days after official publication of the decision to call the election. The total printing space to be reserved by the editorial office of a periodical for provision on a paid basis shall not be less than the total free printing space to be made available, but shall not exceed this space by more than two times.

The printing space indicated in Clause 9 of this Article shall be made available by the editorial office of a periodical within the same period as set for the free space. The exact dates for the publication of propaganda materials of particular registered candidate, etc. shall be determined by lot by the editorial office of the periodical with the participation of interested persons on the basis of written applications for participation in lot-drawing submitted by registered candidates, authorised representatives of electoral associations and electoral blocs. The lot-drawing procedure may be witnessed by members of the appropriate election commission. The results of lot drawing shall be formalised in a protocol.

The editorial offices of periodicals which do not come within "Group A" may publish election propaganda materials immediately after the registration of a candidate. They may also publish federal lists of candidates in accordance with a contract to be concluded between the editorial office of a periodical and a registered candidate, an electoral association or electoral bloc which has a registered federal list of candidates. It should be observed here that this provision creates unequal opportunities for campaigning based on early or late registration. The printing space must be paid for on equal terms and conditions and payment must be made exclusively from an electoral fund of a registered candidate, etc.

A very restrictive provision can be found in the same Article 57 (subsection 17):
"Election propaganda materials published in accordance with this Article shall not be accompanied by any forms of editorial comment and by headlines and illustrations that are not agreed upon with registered candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs."

3.11 Abuse of campaigning rights and liability

Article 60 of the Statute "On the Election of Deputies…" prohibits misuse of the right to election campaigning. It basically follows corresponding Constitutional provisions. It says in particular:
"Election programmes of registered candidates, electoral associations, electoral blocs, election propaganda materials and speeches at meetings and rallies, articles in the mass media shall not contain calls for seizure of power, violent change of the constitutional system and the destruction of the integrity of the Russian Federation, propaganda of war. Propaganda exciting social, racial, national, religious hatred or enmity, misuse of the freedom of mass information in other forms banned by legislation of the Russian Federation is prohibited. Propaganda in violation of legislation of the Russian Federation on intellectual property is prohibited."

In addition to the general ban of hate speech, the Statute "On the Election of Deputies…" puts special restrictions regarding defamation of candidates' issues. In Article 60 (subsection 4) it says that during the election campaign TV and radio programmes on the channels of TV and radio broadcasting organisations and editorial offices of periodicals which fall into "Group A": "shall not make public (publish) information that may damage the honour, dignity or business reputation of a registered candidate(-s) if these TV and radio programmes and editorial offices of the periodicals cannot provide a registered candidate(-s) with a possibility to make public (publish) a denial or some other explanation in defence of his/her (their) honour, dignity or business reputation before the end of the election campaigning period."

If a TV and radio broadcasting organisation or an editorial office of a periodical violates the rules laid down by the election law, the appropriate election commission may apply to law enforcement bodies, courts, executive bodies of state power which implement the state policy in the mass media sphere and request them to stop illegal propaganda activities and bring the TV and radio broadcasting organisations, editorial office, and their officials to task as provided by Russian Federation laws.

The Criminal Code has the following provisions:
"Article 141. Preventing citizens from the use of their electoral rights (including the right to conduct election canvassing) with the use of one's office (or, official status) is punished with fines of 200 to 500 minimum monthly wages (currently about 80 roubles), or of other income of the guilty for 2 to 5 months, or with forced labour of 1 to 2 years, or arrest of up to 6 months, or incarceration in prison or camp for up to 5 years."

The Administrative Code introduces the following liability for the violation of the election law and voting rights:
Article 40.2: election canvassing in the period when it is forbidden by law to engage into such activity has the sanction of fine from 10 to 50 minimum monthly wages (currently about 80 roubles).

Article 40.3: spreading or publishing of defamatory statements about the candidates has the sanction of fine from 10 to 50 minimum monthly wages.
Article 40.8: violation of canvassing rules by the mass media and/or journalists has the sanction of fine upon the chief editor or journalist from 10 to 50 minimum monthly wages.

Currently the State Duma is reading a bill amending the Administrative Code specifically to make sanctions for the violations of the election law harsher.

4 Broadcast media

Sarah Oates
Benedicte Berner

TV is the dominant medium in Russian electoral campaigns and has been important in previous elections, particularly in its ability to remake the image of the unpopular regime or president. While control over electronic media is no guarantee for electoral success, TV has enormous influence in setting and controlling the agenda of a campaign.

There are several factors that compound the power of television in Russian elections. First, there is a growing rejection of the concept of unbiased media in Russia, particularly in the influential sphere of television. Politicians, media owners, journalists and viewers alike are apparently now reconciled to the idea that programmes on television channels, especially news and analytical shows, will reflect the political agenda of those who control the station. As ownership is quite narrow – and the two most powerful television channels are controlled by the presidential administration – this has significantly reduced the amount of unbiased information available to viewers throughout the Russian Federation.

Editors at Russian radio stations report less pressure to conform, although the quantitative monitoring suggests that some are quite skewed in their coverage. It was more difficult to monitor the radio programming, as it was often quite difficult to tell whether certain programmes were paid advertising or editorial. However, monitors made the assumption that the programme was not an advertisement unless it was categorised as such by the station itself.

Money – and the line between editorial coverage and advertising – remains a difficult issue throughout the broadcast media. The reported salaries for broadcast journalists are often appalling low. For example, OGRK Mayak General Director Andrei Bystritskii said that the average salary at Radio Mayak is $60 a month. While salaries are better on television, particularly private stations, they still are not high. Top correspondents at NTV, for example, can earn about $800 a month, while editors get about $400 a month. Although most journalists denied even being offered bribes, the low pay would make many relatively susceptible. Media observers claim that bribes are commonplace in the broadcast media, although only one journalist interviewed by the EIM said that he had been offered bribes.

According to the Maxima Communication Group, slots on prime time television can cost as much as $40,000 a minute. However, the figure is misleading, as advertisers are able to negotiate substantial discounts, sometimes up to 90% off the top rate.

4.1 Television

Russia has a mixture of state-run and private television, but many Russian citizens can only watch national state-controlled television. The state-controlled first channel (ORT) and second channel (RTR) reach virtually all of the country. TV-Centre,

broadcast on the third channel, is funded mostly by the Moscow administration. Its potential reach is estimated at about 67 million viewers, according to TV-Centre Vice President in Charge of Development Victor Zavialov. There are regional television companies as well, including St. Petersburg television.

The major private television stations are NTV and TV-6. The broadcast coverage of the private channels is mostly in European Russia, although they have partners that carry all or part of their programming throughout the country (and abroad). NTV officials estimate that they have about 40 million viewers in Russia. Meanwhile, TV-6 estimated its *potential* audience at 110-120 million in Russia and the CIS. NTV is owned by a large media holding company (Media Most) that has been relatively committed to fair news coverage. TV-6 is now controlled by media mogul Boris Berezovsky, who has close ties with the Kremlin. According to a TV 6 official, controlling shareholder Berezovsky has "recommendations" for the editorial staff.

ORT remains the broadcast flagship of Russia and the most-watched channel for Russian citizens. According to a survey of 3000 viewers by Russian Research in November 1999, 87% of regular TV viewers in Russia watched ORT daily during the last two weeks of November, while 83% of viewers watched RTR, 72% NTV, 51% TV-6 and 35% TV-Centre. All channels, whether state-owned or private, accept paid advertising, including political advertising

Most broadcast journalists and media analysts interviewed by the EIM said there was little objectivity in relation to election coverage as all the national television networks - state and private - openly supported either pro-Kremlin Unity or Kremlin opponent Fatherland-All Russia. Overall, there are concerns about funding, interpretation of the election law, little discussion of policies or even ideology in the campaign and a lack of journalistic ethics. Underlying these problems is a growing trend in Russian journalism toward sensationalism or comprising material (*kompromat*).

At the state-funded television stations, the message was clear: support the government branch that funds the station. While officials at ORT declined to meet with media monitors and a top RTR editor claimed his station had no bias, the quantitative monitoring makes it clear that the pro-Kremlin party, its leaders and interests received more and favourable treatment on Channels 1 and 2. At Channel 3, where TV-Centre is funded by the Moscow administration, the political party led in part by the Moscow mayor received extensive, positive political coverage. TV-Centre Vice President Victor Zavialov, however, said that his station was "closer to an objective" channel than state-run stations, although he admitted that TV-Centre had to be aware that it must "exist on the money of the Moscow government." He said it was a shame that there was no real public-service television in Russia, as even ORT sells advertising.

Overall, viewers were exposed to a broad range of coverage of political parties on television, according to the quantitative study by the EIM. Three parties – Fatherland All Russia, the Zhirinovsky Bloc and the Union of Rightwing Forces – received almost half of the coverage among them. Meanwhile, the two parties that won the largest amount of party-list votes, Unity and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, received just 5% each of the coverage of political parties on national television. In terms of actual minutes, viewers were exposed to 14½ hours about Fatherland-All Russia, compared with 14 hours for the Zhirinovsky Bloc and just over 12 hours for the Union of the Rightwing Forces.

However, qualitative research and observation of television during the elections suggests a very different story. Much of the coverage received by Fatherland-All

Russia was negative, although the Luzhkov-led party garnered an inordinately large amount of neutral coverage on TV-Centre. Meanwhile, the framing of the Unity party and its link with the forceful policies of the Kremlin in Chechnya and elsewhere amplified its media coverage. It is important to consider, as well, that many areas of the country do not receive NTV, so there would have been only Kremlin-led television available to those voters (i.e. ORT, RTR and possibly TV-6).

Media analysts suggested that the heavy coverage of the Zhirinovsky Bloc was due primarily to two factors: the news generated by the party's initial inability to register for the elections and a desire to showcase party leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky's telegenic "bad boy" image. In addition, covering the Zhirinovsky Bloc was relatively safe as it had little chance of seriously challenging the parties of power. The pattern of relatively ignoring the Communist Party, the most serious, long-term contender for power in Russia, reflects the bias of the Kremlin-led media. At the same time, however, television editors point out that the Communists themselves were not keen to join in debates or appear on many television programmes, preferring to remain above the media fray and maintain their reputation as establishment outsiders. While the Communists complained that they are not invited to media events, editors pointed out that the Communists declined invitations to appear on television.

While the sheer volume of coverage is significant, it also is important to consider the type of coverage. Most significantly, much of the coverage of Fatherland-All Russia was negative. Unity was the only other party to attract a significant amount of negative coverage, not surprising in a highly polarised election in which television stations took aggressive stances both for and against particular political power bases. Much of the negative coverage of Fatherland-All Russia was found on ORT, while Unity received the most negative coverage on the private NTV.

When the analysis focussed only on the major news programmes on the main Russian television channels, a slightly different pattern emerged. The biggest story on the news during the campaign was clearly Fatherland-All Russia, receiving more than a quarter (26%) of all new coverage on political parties on Russian television. Quantitative observation makes it clear that the news on this Moscow-based party was quite polarised – negative on ORT and positive on Moscow-controlled TV-Centre.

Other parties that received a significant amount of airtime on the news on all the channels monitored were Unity (16%), the Zhirinovsky Bloc (13%), the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (11%), Our Home is Russia (9%) and Yabloko (8%). Thus more than half of the coverage on the news was given to only six parties in the race. Just as with the mentions of parties across all programmes, the pattern varied enormously among the channels (channels discussed individually below).

There were very few analytical programmes that gave viewers information on the policies, or even the broad ideology, of the more than two dozen parties initially in the race. Rather, much of the reporting focussed on individual party leaders. Much of this coverage was in the format of reporting on a party leader's visit to a local factory or other location. At other times, the shows featured clips from press conferences or excerpts of speeches.

Russia remains a country in which political leaders typically dominate over political parties, the lone exception being perhaps the Communist Party. Naturally, it is not surprising that Prime Minister Vladimir Putin dominated the coverage of key figures on the news during the election, particularly given the crisis in Chechnya. Putin alone

received more than a third (37%) of the coverage of key figures, according to the EIM study.

While a prime minister is a news story in his own right, it would still seem to be excessive to give him almost three times as much coverage as any other political figure in the country (then-president Boris Yeltsin received 14% of the coverage). Putin's image was linked with that of the pro-Kremlin party Unity. Putin said on television during the elections that he could not support a particular party, but that as a "private citizen" he would vote for Unity. In this and other ways, the government made it abundantly clear to the voters that Unity was the prime pro-Kremlin party. In addition, Unity party leader Shoigu – also Minister for Emergencies (mainly working on the Chechen conflict) – received 11% of the key-figure coverage.

Other leading political figures aside from Putin or Yeltsin who received a relatively large amount of news coverage across all the channels were Zhirinovsky (11%), Luzhkov (11%) and former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov (13%). Primakov was one of the leaders of the Fatherland-All Russia bloc. The coverage of key figures, in fact, shows the quick ebb and flow of political visibility in Russia. Alexander Lebed, prominent as a party leader in 1995 and presidential contender in 1996, received less than 1% of the coverage.

Despite leading the most popular party in the party-vote contest for the Duma, Communist leader Gennadi Zyuganov received just 1% of the news coverage for key political figures on Russian television during the campaign. The only channel in this study to follow a markedly different pattern of coverage of key figures was TV-Centre (see below). Many broadcasters reported that they had tried to invite key figures, but often they refused to come because they disliked particular presenters, feared they would get an unfriendly reception or felt that they would not enhance their reputation by appearing with other political figures or parties.

When interviewed by the EIM, television editors said that their coverage was limited to a rather superficial level of sound bites and a focus on leaders by several factors. Part of the problem was news value and the organisation of the political parties in the campaign, although news editors noted newer parties were often disorganised or unprofessional. Many were inexperienced at planning events and most parties, according to editors, had few novel or interesting ideas for staging media events. Many of the leaders of the less popular parties were neither articulate nor telegenic.

Even if broadcasters attempted to make programmes that seriously compared or discussed parties, they often ran into trouble with the CEC. According to the election law, broadcasters are not allowed to make editorial comments on parties and must give equal time to parties. The interpretation of this could be quite narrow, hampering journalists from doing their jobs. For example, journalist Dmitri Kiselev received a CEC warning for his November 10 show on TV-Centre that compared some of the economic programmes of political parties, according to Igor Ivanov, Director of the station's legal department. Kiselev was told by election officials that his show had been subjective commentary. "It's absurd," said Ivanov about the restrictions in the law.

On another occasion, the CEC complained that a TV-6 programme was unfair because it gave different time to candidates as they replied to the same question, according to Andrei Safronov, TV 6 Social and Political Programmes Department Director. However, the answers varied simply because people's natural responses were somewhat different in length, a situation hard to control by the station without resorting to a somewhat artificial format.

Thus, broadcasters found themselves in an absurd position. While programmes such as “The Sergei Dorenko Show” on ORT could attack Fatherland-All Russia leader Yuri Luzhkov with a string of poorly-documented accounts of financial malfeasance with no more than mild hand-slapping from media officials, stations seeking to offer substantive programmes offering thoughtful comparisons of party policies were reprimanded by authorities.

In addition, as is often the case in election campaigns around the globe, there was little interest among viewers in complex analytical programmes when far more interesting elections news – such as the antics of ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky – were on offer. Officials at RTR even noted that their ratings increased whenever Zhirinovsky appeared on air. Thus, broadcasters who choose to feature comparisons or more serious election news were hampered both by possible legal constraints and a lack of viewer interest. Viewers need “bread and circuses,” said Sergei Kostornou, head of the special projects department at RTR’s Vesti company. Putin is the “bread,” Kostornou said, and Zhirinovsky is the “circus.”

Attracting viewer interest is of paramount importance to all broadcasters in Russia. State subsidies are inadequate and broadcasters need popular programming to get advertising revenue. Money remains particularly tight at television stations since the financial crisis in August 1998, which left staff at RTR without paychecks for two months. This is particularly difficult at state-controlled outlets, such as ORT and RTR, where broadcasters must toe the Kremlin political line as well as devise shows with popular appeal. Even the commercially successful NTV has found times leaner, with advertising revenue slashed in half since its high of $100 million in 1997, according to NTV Deputy Editor-in-Chief Vladimir Kulistikov.

While ratings for typical election programmes are low, sensationalism sells, according to television officials. Thus, ORT can satisfy both its political line and its need for revenue with programmes such as “The Sergei Dorenko Show,” in which the irreverent, ironic host presents compromising material on Kremlin enemies. The show, the most popular on Russian television, commands up to $40,000 a minute for advertising time during its 9 p.m. Sunday time slot, according to Maxima Communications Group in Moscow.

The quantitative measure of television coverage by channel reveals wide differences in emphasis among the channels. A more in-depth discussion of each channel follows below.

ORT (Channel 1)

While ORT is 51% owned by the state, it also is controlled by the interests of pro-Kremlin businessman Boris Berezovsky (as is the private channel TV-6). In overall programming (including news, analysis, advertising, specials and other programmes), ORT featured the Zhirinovsky Bloc (16%), Union of Rightwing Forces (12%), Fatherland-All Russia (12%) and Unity (9%).

It is interesting to note that the Communist Party received 7% of the coverage, slightly more than their average across all channels monitored for this report. The coverage was generally neutral – although about half of the coverage of Fatherland-All Russia was negative. In total, Russian viewers could watch about 3 ½ hours of coverage of the Zhirinovsky Bloc on ORT, as well as about 2 ½ hours of coverage of the Union of Rightwing Forces and almost 2 ½ hours on Fatherland-All Russia (much of it negative).

In news programmes, it is clear that Unity was the leading news story for the prime state-run channel. The Kremlin-backed party received 28% of the news coverage, compared with 16% for the Zhirinovsky Bloc, 15% for Fatherland-All Russia, 10% for Our Home is Russia and 8% each for the Union of Rightwing Forces and the Communist Party.

ORT had a firm focus on news from the government in its coverage of key figures. Putin and Shoigu dominated the news on key figures, with 42% and 19% respectively. It is interesting that ultra-nationalist Zhirinovsky (15%) received more than Yeltsin (12%), although it should be pointed out that Yeltsin was virtually inactive during the campaign. In fact, Putin gave the "presidential" address that traditionally comes on the eve of Russian parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, Moscow mayor Luzhkov had just 4% of the coverage.

RTR (Channel 2)

RTR reaches 94% of Russia´s population and its audience is even larger as it also broadcasts beyond Russia. The station is wholly owned by the state. Up to 1996 it had nevertheless taken a balanced and critical stance on political issues. Through changes in management, more active presidential control over the channel's political line was introduced.

On RTR, the allocation of coverage of political parties across all programmes was slightly different from that found on ORT. The second channel gave its greatest coverage (22%) to the Zhirinovsky Bloc, followed by Yabloko (10%), the Communist Party (7%), Union of Rightwing Forces (6%) and Our Home is Russia (6%). Most of the coverage was neutral, although some of the coverage of Fatherland-All Russia was negative. Overall, viewers could see about 4 hours and 20 minutes of news on the Zhirinovsky Bloc, as well as about 2 hours on Yabloko and about 1½ hours on the Communist Party (almost identical to the time devoted to the Communists on ORT).

On the news on RTR, most of the coverage was divided between Unity (24%), Yabloko (16%), the Zhirinovsky Bloc (14%), Fatherland-All Russia (13%) and the Communist Party (10%). It is interesting that Yabloko, a pro-reform party that often speaks out against the presidential administration, was granted much more time on the RTR news than on ORT news (where it got just 3% of the news coverage).

It is important to note, though, that the actual minutes of coverage are far fewer, as RTR has shorter news programmes. Thus, while Unity received 24% of the news coverage, this translated only into about half an hour of coverage. Yabloko received about 20 minutes, the Zhirinovsky Bloc about 18 minutes, Fatherland-All Russia about 16 minutes and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation about 14 minutes.

RTR continued the heavy coverage of Putin (40% of coverage of key figures) and Shoigu (15%). The spread between Zhirinovsky (13% of coverage) and Yeltsin (10%) was quite similar to that on ORT, although Luzhkov received more attention at 7%. As with the coverage of the parties, the actual minutes of news on key figures was relatively short – Putin with about 50 minutes and Shoigu and Zhirinovsky with roughly 20 minutes each.

In statistical terms, the political coverage on RTR of the campaign seemed to be fairly equally spread. However, qualitative analysis showed a definite bias in favour of government-supported parties with negative treatment of the main opposition party and its leaders, Primakov and Luzhkov. In statements by its general director it was

apparent that RTR had a policy of supporting the government which in electoral terms was almost synonymous with support for "Unity". Its main political programme, "Zerkalo" run by Nicolai Svanidze, was actively campaigning against "Fatherland-All Russia" from September onwards with few inhibitions as to the factual basis for many of the accusations. Here and in the news programme "Vesti" a wide range of accusations against the OVR leaders were offered. They included that Primakov was too old and sick to govern, that incompetence marked both Primakov and Luzhkov's careers, that corruption was rampant in Moscow and particularly in the Mayor´s office, that organised crime also had supporters there, that both Primakov and Luzhkov had been involved in assassination plots, that Luzhkov had authoritarian tendencies and was planning violent demonstrations to support his political aims, that OVR was conspiring with foreign powers to unseat Prime Minister Putin, that such plots were also directed against the war efforts in Chechnya, that conflicts of interest would divide OVR, that NTV, supposedly in the service of OVR, was financially supported by Moscow City government. All these accusations were based on very flimsy evidence. They were repeated on both ORT and RTR.

TV Centre (Channel 3)

The pattern of bias in coverage was most clear on TV-Centre, which is funded by the Moscow administration. TV-Centre supported its financial backers, turning the channel into a showcase for Mayor Luzhkov and his Fatherland-All Russia party during the election campaign.

The quantitative analysis shows that the station devoted almost half (46%) of its coverage of political parties across all programmes to Fatherland-All Russia. This meant more than seven hours of coverage for the party. Unity, Luzhkov's archrival, was virtually ignored, with just 3% of the total coverage, while other relatively obscure parties received unusually high levels of coverage (i.e. the Stalinist Bloc for the USSR received 8%). The tone of the coverage was generally neutral, although some of the coverage of Unity was negative.

The focus on Fatherland-All Russia was even stronger on the news programmes. Almost three-quarters (71%) of the political party coverage on TV-Centre was dedicated to Fatherland-All Russia. Once again, a fairly obscure and unsuccessful party (Spiritual Legacy at 16%) received a puzzlingly large amount of coverage while major political players such as Unity, Yabloko and the Communist Party were barely covered. Casual viewing of TV-Centre during the campaign confirmed this trend, which virtually turned the channel's news coverage of the elections into an infomercial for Luzhkov and his party.

It is certainly unsurprising that the main key figure covered on TV-Centre was Luzhkov himself. The Moscow mayor received 37% of the coverage (about 35 minutes total), while Putin had just 18% (about 15 minutes). As a Moscow media outlet, TV-Centre arguably has a need to focus on politics in the capital city over those in the Kremlin. But their coverage varies so much from other channels that it shows a lack of objectivity. In addition, even attention to Primakov – co-head of the Fatherland-All Russia party but not a current member of the government or parliament – was greater than that to Putin. Shoigu was virtually ignored, as was communist leader Zyuganov.

NTV (Channel 4)

NTV is owned by the Media-Most Holding Company, headed by Vladimir Gusinsky. NTV has more of a focus on serious election news stories as opposed to sensationalism. The network broadcast a series of well-produced and even-handed debates between main political figures ("Glas Naroda", hosted by Evgeny Kiselyev).

Those absent, such as Shoigu and Zyuganov, had been invited, but declined, according to different sources.

At times, NTV has shown less bias in its political coverage, particularly in the 1995 Duma elections. However, NTV enthusiastically and openly supported Yeltsin over communist contender Zyuganov in the 1996 presidential elections. The station retains an air of pragmatism. For example, NTV head Kulistikov admitted that his station was providing more coverage of Fatherland-All Russia, saying it was necessary to counter the excessive negative coverage of the party on ORT – as well as ORT's attention to Unity.

The quantitative analysis of coverage of political parties on all programming shows that the private station had a very different focus from that of the state-controlled television channels. NTV devoted 32% of its time to a new party, Union of Rightwing Forces, that featured one of Yeltsin's discarded prime ministers (Sergei Kirienko) as its leader. In addition, NTV gave 20% of its overall coverage to Fatherland-All Russia, 16% to the Zhirinovsky Bloc, 11% to the rather obscure Spiritual Legacy party, 8% to Yabloko and just 5% percent to Unity (some of which was negative). The Communist Party received little attention (3%). This meant a total of almost six hours of coverage for Union of Rightwing Forces, 3 ½ hours for Fatherland-All Russia and about 3 hours for Zhirinovsky Bloc.

A third of the news programming on NTV was on Fatherland-All Russia, while the Communist Party received 18%, Yabloko14%, Zhirinovsky Bloc 10% and Unity just 5%. As even a top NTV editor noted that the station was striving to make up for gaps in political party coverage, it is not surprising that their coverage is, to a degree, is the opposite of that found on ORT and RTR.

Prime Minister Putin had a starring role as a key figure on NTV news programmes with 38% of the coverage. However, Unity leader and Chechen affairs minister Shoigu got far less attention (4%) than on the two main state channels. Fatherland-All Russia leaders Luzhkov and Primakov each garnered a significant amount (13% apiece) of the news coverage of key figures on NTV. Still, Putin was the main figure covered, with over an hour of coverage on the NTV news programmes, compared with about 20 minutes each for Luzhkov and Primakov.

Kulistikov said that his private station chose to give more air time to those with relatively little coverage on the state-controlled television channels: "We are sympathetic with the Kremlin's opponents and we give them the floor," Kulistikov said.

It is worth noting in this context that NTV representatives reported that the channel had been under pressure from the presidential administration to support the government from the summer of 1999. When it resisted, various measures of financial pressure were applied and rumours about financial problems experienced by NTV-owner, the Most group, were spread both before and during the election period.

TV 6 (Channel 6)

Privately-owned TV 6, where a controlling part was recently acquired by the Berezovsky group, has a coverage of around 80 million people in 380 cities but only around half of NTV's viewership. TV 6 devoted a large amount of coverage during the campaign to the Congress of Russian Communities/Boldyrev Movement (17%), Zhirinovsky Bloc (16%), the Union of Rightwing Forces (16%) and Support of the

Army (16%). The tone was primarily neutral, with some positive coverage of the Zhirinovsky Bloc.

The TV 6 news shows, however, had a markedly different pattern from their overall coverage. The news focused on the former party of power Our Home is Russia (24% of news coverage), the Zhirinovsky Bloc (20%), the Communist Party (13%) and Unity (12%). Putin and Zhirinovsky were the most heavily covered political figures, at 38% and 19% respectively. Shoigu (11%) also received a relatively large amount of coverage as a key figure.

4.2 Election programmes

Much of the election coverage was marked by what Russian editors and media observers called dirty tricks (*chernaya tekhnologiya*) or compromising material (*kompromat*). A leading example could be considered Sergei Dorenko's immensely popular show on ORT on Sunday evenings. Dorenko presented a large amount of material criticising Moscow mayor and Fatherland-All Russia leader Yuri Luzhkov. In fact, Luzhkov sued Dorenko during the last month of the campaign and Dorenko was ordered to pay a nominal amount in damages, but Luzhkov did not receive a right of reply on Dorenko's programme before the elections.

The issue of unbalanced and compromising material, however, is wider than a lack of balance of a single programme on ORT. RTR's Kostornou said that "it is categorically forbidden to have political preferences" at a state channel. However, RTR's principal political anchor, Nikolai Svanidze, made no secret of the channel's support for the government. This was clearly shown in Svanidze's aggressive campaign against the Fatherland-All Russia leaders in his programme 'Zerkalo" from mid-September with few inhibitions as to the factual basis for accusations.

There is little protection against the views of the owners or the controllers of the television station having their opinions echoed by their media outlets. For example, while TV Centre's Zavialov said that his channel could not engage in propaganda and had a responsibility to the voters to provide "full, objective information," the channel could not forget that it "existed on the money of the Moscow government". According to a TV 6 official, controlling shareholder Berezovsky has "recommendations" for the editorial staff.

News programmes on government-controlled stations gave wide and positive coverage of Prime Minister Putin, described as a strong, decisive, active and patriotic leader, and to Unity leader, Shoigu. The Chechnya war efforts dominated the news, particularly in the period close to the elections. The military success of the Russian forces under Putin's political leadership was emphasised as well as Russia's present firm will to stand up against Western pressure. While such reports did not always directly refer to the parliamentary campaign, the connection between Putin and Unity also served to strengthen and promote the pro-Kremlin party.

The large amount of coverage devoted to Zhirinovsky on all channels was in part a result of the reporting on his various problems with the CEC on registering himself and his party. However, media commentators told EIM monitors that Zhirinovsky frequently used his time to criticise Fatherland-All Russia.

RTR, TV-Centre, TV-6 and NTV all reported that they were ready to take paid political advertising from all registered parties, although they did reject some ads on grounds of taste, rather than political position. Most broadcasters said their revenue from political advertising was insignificant.

Broadcasting companies generally reported less political advertising than in previous campaigns. Maxima Communication Group head Vladimir Evstafiev believes that the smaller amount of paid political advertising stemmed from tighter controls by the CEC. Media outlets were required to publish a price list of their advertising time for political parties and political parties could only pay for their time through their official campaign accounts at Sberbank. As a result, parties would have found it difficult to exceed their spending limits (which were clearly violated by the pro-Kremlin Our Home is Russia in 1995 because of the sheer volume of ads for the party on prime-time television).

Television officials at RTR, NTV, TV-6 and TV-Centre said that the political advertising was clearly labeled on their channels. No one reported receiving bribes or attempted bribes except for Kulistikov at NTV who said that some political parties offered him bribes in exchange for news coverage. He said he refused the bribes and declined to say which parties made the offer.

All state-controlled television channels provided free time to the parties in the elections. There was little trouble reported with this, although RTR found that parties were concerned after hearing that they would have to pay for the time if they did not garner 2% of the vote. Some parties did not use all their free time. The law required that roughly a third of free time be devoted to group coverage of parties, such as round tables and debates. However, it was often difficult to stimulate discussion among fairly inexperienced party leaders with little television presence.

4.3 Regional television

With little opportunity for switching jobs, regional journalists find themselves under even tighter controls from the authorities. In addition, regional leaders tend to keep a close watch on news broadcasts in their areas. Central television is not immune from this effect. NTV reports that their news shows have been switched off three times in Vladivostok when covering the local leader Yevgeny Nazdratenko, according to Kulistikov.

In Yekaterinburg, candidates and parties were displeased with the negative campaigning. Igor Mishin, head of Channel 4 in Yekaterinburg and Yabloko candidate, reported attempts by the oblast administration for the channel to adopt a particular line in the local mayoral election, but no adverse consequences followed from resistance to the pressure at this NTV affiliate. Candidates and parties in Yekaterinburg had no complaints about the way in which free time was allocated on television. On the other hand, they complained about high price of paid advertising. In Samara, the events of election campaign were overshadowed by the exclusion two days before the vote of Albert Makashov, a hardline communist, and the role of Governor Konstantin Titov in the Union of the Rightwing Forces.

The channel Peterburg TV is St. Petersburg's main television channel which serves roughly six million people in the region. Governor Vladimir Yakovlev privatised the

formerly state-owned channel in 1998 and named his deputy as head of the new station. The city administration owns the major stake in Peterburg TV. In its news and political programme “Sobytie” the broadcaster gave unconditional support to the Governor and positive coverage to Fatherland-All Russia. The channel campaigned strongly against Yabloko. Last spring, Chernyadyev told his audience that the reason his programme aired positive report about Yakovlev was simple: “He bought us”.

4.4 Radio

Russia has a mixture of state-run and private radio stations. Radio stations in Russia, both state and private, reported that they felt a relative lack of pressure to provide support for a particular party during the 1999 elections. Radio’s reach and influence, however, is much smaller although it could be argued it remains an oasis of relatively balanced coverage. In addition, radio is relatively popular among retired people, who are particularly dedicated voters. This can amplify the influence of the medium, although it is far less influential than television.

As on television, only a handful of parties received significant attention on radio during the elections, although the pattern is slightly different. In a study of total time (including advertising, analysis, news and special programming), it was the Union of Rightwing Forces that emerged with the greatest amount of coverage at over 9½ hours. Other parties to receive significant amounts of coverage were Fatherland-All Russia (about nine hours), Our Home is Russia (about seven hours), the Congress of Russian Communities/Boldyrev Movement (just over six hours), the Zhirinovsky Bloc (just under six hours) and Yabloko (about five hours). Interestingly, Unity and the Communist Party similar amounts of time at about three hours each. Must of the time was coded as editorial coverage, although both Fatherland-All Russia and the Union of Rightwing Forces bought some advertising time.

While Putin dominated on television, Zhirinovsky was the most prominent figure on radio with 24% of the coverage for key figures. Putin, however, was not far behind at 20%. Other people receiving a significant amount of coverage as key figures were Luzhkov (16%), Yavlinsky (10%), Shoigu (9%), Yeltsin (9%) and Primakov (7%). These results suggest that the coverage of the campaign was different on radio, although a strong focus on Fatherland-All Russia and the Zhirinovsky Bloc was the same as on television. However, the pattern of coverage varied a great deal from station to station (as outlined below).

Radio Rossiya
Funded by the state, Radio Rossiya is the most popular radio station in Russia, reaching an estimated 96 percent of the country. Station General Director Igor Ambrosov said the station receives approximately $400,000 annually from the government and makes up the remaining two-thirds of its budget through advertising revenue. Like the television workers at RTR, his station felt the pinch after the economic crisis in 1998, when workers weren’t paid for two months. In addition, pay was cut after the crisis, Ambrosov said.

Ambrosov said that his radio station is the only one in some markets (he named Kalmykia as an example) and estimated that the station attracted perhaps 40-60 million listeners. The station has 23% of the market share in Moscow, he said. Roughly half the programming has a political theme (i.e. news and current affairs), while the rest is drama, music, literature, educational or on other themes.

According to the EIM quantitative survey, Our Home is Russia dominated political party coverage on Radio Rossiya, receiving about 6½ hours of coverage. This was about six times as much as any other party and little of it appeared to be advertising. While this does suggest that Radio Rossiya certainly wasn't toeing the Kremlin line, as Our Home is Russia no longer represents their interests, is odd that so much time would be devoted to one relatively unsuccessful and largely irrelevant party in the elections. The tone of the bulk of the political party coverage was neutral.

Coverage of key figures was essentially shared among three political players – Zhirinovsky (31%), Putin (26%) and Yeltsin (24%). It is interesting that then-president Yeltsin received substantially more attention on Radio Rossiya than on other news outlets. Ambrosov pointed out in an interview with the EIM that Radio Rossiya, as the largest federal radio station, has an obligation to present news about the government and its leaders to Russian listeners. Thus, the station would have more of a focus on incumbent leaders. Shoigu also received a relatively large amount of coverage on Radio Rossiya (11%). Most of the coverage was neutral, although about a quarter of the coverage of Putin was coded as positive.

Radio Mayak

State-owned Radio Mayak is the 2nd most popular radio station in the country, according to its general director Andrei Bystritskii, and can reach about 92 percent of the country. The station estimates its daily reach at about 9-10 million people daily and about 16-17 million weekly. As the government funding only covers a fraction of the operating costs, the station also takes advertising. Roughly two-thirds of its programming is news, analytical programmes and other shows; the rest is music, according to Bystritskii.

The coverage of political parties on Radio Mayak followed the national pattern. The most coverage was given to the Union of Rightwing Forces (about an hour and 40 minutes) and Fatherland-All Russia (about an hour and a half). A small fraction of the news on Fatherland-All Russia was negative, but most of its was coded as neutral. This would suggest that state-controlled radio stations were able to pursue a more independent line from the Kremlin interests than state-controlled television channels.

However, federal figures did dominate on the news – Putin, Shoigu and Yeltsin among them garnered 70% of the coverage of key figures. About a quarter of the mentions of Putin were coded as positive. It should be noted that station head Bystritskii said that the station invited Luzhkov several times, but he never came on the air.

Ekho Moskvy

Ekho Moskvy (Echo of Moscow) is a non-governmental, private radio station that is part of the Media-Most Group (as is the NTV television station). Although considered an influential and respected station, Ekho Moskvy has fairly limited range, about 1.2 million listeners in Moscow and the surrounding area.

The station devoted the greatest amount of time to the Union of Rightwing Forces (about 4 hours) and Fatherland-All Russia (about an hour and 20 minutes). About a tenth of the coverage of the Union of Rightwing Forces was deemed positive by the coders, with a few minutes of negative coverage. In addition, while most of the coverage of Fatherland-All Russia on Ekho Moskvy was neutral, coders found both positive and negative coverage of the party as well.

Putin had a relatively small amount of coverage (14%) as a key figure on Ekho Moskvy. Yeltsin (32%) and Zhirinovsky (23%) had far more. Communist leader

Zyuganov got a fairly large amount of coverage (15%) on Ekho Moskvy. Interestingly, although Ekho Moskvy is focussed on the Moscow market, Moscow mayor Luzhkov had less coverage (7%) than he received on other broadcasting outlets, notably NTV (owned by the same media company).

Russkoe Radio
At state-owned Russkoe Radio, the Congress of Russian Communities/Boldyrev movement received the largest amount of coverage (about 2½ hours). Yabloko, Unity, Civic Dignity, KEDR (the green party) and the Zhirinovsky Bloc also received relatively large amounts of coverage. The tone was mostly neutral. Interestingly, Putin was relatively ignored (6%) while Shoigu received the largest amount of coverage (29%) as a key figure on the station. Yavlinsky (24%), Zhirinovsky (22%) and Primakov (15%) split most of the rest of the coverage of key figures among them. The tone of the coverage was neutral.

Radio 7
Radio 7, funded by the Moscow administration, made its allegiances quite clear in elections. While its news on political parties had a heavy emphasis on Fatherland-All Russia, the coverage of key figures was almost all (92%) on Luzhkov.

4.5 The future for Russian elections and broadcasting

The 1999 Russian Duma campaign solidified trends toward biased political coverage on Russian television, particularly on state-controlled outlets. Although patterns of unfair coverage – notably an unusually large amount of time devoted to the Kremlin-backed party or incumbent president – had been noted in earlier elections, the 1999 Duma elections introduced the concept of compromising material and dubious news shows attacking political rivals. The most notorious example of this was on ORT, in the Sergei Dorenko programme discussed above.

Yet the problems of bias and its affiliated phenomenon, *kompromat*, were merely the most prominent problems faced by Russian television journalists. Other problems included a lack of viewer interest in being educated about various political parties, little ingenious or interesting marketing by political parties, the tendency to report on leaders rather than policies and a lack of money in both state-run and private broadcasting. The situation should be quite similar for the presidential campaign in March 2000.

Journalists and media observers themselves are divided about the influence of the media on elections in Russia. NTV's Kulistikov points out even when Yeltsin controlled all the television stations in the 1996 elections, a sizeable minority still voted for the communist leader for president. Others point to the ability of television to create political movements with little or no grass-roots support, such as the Unity party. Yelena Rykovtseva, a columnist who writes on television, said that Unity was a "*yefernaya partiya*", i.e. a "television screen party" that didn't exist outside the stream of electronic images flickering across television sets throughout Russia. In the end, she said, the popularity of those type of parties was nothing more than the popularity of the television station – rather than a real political phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the voters are not getting basic information about political parties, their platforms or even their basic ideologies. "The voter doesn't get enough information to

form decisions," said TV-Centre's Ivanov. "Everything is focussed on discreditation. Everything is on the most primitive, low level."

"This type of coverage doesn't help the voters make their choice. The campaign widens the gap between the voters and the policymakers. And I think the alienation has grown and this is not good for the growth of Russian democracy," said NTV's Kulistikov.

Although it was not known that the presidential elections would take place so quickly after the parliamentary elections in Russia, the battle for broadcast control was clearly part of the pre-presidential election skirmish. "The Kremlin politics is to do the same thing -- control all the mass media for the presidential race," Kulistikov said.

5 Print media

Jonathan Steele

Newspaper reading in Russia fell sharply at the start of the economic reform process when the liberalisation of prices led to hyperinflation and the destruction of most people's savings. According to the annual yearbook of the State Committee for Statistics, newspaper circulation dropped from 142 million in 1992 to 84 million the following year. Although it subsequently picked up again to 123 million in 1997 (the last year for which figures have been published), almost all editors report that their papers are thinner than they used to be. They also reported a second drop in circulation and pagination since the rouble devaluation and financial crisis of August 1998. Since Soviet times there has also been a tendency for people to drop their subscriptions to newspapers and buy them at street kiosks instead. This is partly for financial reasons but also because of the growing inefficiency of the postal service.

In spite of newspapers' relative insignificance compared to television, there has been a growing tendency over the last few years for newspapers to be bought by businessmen with strong political agendas. Although several editors told the EIM's monitors that their paper's owner or major share-holder did not telephone them to give instructions, it was clear that most papers to a greater or lesser extent reflected their proprietor's political preferences.

In terms of the obligations which the written press is expected to fulfil in a democracy, there were serious problems during the campaign. These can be summarised as biased coverage, the printing of dirty propaganda (so-called *'kompromat'* against individual candidates), and the disguising of paid advertisements as though they were independent articles.

In these elections the main battle-ground in the media was between the Kremlin which had its favoured figure Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and the electoral bloc, Unity, and the rival formation, Fatherland-All Russia, led by Yevgeny Primakov, a former Prime Minister, and Yuri Luzhkov, the Mayor of Moscow. It was widely accepted that the performance of these two blocks in the polls would have a powerful effect on the presidential race which was due within a maximum of six months' time. EIM monitoring of mentions of political parties in the national newspapers reflected this perception. Fatherland-All Russia and Unity were the only two blocs which each received more than two thousand mentions in the final three weeks of the campaign (see Table 3.1).

The monitoring also showed that although the majority of coverage of these two blocs was neutral, Fatherland-All Russia was subjected to about three times as much criticism as Unity. Nevertheless it can be argued that even neutral coverage counted as a plus for Unity, since it was a totally new formation that wanted to obtain name recognition rapidly. Table 3.1. shows that it got more coverage than either of the well-established blocs, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the Yabloko bloc, led by Grigory Yavlinsky. This helped to give Unity instant credibility over and above the other dozen or so blocs which had also not stood for election to the Duma before.

Clearly editors have to make news judgements about the real and potential importance of political developments and it would have been absurd not to see that Unity was a key factor. Nevertheless the very large amount of coverage given to Unity, as compared to all other blocs except for Fatherland-All Russia, seemed to reflect an element of bias among newspaper owners and a desire to boost the bloc's chances.

Among the highest circulation newspapers are the weekly Argumenty i Fakty (current circulation of 3 million compared to 30 million in 1990), Trud (800,000 on most days and 1,700,000 on Thursdays) and Komsomolskaya Pravda (circulation 700,000 on most days, and 2,400,000 on Fridays).

Argumenty i Fakty claims to be the “only independent national paper in Russia”, according to Alexander Meshchersky, the chairman of its board of directors. It has survived the economic crisis and avoided having a single tycoon-owner by having no publicly quoted shares and by starting up a series of separate weekly publications on issues ranging from gardening to pets to romance. It also has its own distribution network including street kiosks. The weekly gave by far and away most coverage to Fatherland-All Russia but Unity was in second place. Coverage of Unity was more positive than negative (see Table 3.17).

The daily paper Trud is formally owned by its own staff but the energy giant, Gazprom, which is linked to Viktor Chernomyrdin of the electoral bloc Our Home is Russia, has a large packet of shares. This appeared to be reflected in the relatively large amount of space given by the newspaper to Our Home in Russia, although some of it was negative (Table 3.12). Trud gave heavy coverage to Unity, almost rivalling the amount it gave to Fatherland-All Russia. But what was significant was how the balance of positive versus negative coverage in Trud was weighted in favour of the pro-Kremlin bloc Unity.

The controlling shareholder of Komsomolskaya Pravda is the Interros Holding Company, whose chief executive officer is Vladimir Potanin. One of Russia's “oligarchs”, Potanin was a strong supporter of the Yeltsin-Putin camp and an opponent of Fatherland-All Russia. Komsomolskaya Pravda gave strong and uncritical coverage not only to Unity but also to the Union of Rightwing Forces, the pro-Kremlin bloc of young rightwing economists led by former Prime Minister, Sergei Kiriyenko. (see Table 3.17). Although Potanin is a determined anti-Communist, Komsomolskaya Pravda carried more articles attacking Fatherland-All Russia than the Communists.

Only a few papers' coverage was relatively fair as between Unity and Fatherland-All Russia. Parlamentskaya Gazeta gave very similar space to both, and with a comparable balance of positive and negative mentions (Table 3.9). Obshchaya Gazeta gave identical and neutral space to both blocs (Table 3.20). The newspaper Segodnya, whose main shareholder, the “oligarch” Vladimir Gusinsky, supported Fathertland-All Russia, was a rare exception in actually giving more favourable treatment to Prime Minister Putin than to Mayor Luzhkov (Table 10.3). Segodnya's editor, Mikhail Berger, said only half-jokingly “I suspect Gusinsky never reads this paper”. More typical was the coverage in Nezavisimaya Gazeta, which is controlled financially by the pro-Kremlin tycoon, Boris Berezovsky. In spite of its title, the Independent paper, it was far more negative towards Luzhkov than Putin (Table 10.7).

Russian newspapers have long had a polemical slant, in which news and comment are regularly intertwined. The tradition goes back beyond the Communist period to

the first newspapers published under the Tsars. This changed little with the lifting of censorship under Mikhail Gorbachev and the re-birth of a non-Communist press. But the monitors were repeatedly told during the 1999 campaign that the quality of reporting had declined since the presidential election of 1996 and the last Duma election of 1995. "The coverage is far worse than in 1995 and 1996. It's much dirtier", said Alexander Meshchersky from Argumenty i Fakty.

Examples of bias were frequent. Shortly before the voting Mayor Luzhkov held a final rally just outside the walls of the Kremlin. Kommersant, which supported Unity and the Union of Rightwing Forces, sent a reporter to cover it, but the article on December 15 was a hatchet job designed to ridicule the gathering, and imply that the audience was made up entirely of paid city employees. In the penultimate paragraph the reporter wrote "At the end of this disjointed speech, the chairman gave the floor to Luzhkov. With that the meeting ended". So not a single word of the candidate's speech was reported in an 800-word article. Izvestiya (December 15) covered the same rally with a picture and 400 words of text, but again not a line of Luzhkov's speech. A report in Nezavisimaya Gazeta on the same event was only slightly fairer. Here four sentences of Luzhkov's speech were reported in a 700-word article.

Worse than the bias was the scurrilous nature of some of the press attacks on candidates. Printing unsubstantiated charges against politicians has become a common feature of Russian journalism. It continued throughout the election campaign. It reached such proportions that it was even criticised by official representatives of the Russian government. "No-one expected such a violent and fierce campaign, or the use of such unimaginably dirty tricks. At the moment there is practically no such thing as journalistic ethics, All editors represent particular interests", Vladimir Grigoriev, the deputy minister for press, television, radio and the mass media told EIM monitors.

Anatoly Yurkov, the chief editor of Rossisskaya Gazeta (which is owned by the Russian government) referred to the widespread use of compromising material to blacken political opponents. This included alleged transcripts of private telephone calls or claims about fraud. "The war of *kompromat* is casting a stain on the whole campaign. The battle between the pro-government forces and OVR is extremely fierce and unprincipled. It's become a list of accusations - who lied most? Who stole most?".

Editors did not see any chance to stop the negative campaigning. There was a feeling that it was an inevitable, though regrettable, part of politics. "The campaign is fierce, but there is no alternative", said Sergei Agafanev, the deputy editor of Noviye Izvestiya. Some explained it as a result of the emphasis on personalities rather than ideology. Whereas in 1996 the choice was posed as one between communism and democracy, this time the Communist Party was virtually ignored and there was no obvious political distinction between the other election blocs. They and their supporters in the media resorted to negative campaigning and mud-slinging instead of attacking their opponents' political views. "Ideology does not need so much mud", said Mr Meshchersky in explaining the switch of tactics.

Viktor Loshak, the editor of the weekly Moscow News, one of the few objective papers, put the fierceness of the campaign down to the high stakes. "The Duma has become a feeding-trough. Many members use their positions to make money. For successful candidates from the provinces a seat in the Duma means a free flat in Moscow, and a high salary. Few of them ever return to the provinces", he said. Another reason he cited for the tense campaign was that it had become "a trial run for the presidential campaign".

Vitaly Tretyakov, the editor of Nezavisimaya Gazeta, put the ferocity of the campaign down to the fact that in the aftermath of the Soviet system of total state control Russia was going through “a cold civil war with a still unresolved struggle over power and property - the new ruling class is not yet fixed, and people want to destroy each other's business empires”. Mr Tretyakov said he himself used to have good relations with two of the Kremlin's opponents, Grigory Yavlinsky and Yevgeny Primakov, but for various reasons became disappointed with them. He now found himself in more agreement with Boris Berezovsky, his paper's new owner, but had reached this position separately. “Of course Berezovsky is more sharply critical of Primakov than I am. His views are harsher than mine”. “There are no independent publications in Russia,but ours is freer than others”, Mr Tretyakov added. “Berezovsky is no better or worse than other oligarchs, but at least he makes his goals open”.

Because of the high stakes invested in the results of these elections and the presidential contest, for which they were seen as the fore-runners, huge amounts of money were spent on buying advertising space in newspapers and on paying newspapers to publish campaign material. According to the election law any state-owned paper is obliged to publish advertising material from any bloc or party which requests it, up to a limit which is fixed and equal for every bloc or party. The material must be labelled as an advertisement. Krasnaya Zvezda, whose publisher is the Ministry of Defence, and Rossiskaya Gazeta, whose publisher is the Russian Government, did this correctly.

In addititon, government and non-government newspapers are allowed to accept paid advertisements for political parties. Virtually every newspaper, with the exception of Krasnaya Zvezda, said they accepted such advertisements. The election law is unclear about whether and how this material should be labelled. In most democratic societies it is taken for granted that such advertising must be marked in a way that shows readers that it is not independent editorial matter but something which has been paid for or ordered.

In only a few cases did newspapers have a note at the end of an article, saying it was paid by a particular electoral bloc or politician. Most newspapers kept its origins obscure. Izvestiya put it under the rubric “Elections 99” but this was not sufficient to distinguish the material as advertising. Sophisticated readers might detect from an article's tone that it was partisan, but this would not necessarily be enough to show that it was paid. “Elections 99” could be an editorial rubric just as another page might be marked “Sport” or “Foreign News”. An article in Izvestiya on December 15 under the Elections 99 rubric headlined “New Economic Policy: Kiriyenko knows how to save Moscow” was signed by a journalist's name. This also gave the impression it was an ordinary article rather than one that had been ordered and paid for.

Argumenty i Fakty used various techniques for labelling articles about the election, though it was never clear they were paid advertisements. An interview with the head of the Duma in Sakhalin oblast was simply headed “Home Region”. Again, there was no reason for the reader to know this was an advertisement. The same issue of Argumenty i Fakty (number 50, for December 1999) carried two long interviews with Anatoly Chubais and Grigory Yavlinsky. The one with Chubais was done for free, the one with Yavlinsky was paid for by his party Yabloko. Alexander Meshchersky, the chairman of the board of directors deputy editor, said the Chubais interview was newsworthy and therefore unpaid. He explained that the paper had done a similar one, unpaid, with Yavlinsky in the previous issue because it was newsworthy at the time. The second interview with Yavlinsky in issue number 50 was provided by Yabloko, which paid for it. “We would never do two successive interviews with him. It was not news”, Mr Meshchersky said.

He pointed out that the lack of labelling has certain financial advantages. Advertising carries a 35 per cent tax, so that the newspaper raises the price to advertisers for paid articles. If it is unlabelled, the price is less.

Alexander Prokhanov, the editor of the weekly paper Zavtra, took a cheerful view about the use of paid material. He said the Kremlin gave him material which was hostile to Yevgeny Primakov, the leading candidate for Fatherland-All Russia while Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov gave Zavtra material attacking Sergei Shoigu, the leader of the pro-Kremlin bloc, Unity. "We would attack them both anyway. It's very profitable for us to get paid", Mr Prokhanov said. The material was not acknowledged on the newspaper's pages as having been paid.

The majority of paid material which was not labelled far outweighed the number of political advertisements which were labelled. This lack of labelling was a serious deficiency in the elections. If the election law is changed in the future, serious consideration should be given to requiring that all paid material be clearly accompanied by an unambiguous logo or strapline that says it is an advertisement.

Besides deceiving readers, the blurring of advertising and editorial news or comment also helps to contribute to an atmosphere in which public faith in journalists' honesty and integrity is undermined. Readers begin to doubt whether the material they are reading has been objectively researched. This may affect their perception of everything they read, not just at election time. It also creates a conflict of interest. A journalist who takes money from a company, even for an advertisement which is correctly labelled as being paid, puts himself or herself in a potential conflict of interest if he or she has to write a genuine editorial report on that same company later.

Mr Meshchersky acknowledged the problem, when he told us that cynicism was increasing among Russian journalists. "Even if the Communist press was dull, journalists were honest within the permitted limits. Now journalists are more cynical in terms of the new technology of dirty tricks. They are using increasingly dishonest practices. Many Communist journalists believed what they wrote. Now journalists are for sale", he said.

Similar pessimism was expressed by Andrei Illesh, the deputy general director of the news agency Itar-Tass. "The journalistic profession is being destroyed. Journalists are beginning to think you can cheat everyone and that money decides everything. The level of cynicism is particularly worrying. A new generation is coming up which thinks that everything is possible, publishing strange documents, tapping telephones and the like. Imagine what will happen in ten years' time when people want decent information. Who will provide it?"

Vladimir Grigoriev, the deputy minister for press, television, radio, and the mass media, saw a problem in the shortage of journalists with proper qualifications, standards, and experience. There were too many newspapers in relation to the potential market for advertising, he said. Many newspapers were not commercially viable, and there ought to be some shrinkage in their numbers. "There is also a disproportion between the number of publications and the number of professionally trained journalists. We have around 15,000 newspapers plus 8,000 TV and radio stations. There just aren't enough journalists, or even editors for all that".

Mr Grigoriev said he thought the Central Election Commission should find a better way of monitoring the media and influencing its approach, by legislative changes if necessary. "The current laws are not complete. The CEC should take the initiative".

One problem was the low level of fines which can be imposed on broadcasters who violated the code of conduct, such as not giving a right of reply to politicians who are criticised.

Several editors said they would not take paid advertisements from certain parties. Komsomolskaya Pravda, Noviye Izvestiya, and Trud said they would not print advertisements from the Communist Party, even if it was clearly labelled as an advertisement. “As long as it's lawful, we'll bloc them”, said Vladimir Mamentov, the first deputy chief editor of Komsomolskaya Pravda. The paper would also lower the price for political parties which it liked, he said.

The election law does not make clear whether papers have a right to differentiate between parties in this way, or to ban certain parties from advertising. This is a form of discrimination. As long as there is a marketplace for political advertising, everyone should have equal access, provided their party or bloc is legally registered. The only check over the content of the advertisements should be whether they conform to the laws on libel, defamation, and the unacceptability of racial or other inflammatory material.

This is also the position of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on the Mass Media. In the list of recommendations on the role of the media during election campaigns which it adopted on September 9, 1999, it said regulatory frameworks in member states should ensure that “the possibility of buying advertising space should be available to all contending parties, and on equal conditions and rates of payment”. The Russian government signed up to these recommendations.

The recommendations also insist on clear labelling, the point raised here earlier. Regulations should ensure that “the public is aware that a message is a paid political advertisement”.

6 Internet

Michel Tatu

Russia is swiftly entering the cyberspace in spite of numerous economic and technical impediments. According to a recent analysis, Russian native speakers account now for two percent (roughly 5.5 million) of the 277 million online population estimated world-wide.[5] The number of Internet users in Russia doubles every year. Many companies and institutions are now computerised and connected to networks. Powerful portals like List.Ru, Yandex and others give long lists of Russian sites on a plethora of subjects. Nearly all federal institutions are present in the web, but also all the 89 "subjects" of the Federation (federal units), many cities, most newspapers and other publications. There are free electronic magazines such as the e-daily *Utro v Verkhakh* and the e-newsagency *Lenta.r*,[6] although many media outlets charge for their Internet information.

At present, the Internet plays a modest role in political communication in Russia. There are three main groups of Russian information suppliers on the Internet:

- Parties and political movements. The portal List.ru lists 170 such sites, including 95 at the national level (all-Russian or interregional movements). Most important parties are present on the net. Many of their supporters have their own sites where they promote the ideas of their favourite party. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish such sites from the official web presentations of the political parties. Sites representing the regional administrations are largely used for the propaganda of the governor or the mayor.

- Political think-tanks and other academic institutions. One of the most important sites in this field is *Panorama,* heir of the unofficial publication of the same name founded in 1989.[7] Over time, it has become an important centre for information and research, with 20 permanent staff and 30 associated political researchers with a strong democratic leaning. Their data bank is appreciated by many institutions in Moscow, including foreign embassies. In addition to powerful databases reserved for paying subscribers, they offer abundant information on institutions, people and events of the political life free of charge. A related organisation, *Politika*, provides at its site information in the same area.[8] Worth mentioning is also *Epolit*, an electronic magazine focused on political information.[9]

- Private consulting companies specialised in political campaigning. One of them is the Centre for Political Consulting 'Nikkolo M", founded in 1989, which offers "ready-made" (*pod kliuch*) electoral campaigns, including political and psychological studies, advice in strategy, monitoring, etc. Its site provides also detailed information about Russian politics in general.[10] A similar institution, the

[5] Source: Global Internet Statistics, http://www.euromktg.com/globalstats/
[6] http://lenta.ru/
[7] http://www.panorama.ru:8101/
[8] http://www.cityline.ru/politika/
[9] http://www.epolit.ru/
[10] http://www.nikkolom.ru/

Centre of Political Technologies, created in 1993, offers also expertise on "developing ties with power structures and using them for political campaigning". This sounds like a clear invitation to trading of influence, well beyond lobbying. [11]

Two broad observations can be made regarding the role that the Russian segment of the Internet played in the campaign before the parliamentary elections:

- Although all mentioned institutions and sites were involved in the campaign for the election to the Duma, either directly, or through coverage and analysis, the influence of Internet on the voters appears marginal, far behind the role of television, newspapers and radio.

- Russian Internet users are a minority, but also an elite, more interested and sometimes more active in political affairs than the average population. Several sites developed interactive devices to enhance a maximum input of the viewers. Discussion groups, opinion polls and Internet voting simulations were among such tools.

Panorama listed 21 sites devoted to the 1999 electoral campaign. Some of them were especially created for this event. But there was certainly much more content on the Internet related to the elections. Many politicians launched or re-launched their sites to promote their candidacy. EIM encountered about 30 such "personal sites", for instance by Chubais, Shokhin, Berezovsky, Ziuganov, Lebed, Stepashin, Seleznev, etc.

Here is an overview of the most significant election sites:

- The Central Electoral Commission posted all pertinent texts of legislation and other official information. It offered also data not easily accessible elsewhere: for example the income and wealth of all party lists candidates. Surprisingly and without explaining why, it omitted those of candidates for single-mandate constituencies.[12] The site published also the decisions of the Commission concerning violations of the law, its recommendations, etc.

- An electronic magazine, *Russky Deadline,* was created in October 1999 with a wide range of information on the elections. It sustained its presence on the web even after the ballot.[13]

The information posted on those sites came from all sorts of sources. Often it originated from mass media, but information was also provided from private or undisclosed sources. On some sites, there is a visible tendency to look for sensation rather than to communicate political thoughts. For example, the portal List.ru lists 14 sites in the single category of "kompromat". One of those, the private Internet "kompromat" library of Sergueï Gorshkov is in fact a compilation of various press publications without a clear-cut bias.[14] The editor specifies that the posted documents "are not prohibited for free publication on the net" or are published "with the agreement of the copyrights' owner". But than he adds: "Unfortunately, there may be cases when the author of the text is not mentioned or is incorrectly listed. Please let me know, I will correct everything…".

[11] http://www.cpt.ru/
[12] http://www.fci.ru
[13] http://www.deadline.ru/
[14] http://www.compromat.ru/

The relationship between Internet editors and the authorities is ambiguous. At a press conference in January 2000, the chairman of the Central Electoral Commission Alexandr Vishnyakov answered negatively when questioned about the applicability of the election law to the World Wide Web. He said: “We have no real juridical basis to consider Internet as a mass media in a direct form”. But than he added that at “many points” obligations derived from the electoral law could be addressed to Internet editors. The deputy minister for the press, Mikhaïl Seslavinsky, was much more assertive in listing those points: “Who is the owner of the domain? Is the server on Russian territory or abroad? Is it registered as an electronic mass media? Is the source of information indicated?”. He seemed to be implying a strong inclination by the government to interfere into the political communication on the net.

In fact there was one case of such interference in the 1999 election campaign, due to what Vishnyakov characterised as a clear violation of the law. On December 17, two days before the election, the Internet editor Gleb Pavlovsky announced at a press conference in Moscow his project “elections99.com”.[15] He was going to publish on his site, in real time, from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. Moscow time on election day the results of exit-polls organised in 20 cities across all the Russian Federation. The idea was to ask a single question people leaving the voting premises: “For whom did you vote?”. Pavlovsky expected to know the probable results of the vote before the official announcements by the Central Electoral Commission which were expected for the following night. He admitted that he was aware that the publication of any opinion poll was prohibited on election day, but he alleged that this was necessary to prevent fraud. Characterising Internet as “a place of presence, not mass media”, he wanted to oppose, what he called “a machine of pre-emptive control” and a ”falsification machine". He suspected the authorities to be placing such devices into position. In addition to the poll, the site was to post comments of these preliminary results and to denounce all violations of the law observed during the election.

The result was typical of similar “Internet fights “ observed in other countries. Pavlovsky received on the morning of the elections a telephone call from the General Procurator’s office ordering him to close his site. Vishnyakov asked the same from the provider company Telekom-Tsentr. At 11a.m, the main site was practically inaccessible and Pavlovsky had to stop the posting of the poll results on it. He continued to do it on about 20 mirror sites in Russia and in the US. Altogether, he claims to have been read by more than 20,000 people on the Internet and to have prevented the rigging of the elections since his “exit-polls” gave figures very similar to the official ones.

It has to be pointed out already that such occurrences are not special to Russia. The same has happened in other countries where publication of opinion pools is prohibited in the days preceding an election, as in France. On many occasions newspapers in Switzerland and Belgium posted information of this kind on their Internet sites.

The Foundation ”Informatika for Democracy” (INDEM) initiated with the sponsoring of UNESCO, the *Obshchaya Gazeta*, the “Open Society Fund” and other non-governmental institutions, the project ”INDEM 2000+” intended to monitor the election.[16] The Foundation invited everybody, both actors of the political debate or individual observers, to send information about the main events of the campaign to be posted. This included reports of violations the election regulations they might learn of. Only a subscribed member could send such information, which were validated by

[15] http://www.elections99.com/
[16] www.indem.ru

a manager of the system and his team (five persons, including two programmers), then sorted according to many criteria. A big data base was created, allowing research among more than 200 types of violations, including those concerning the mass media, with the text of the relevant law or ruling posted. The aim of the program was to recruit on a permanent basis hundred of volunteers to observe not only the 1999 Duma election, but the 2000 presidential vote also.

The INDEM program had no problems with the authorities. Indeed, one member of the Central Electoral Commission, O. Volkova, was also a member of the Observer Council of the program, chaired by the well-known ambassador Adamishin. It had apparently lacked time to develop a strong network since its creation in the summer of 1999 and the December election. On December 18, the site had received 2,500 visitors and registered 250 volunteers from a few regions only. Two hundred complaints had been filed, among them 28 concerning the media. At this moment, access to the data base of the site is not possible on-line.

Altogether, despite its still limited audience, the rapid growth of Internet in Russia has helped to develop the interest for political life and civic activism. At the same time, it induced the authorities to look for ways and means to control the distribution of Russian domains and their content. This, in turn, mobilised the Internet community in Russia to fight back by promoting freedom of speech on Russian Internet sites.

On 5 January, then acting President and prime minister Vladimir Putin approved a draft government order extending the rights to Internet surveillance enjoyed by the Federal Security Service (FSB) to several other agencies. These are the tax police, the Interior Ministry, the border guards, the customs department, the Kremlin security service, the presidential security service, the parliamentary security service and the Foreign Intelligence Service. The newly prepared regulation is the updated version of a federal law from 1995. The new regulation, according to a statement of Andrei Morozov of the Russian Justice Ministry, quoted by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, also allows authorities to close any Web site that they think may compromise security. This moves are being critically discussed in the Russian public, in particular on the various pro-democracy sites. The government order is still under examination in various ministries and other public authorities and is not being applied yet.

7 Samara

Michel Tatu

7.1 Political background

Samara is one of the most industrialised areas of Russia. It considers itself to be the third most developed region of the federation. Samara provides four per cent of the total industrial production of the country with 2.2% of its population. VAZ automobiles and Aviakor aeroplanes are produced in the area. These production sites are an inheritance from the years of the Second World War, when Samara (previously Kuibyshev) gained many industries displaced from Moscow and became the "rear capital" of the Soviet Union.

The population of the *oblast* is 3.3 million, with 1.2 million in Samara and 720,000 in Tolyati.

The region is divided in five single-mandate constituencies, for which 44 candidates were campaigning. In addition, there were 28 party lists registered in comparison to 43 lists in 1995 and 13 in 1993.

Governor Konstantin Titov played an important role in this election. He is the one of the founders of the Coalition of Rightwing Forces (SPS) and the only acting governor on this list in the whole Federation. The SPS fared better in the Samara region than on the national level and overtook Putin's party: 22.12%, compared to 19.98%. SPS came second in the *oblast* after the Communist Party, which is traditionally strong in this region. The Communists lost somewhat compared to 1995. Together with their agrarian allies, they scored 26.13% of the vote against 27.64% four years earlier.

The SPS was one of the best organised parties in the region, along with other parties which have a more or less efficient structure at the national level such as the Communist party or the LDPR (Zhirinovsky). OVR was weakened in the region because of the rivalry between its local and federal leaders. The same division happened in the even more poorly structured *Iabloko* , that counts only 40 registered members in the region.

Three days before the vote the local electoral commission excluded Albert Makashov from the ballot. A local court confirmed this decision. General Makashov, a member of the KPRF, chairman of a movement for the defence of the Army and member of the outgoing Duma, had become notorious at the national and even international level for his anti-semitic outbursts. His exclusion appeared regular since he had overstepped the limits of allowed electoral campaign funds. For the printing of his propaganda leaflets he paid in cash which is forbidden by law. But many people, including some of Makashov's foes, thought that he was not the only candidate to violate the rules and that he was excluded for political reasons. One consequence was that many voters in his former electoral district Nr.152, said "no" to all remaining candidates. Some 26 per cent voted against all candidates, only slightly less than what the winner Vera Lekareva of the Union of right-wing forces (SPS) achieved, namely 28 per cent.

As in many other regions, the discrepancy between party affiliation and personal preferences is also strong in Samara. The same voters opted for quite different candidates and lists. For example in the district Nr.151 (Novokuibyshevski okrug), the first secretary of the KPRF regional committee Valentin Romanov was elected in 1995 with over 49% of the vote. But in the same area the anti-communist Konstantin Titov was elected governor with 60 % of the vote. The same can be said of the "red-brown" Makashov. Half of his voters had voted for Titov as governor.

7.2 Media and the authorities

There are 611 media organisations officially registered in the oblast. The local Union of Journalists has 700 members. Journalists are paid between 20 and 100 $ a month.

Local TV stations have much smaller audiences than the national TV networks. At peak of prime time (10:30 p.m.), in Samara oblast the audience of the leading national network ORT surpasses by far the number of viewers of any other station. It achieves a rating of 350 on a scale of 400, followed by RTR with 170. The first local station, SKAT, has only 80.

SKAT/REN TV.
This private company is associated with the commercial broadcaster NTV in Moscow. It broadcasts 20 hours per day to a potential audience of 1,3 Million people. SKAT draws its income chiefly from advertising (60%), the remaining 40% derives from materials produced for other companies. The average monthly income of its 250 employees is about 100 $.

Director Nikolaï Fomenko publicly supported the Coalition of Rightwing Forces SPS in the printed publication of the station, Channel 7. The station devoted 37% of its coverage during the election campaign to the SPS, compared to zero per cent to the KPRF. This station accepted paid advertising from all parties, including the communists. Putin came first in the list of the leaders most mentioned in its coverage.

RIO.
This private television and radio company is affiliated with the central network TV6 and covers the entire "oblast" (3.5 millions inhabitants). It employs some 200 people. RIO is directed and owned by Vitali Dobrusin, previously a local correspondent of the former Soviet state broadcaster Gosteleradio. As a deputy to the State Duma in Moscow at the end of the eighties, he enjoyed a certain independence from the governor Titov. He told EIM observers that relations with the Titov administration had deteriorated recently. RIO's coverage of the SPS was minimal, far behind the coverage given to "Our Home is Russia" (35 %), to Yabloko and the KPRF (13% each). Dobrusin is proud to have broadcast, despite criticism, a one 90 minutes paid interview with Zyuganov. As a result, Titov refused to buy space time for SPS at RIO.

Dobrusin is also chief editor of *Novaia Gazeta* in Samara, leaning more to the right than RIO.

7.3 Print media

Volzhskaia Kommuna was founded 93 years ago. It has always been the organ of the regional public authorities and is now under the control of governor Titov. Its circulation of 30,000 copies (36,000 on Saturday) is sold mainly through subscription. The budget is covered at 40% by advertising, 30% by subscriptions and 30% by regional administration subsidies. One big problem is the cost of paper, which has increased sixfold since 1998. The editor-in-chief, a former member of the communist party, has been with the newspaper since 1971. He is now a vocal supporter of the Union of Rightwing forces, the movement of the governor.

Samarskaya Gazeta is somewhat special in the sense that it is founded by the city administration, i.e. by the leftist mayor Lemansky. The city subsidises 30 % of the newspaper's budget. Nevertheless, the editor-in-chief, Sergei Ryazanov, is at the same time one of the leaders of Yabloko in Samara. He openly supported this party in his articles, although the newspaper was striving to be pluralistic during the campaign. In one single issue (16 December), the reader could find an article criticising Serguei Shoigu, head of the Unity list, and another one praising Vladimir Putin, official supporter of the same list. While not supporting the Fatherland - All Russia bloc, it denounced in several articles the controversial ORT anchorman Dorenko and his methods of denigrating opponents of *Iedinstvo. Gazeta* published political advertising, duly stating that it was paid for.

Delo is a private weekly, distinguished in 1997 as the best regional economic weekly magazine in Russia. It is owned by Fedorov's group, named after the active business-minded journalist, who claims a good relationship with Titov. The Fedorov printing plant prioduces most of the regional administration publications. With a high subscription price of 700 rubles for six month and its limited circulation of some 1,000 copies, *Delo* targets the elite of the regional business. It has refused any political advertising and abstained from publishing any *kompromat*. In its coverage of the campaign, it has deliberately ignored the KPRF while favouring Yabloko. *Navigator*, another publication of the same group, accepted paid political advertising, but only from three parties : SPS, Yabloko and Yedinstvo. The Zhirinovsky bloc submitted an advertisement, but was rejected.

Samarskoe Obozrenie. The weekly was founded in 1996 by young local journalists who previously worked as correspondents for Moscow newspapers. It has the reputation of following the orders of its sponsors and their business interests – mainly the gas and oil industry. Half of its income comes from advertising. The price is 1,100 $ a page while the minimum monthly salary for journalists equals 100 $. The paper editors said they had little interest in political paid ads, to which they assigned only one page and a half out of a total of 32 in each issue.

7.4 Media coverage of the campaign

There is a lot of criticism of the press law adopted in March 1999. The following arguments are brought forward by journalists and other media professionals:

- It discriminates against state-supported media in comparison to private companies. The former have to accept free political advertising and must observe limitations to

the volume of paid ads. The latter are free to pick up the advertisement they prefer and to refuse others and they do not have to observe any limits regarding the amount of paid ads. Also, ads ordered by a party have to be paid two days in advance by a money transfer from the Moscow headquarters of the party. In many cases, this rule could not be applied for practical reasons.

- The law limits press freedom in term of news coverage and political analysis because it bars journalists from "agitating". Many journalists complained that the press was in effect silenced because of such regulations. This in turn made the coverage of the campaign dull. Others journalists boasted that they violated such rules, but that the electoral commission showed no concern about it.

Due to the position of governor Titov as a leader of the SPS, this party got a better coverage in the Samara region than on national level. SPS came third in the coverage of political parties by All-Russian channels, but first on most Samara channels, with the exception of RIO private television.

There were far fewer cases of "black PR" and *kompromat* than in Moscow. According to the majority of those interviewed, the methods used in the capital were generally rejected. On December 7, around 2000 demonstrators protested in Samara against Sergei Dorenko, the "telekiller" of ORT Harsh criticism against him appeared in *Volzhskaya Kommuna* and in *Samarskaya Gazeta*. In one case, the SKAT TV asked one candidate to remove an ad because SKAT thought that it contains an insult against another candidate. The same happened with the weekly *Obozrenie*, which refused one paid ad of similar kind. According to Benyamin Zvonovsky, a local politologist, the bitter fight of the ORT and RTR against the Luzhkov-Primakov coalition had damaged the confidence of the public in the mass media as a source of information. One local pool showed that for the average citizen, the smear-campaign in Moscow appeared to be coming from another world and happening in a different life.

Opinion polls were often published during the campaign. Local media preferred to use national polls from in Moscow, not local ones, which were considered by some local experts to be unreliable. The poll institutes complained that the media, in most cases, refused to pay for publishing their findings.

Free political advertising was compulsory only for the state supported media. In practice, this applied to four outlets in the Samara oblast: the official regional newspaper *Voljzhsakya Kommuna*, the organ of the regional Duma *Samarskie Izvestia*, and the two branchs of the state electronic media company GTRK, Samara television and Samara Radio.

In the official regional newspaper *Voljzhsakya Kommuna*, each candidate was entitled to 240 square centimetres of text or image, to be published between November 10 and December 17. The newspaper decided to group all these texts in a special four-pages supplement every Friday. Normally, *Volzhskaya Kommuna* was supposed to be refunded for this free allocated space, but the regional administration argued that since the budget had been adopted at the end of last year, i.e. before the adoption of the election law, it was too late and impossible to find the money.

Paid political advertising was less important than in Moscow since, according to many observers, a candidate could afford to spend two to three times less than in the capital. State-affiliated media had a quantitative limitation of the space they could sell. For example, *Volzhskaya Kommuna* could publish 420 sq.cm for each

candidate for a price of 25 roubles per sq. cm. The tariff had to be announced in August 1999 and could not be changed afterwards.

In fact those limits were bypassed in several ways. Many indirect advertisements were paid off the record to the newspapers and presented as normal articles, written and signed by a journalist. This was particularly the case with parties and blocs, less for single-mandate candidates. Even when the political ads were regularly paid, in many cases they were not mentioned as such - the result being a clear misinformation of the reader. According to an official of the electoral commission, the Samara media most guilty in this respect were *Navigator* and *Volzhskaya Kommuna)*. Executives of SKAT TV admitted that in their programmes there were five cases of disguised political advertisements, but they argued that the candidates were not mentioned as such in the items.

One serious incident occurred in the last few weeks of the campaign involving the daily *Samarskaya Gazeta*. Alexandr Belousov, an independent candidate, had ordered and paid in time an advertisement in this newspaper, but at the last moment the editor-in-chief Sergei Ryazanov decided not to publish it, allegedly stating: “If I do it, I will lose my job“. Indeed, *Samarskaya gazeta* depends on the city administration and Samara mayor Lemansky is a foe of Belousov, who was his competitor for the post of mayor. Belousov complained to the regional electoral commission, which said it was ready to impose a fine on the newspaper. According to a commission spokesman, Belousov eventually dropped the matter. In fact, many people say that the commission was very soft in this case. Nevertheless, Belousov won the election with a huge majority.

The regional electoral commission was not entitled to impose fines. The only sanction it could propose was the suppression of the licence which would amount to “overkill”. This could be done only by sending a request to the ministry in charge of the press in Moscow. As a result, no sanctions whatsoever were imposed.

Party officials offered mixed comments on media performance during the campaign. As in many other regions, the KPRF relied on its own activists for the campaign and was not very active in the media. Local leaders of Yabloko were only happy with RIO, whose coverage their considered fair. When Yabloko leader Yavlinsky visited the Samara region on November 19, he had a long interview on SKAT, but his visits were ignored by the local state television GTRK Samara.

As far as paid advertising is concerned, Yabloko decided not to apply to some other media (notably *Volzhskaya Kommuna*), anticipating a refusal.

Altogether, the media situation in Samara oblast during the campaign was not worse than in the rest of the country and probably better than in many other places. The influence of governor Titov was certainly strong, but not dominant - as exemplified by RIO TV. His clout did not prevent a pluralistic approach on the part of several important newspapers. There was far less use of *kompromat* than in Moscow, even though ORT programmes had their influence on the voters in Samara as elsewhere in the country.

8 Saint Petersburg

Benedicte Berner

8.1 Political background

The second largest city in Russia with a population of six million, Saint Petersburg lies on Russia's only border with an EU country, Finland, and has traditionally been regarded in Russia as the ”outpost” for the West.

Since he was elected governor in 1995, Vladimir Yakovlev had promoted a liberal economic policy for the city. In the past years, the Legislative Assembly, one of the few regional parliaments in Russia to enjoy serious influence, has passed several laws designed to help the development of business. The city’s finances are among the healthiest in Russia.

However, since the assassination in 1997 of one of Yakovlev´s closest advisors, a series of contract murders of high profile bankers, attorneys and leading entrepreneurs has plagued the city, which has since then carried the name of Russia´s ”criminal” capital. The killing of the prominent reformist politician Galina Staravoitova, while investigating charges of corruption and crime in the city, was a major blow to Petersburg’s political community.

Saint Petersburg was the scene of two election campaigns: the State Duma election and the gubernatorial elections. The Governor was competing in both as he was running for re-election and also registered as the third leading member on the Fatherland-All Russia list. The conflict surrounding the gubernatorial elections which were given much more attention than the Duma elections, coloured the whole campaign. The gubernatorial elections were due to take place in April 2000, but in October, the faction supporting Governor Yakovlev forced a draft law through the Legislative Assembly moving the date of the elections forward to December 19. Many independent observers in the assembly said the vote on the passing of the law had been rigged. On an appeal from Yabloko which claimed that the vote was illegal, the Presidium of the Supreme court declared the decision invalid on December 11. However, the gubernatorial elections were cancelled by the Saint Petersburg election committee only on December 14. Thus, only the last four evenings of the campaign were entirely devoted to the Duma elections. As many candidates had placed their political advertising close to the election date, the media during this short period was filled with paid advertising.

A series of other incidents marked the campaign: in November a fire broke out at the headquarters of Yabloko where all the signatures needed for the elections were kept. Petersburg Television, the channel controlled by the city administration, compared the fire to the 1933 fire of the Reichstag. At another occasion, city police arrested and fined Yabloko activists for distributing anti-Yakovlev leaflets.

8.2 Results of the Duma elections

Some 54,29% of the citizens of Saint Petersburg voted in the Duma elections; 17,6% of the votes went to the Unity bloc, 17,4% to the Union of Rightwing Forces, 15,7% to Fatherland-All Russia, 14,14% to the Communists and 11,2% to Yabloko. The low results for Yabloko came as a major surprise: in the 1995 parliamentary elections, the party had taken six of the city´s eight single-mandate districts; in these elections it held on to three seats while the Union of Rightwing Forces and Fatherland -All Russia took two seats. One of the Yabloko contenders was former Prime Minister Stepashin, who won overwhelmingly with 49,41% of the votes.

8.3 Media coverage

As Governor Yakovlev was not only campaigning for the gubernatorial elections but also as number three on the Fatherland-All Russia list, after Luzhkov and Primakov, he became part of the national political campaign reflected in the media. As a result the coverage of both campaigns were important in the regional as well as in the national media.

8.4 National media

In Saint Petersburg, like in many other Russian cities, the national electronic media play an important role. The news and political programmes broadcast on the national channels, in particular on the state-owned channels ORT and RTR, have a higher audience rating than the news on the regional channel.

In the national electronic media, the most noteworthy phenomena were the fierce attacks against Yakovlev by the two main channels, ORT and RTR, both in their news and in their political programmes. Already engaged in virulent criticism of Luzhkov and Primakov from Fatherland-All Russia, both channels made strong allegations, depicting the Saint Petersburg authorities as unable to protect the city residents from mafia groups, accusing Yakovlev of corruption, misuse of the city´s budget funds (an investigation was opened in December by the Ministry of Interior into the city´s finances for illegal use of the city budget money to pay for part of the national congress of Fatherland-All Russia which took place in Saint Petersburg in May), links to the local mafia and rigging the vote for the date of the gubernatorial elections. Nikolai Svanidze, hosting RTR´s weekly political programme, Zerkalo, said that there was proof that the office of Saint Petersburg´s Prosecutor General had opened a criminal investigation into the governor´s dealing with the funeral business, linking Yakovlev to the local ”funeral ”mafia and adding that certain photos (which he did not show) proved ”that the governor frequently met with mafia leaders in a sauna to discuss important issues”. Svanidze also implicated Yakovlev in the recent assassination of the deputy speaker of the city´s Legislative Assembly. Fatherland candidates were not given a chance to respond. It should also be noted that such attacks were never broadcast during the time when Fatherland-All Russia leaders supported the Kremlin. The third national channel, the independent NTV, did not

criticise Fatherland-All Russia leaders, Primakov and Luzhkov, but referred negatively to some of the governor´s dealings.

This tendency was also clear, albeit to a lesser extent, in the national print media which are read in Saint Petersburg. However, it is important to note that although newspapers such as *Izvestiya, Kommersant, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Argumenty i Fakty* have local editions twice or three times a week, their local circulation is limited. Readers turn to local newspapers for information on local news. The two first-mentioned newspapers, clearly linked to groups supporting the government and the Unity bloc, were highly critical of Yakovlev. As a counterattack, a fake *Izvestiya* (*Izvestiya Peterburga*), using the logo of the real *Izvestiya*, was printed and widely distributed, attacking Yakovlev´s opponents. The two other newspapers presented the governor in a favourable light.

8.5 Regional media

If plenty of anti-Yakovlev material was available in the national media, the picture was quite different in the regional media. As in most regions in Russia, the development of the local media in Saint Petersburg has been weakened by a series of recurrent problems. Among these are the high distribution costs of newspapers (leading to fewer subscriptions and consequently to a decrease in their circulation) and the debts of newspapers towards printing houses. There is also evidence of pressure on journalists investigating local corruption or critical of local authorities. Pressure is applied by depriving journalists of access to information or accreditation, bringing libel suits against them or by sacking them, causing journalists to practice self-censorship. Such procedures are often combined with the appointment by local authorities of ”favoured” persons to key regional media positions. Economic pressure on local television companies forced to rely on regional committees for the Management of State Property for access to airwaves and office space, distribution of subsidies and preferential tariffs to certain publications and enlistment of subordinate local companies to subscribe for their workers to a ” preferred ” publication.

8.6 Regional broadcast media

In the field of local electronic media, Petersburg Television is the city’s main television channel serving roughly six million people in the region. Previously the national, federally controlled Channel 5, it was privatised in 1998 by Yakovlev, who named his deputy, Potekhin, chairman of the board of directors. The channel fired around 1550 employees during the privatisation process and is now down to approximately 500. The city administration owns the major stake in Petersburg Television, 35%; the oblast government owns 16% of the shares and 18% are owned by banks close to the local authorities, which are therefore in a position to exercise strong influence on the channel. One of the main presenters, Alexander Nevzorov, hosting the programme ”Politics Saint Petersburg Style”, is also the official advisor to the governor on Film and Television and is very influential in the running of the channel.

The channel was under a legal obligation to provide free time for the candidates and parties, which it did with a total of 27 hours and 15 minutes divided between candidates and regional blocs. It also broadcast electoral information programmes in co-operation with the city electoral committees.

In its news and daily twenty minutes political programme "Cobytye" (Events) the broadcaster gave unconditional support to the governor and an overwhelmingly positive coverage to Fatherland- All Russia, all in a fairly propagandistic style. This is corroborated by the quantitative analysis which shows that 43% of the coverage of the political parties went to Fatherland-All Russia, while only 22% went to Yabloko, followed by six per cent to CRC and the Boldyrev Movement and three per cent for the Union of Rightwing Forces and the Communist party. Though Stepashin, the Yabloko candidate, received more coverage in terms of time (41%) than Primakov (39%), the Fatherland-All Russia candidate, the general tone was negative towards Yabloko.

As illustrations of the political tendency of the channel, the following can be mentioned. In September, Chernyadyev, hosting "Cobytye"(in a previous broadcast of Cobytye, he had been accused by the Federal Press Committee of incitement to racial hatred), was appointed director of Inform TV, the news programme. Very loyal to Yakovlev, his nomination was seen by many as linked to the gubernatorial campaign. In October, the day the Legislative Assembly voted to move up the date of the gubernatorial elections, one of the journalists of the news programme admitted that he was "mildly speaking, instructed what to say". As all national channels covered the vote in detail, Petersburg Television reported very briefly on the event in its news. The same month, the same journalist and two other leading commentators left the news programme saying that they were put under too much pressure from the editor, Chernyadyev, to slant the news in favour of Yakovlev. Last spring, Chernyadyev told his audience that the reason his programme aired positive reports about Yakovlev was simple: "He bought us". The Head of the election campaign programmes of the channel said to EIM: "Television is now a political instrument. Most programmes are biased. But could it be different?"

The city has several other local television channels but they are far less influential. One of them, Channel 6, is a commercial station 80% owned by the American company, Story First Communications Inc, which broadcasts mainly entertainment programmes 18 hours a day, covering Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad region. The channel has 85 employees and shows two news bulletins, one of five minutes at seven p.m. and another of fifteen minutes at 11pm. Channel 6 organised one debate between the Yabloko candidate, former prime minister Stepashin (who received 81% of the time devoted to key political figures), and the candidate of the Union of Right Forces, Khakamada, but did not, however, run any political debates as a regular feature of the campaign coverage. The quantitative analysis shows that most of the coverage in the news programmes went to Fatherland-All Russia, followed closely by Yabloko, while very little time was devoted to other parties. The tone of the coverage remained neutral. The Director of the station clearly stated that the channel's aim in the campaign was to make as much money as possible through political advertising. Prices for paid time varied between US $170 and $600 a minute. The station broadcast a series of 12 episodes of 13 minutes each of political advertising for Sobchak, the former mayor of Saint Petersburg, who ran in the Duma elections.

Other local stations, like the channel Nevskiy 36/TVC and channel 11/TNT did not carry much election programmes and have a very limited audience. According to the quantitative analysis, channel 36 gave 86% of the time for coverage of the political parties to the CRC and the Boldyrev Movement, while the most mentioned key

political figure was the Yabloko candidate, Stepashin. On channel 11, the two political parties which received most coverage were Fatherland-All Russia and the Union of Rightwing Forces (a special programme was devoted to the latter). The most covered key political figure on the channel was Primakov from Fatherland-All Russia. The tone of coverage remained largely neutral on both stations.

8.7 Regional print media

A similar pattern was evident in the local print media coverage. Though most of the local newspapers have been victims of the general drop in circulation of print media, they still remain an important and influential source of information for local news. A major problem is the lack of financial independence of the city's newspapers . With a few exceptions -- such as Saint Petersburg *Delovoya Gazeta* (belonging to the Swedish publishing house Bonnier), *Saint Petersburg Times* (revenues from advertising) and *Peterburg Tchass Pik* which have external sources of financing -- local newspapers, weakened by the 1998 financial crisis, are financially dependent on the city administration or on financial structures close to the local authorities. The advertising market of the city is insufficient, partly because of the 1998 economic crisis and partly because most important investors are based in Moscow. Moreover, local newspapers have difficulties in obtaining advertising and suffer heavy costs due to poor management. This financial fragility makes them easily open to political pressure. Also, many journalists interviewed conceded that, as a result, a recurrent problem, accentuated during the campaign, was hidden advertising. As the editor in chief of *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, the city´s main newspaper, said "Every media has a difficult choice to make; speak with its own voice and search for money itself, or accept the support of an economic structure".

Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti, the oldest newspaper in Russia, is co-founded by the city government and has by far the largest circulation (80.000) being the most popular newspaper among the 40-70 age group, which is the most active segment in political life in Russia. Close to the "official circle", it supported the governor, Yakovlev, but not in such an open way as Petersburg Television. Paid political advertising ($2,500 a page) was clearly indicated as such in *Sankt Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, which was not the case for many other local print media.

Nevskoye Vremya, founded some 15 years ago, has a circulation of approximately 30,000 copies. The paper is owned by its employees and has links to Promstroibank which is financing some of the construction work of the city. Traditionally supportive of Yakovlev, *Nevskoye Vremya* did not carry any criticism of him.

Smena, founded in the twenties, became a leader of the opposition against the Communists during perestroika. Nowadays, it is linked to Afksystema (related to Luzhkov), and has a circulation of around 20,000 copies. It did not offer any criticism of the local authorities.

The local weekly, *Peterburg Tchass Pik*, which is not financially dependent upon local structures, widely covered the investigations led by the Ministry of Interior on the use of the city's budget for the financing of the Fatherland-All Russia congress in Saint Petersburg in May, thus airing criticism of the governor. The paper, founded at the end of the eighties, has a circulation of some 20,000 copies but is still influential among intellectuals and is supportive of the federal government.

9 Yekaterinburg

Margot Light

9.1 Political situation

Yekaterinburg, the regional capital of Sverdlovsk oblast, has a population of over 1.32 million. The economy of the oblast is dominated by heavy industry (machine building and metallurgy). Consequently, although the area is rich in raw materials, it fared badly during the reform process. According to official statistics, 23 per cent of the oblast population had an income below the poverty level in 1997.

Eduard Rossel was appointed governor of Sverdlovsk oblast in 1991 by President Yeltsin. He fell out with the president and was dismissed in 1993 when he unilaterally proclaimed a Urals republic and claimed it should have the same autonomy as the national republics within the Russian Federation. However, Rossel won the first gubernatorial elections in Sverdlovsk in 1995, and was elected to a second term in August 1999. Unlike most other governors in the Russian Federation, Eduard Rossel joined neither Fatherland-All Russia nor Unity in the run-up to the parliamentary elections.

The August gubernatorial campaign was extremely bitter and its aftermath dominated Yekaterinburg politics during the parliamentary election campaign. To the fury of Rossel, Yekaterinburg mayor, Arkady Chernetsky, stood for governor against him. In fact, Chernetsky, a leading member of Yuri Luzhkov's Fatherland party, came third in the election. This did not assuage the enmity between Rossel and Chernetsky. Rossel won in the second round of the gubernatorial elections against Aleksandr Burkov, who had founded the populist 'Movement of Labourers for Social Guarantees', 'May' in April 1999. 'May' was transformed into a federal electoral association, Mir, Trud, Mai, (Peace, Labour, May), for the parliamentary elections. It was the only electoral bloc with its headquarters in a provincial capital, Yekaterinburg, rather than in Moscow.

Yekaterinburg is the home of a notorious criminal group, the *Uralmashevtsy.* Having started as racketeers in 1989, by 1999 they had turned themselves into a social movement, the Socio-Political Union 'Uralmash' which plays a prominent role in local politics, including the fight against drugs. One of its leaders, Aleksandr Khabarov (alias Khabar), stood in the single-mandate elections in the Ordzhonikidze constituency. Although he obtained the highest number of votes, the number of electors who voted against all the candidates was even higher, and the election was, therefore, invalidated (see Appendix 2).

Mayoral elections were scheduled in Yekaterinburg at the same time as the parliamentary elections. Arkady Chernetsky, who was listed second on OVR's regional list of candidates for the Duma, stood for re-election against 11 candidates. Interest in the mayoral elections and in the single-mandate Duma elections in the 7 constituencies in Sverdlovsk oblast (two of them in Yekaterinburg itself) prevailed among the Yekaterinburg electorate. The local media also paid more attention to them than to the electoral blocs contesting the Duma elections.

9.2 Media situation

The two national state channels, ORT and RTV, both have good reception in Yekaterinburg and so does NTV. There are also ten local channels. SGTRK, the state-owned channel, is federally funded from Moscow but it also earns advertising revenues. It broadcasts for four hours per day and takes its national news from ORT's Vesti. Both it and Oblastnoye TV, funded by the oblast authorities, are obliged by law to accord free time to all the candidates standing in the seven single-mandate constituencies in Sverdlovsk oblast' and they also give free time to mayoral candidates.

Channel 4/TNT was founded in 1991 and was the first non-governmental TV channel in Sverdlovsk obast'. It is owned by Igor Mishin (who was a candidate in the Duma elections, listed first on Yabloko's regional list) and ZAO Media Most. It has the largest audience of the nine commercial stations in the region, and transmits for 20 to 24 hours per day, of which four hours are devoted to locally produced news programmes.

TV-6, a commercial television network created in 1993 in Moscow, which has more than 100 regional partners, broadcasts in Yekaterinburg on ASV. Channels 47 and 51 are run by Yevgeny Zyabletsev, a Duma deputy who was up for re-election but who lost his seat (see Appendix 2). Guberniya TV is a partner of the network REN-TV, which is said to have financial support from LUKoil. Channel 41, the city channel, is one of the few channels that supported Mayor Arkady Chernetsky in the gubernatorial elections.

There are 158 officially registered local newspapers and journals but only about 10 of them appear regularly several times a week. *Oblastnaya gazeta,* owned by the regional government, was obliged to offer free space to candidates in the Duma elections. In March 1999 Media-Kholding, a private company, took over *Ural'skii rabochii* and *Vechernii Yekaterinburg.* The company has ties with the mayor and has experienced pressure from the governor as a result. In general, TV channels (with the exception of TAU) are considered by independent observers to offer more neutral coverage of political events than the print media in Yekaterinburg.

9.3 Media situation during the elections

The local branch of the Foundation for the Defence of Glasnost is active in Yekaterinburg, collecting material about infringements of freedom of expression and helping those who get into conflict over freedom of expression. Its representative, like other informed, independent observers, were convinced that the main problem in the local media coverage of the election campaign was the contradiction between the Russian media law (generally considered highly satisfactory) and the electoral law. Everyone in Yekaterinburg (journalists, candidates or their representatives and independent observers) was critical of the electoral law. But independent observers also argued that both as a result of the financial crisis in August 1998, and because the 1999 election campaign was dirtier than previous election campaigns, journalists were more corrupt in 1999 than they had been in 1993 or 1995. Journalists denied the allegation but they, in turn, believed that media owners would always dictate

editorial policy. “He who pays the piper, calls the tune” was a phrase used by every journalist in Yekaterinburg.

Negative campaigning was as rife in Yekaterinburg as in the national press, but it related to the mayoral rather than the Duma elections. Channel TAU and its presenter, Sheremet (who was a candidate in the mayoral elections) were particularly criticised for using “black PR” against Mayor Chernetsky which observers thought to have outdone Sergei Dorenko’s infamous programmes in its ferocity. *Oblastnaya gazeta* and *Ural’skii rabochii* were also accused of publishing “black propaganda”.

Candidates themselves had no complaints about the allocation of free time and space in the local media. However, many of them complained bitterly about the high price of advertising and the resulting disadvantages for the smaller, poorer parties. A representative of one of the smaller parties said that advertising was so expensive that “only crooks and the very rich can get into the Duma”. The seven constituency electoral commissions in Sverdlovsk oblast received a total of 31 complaints relating to the media (either that the media itself had campaigned for a particular candidate or that it used unethical means to attack a candidate). Six complaints had been sent to the procuracy, two resulted in a warning from the Sverdlovsk electoral commission. Party representatives claimed, however, that it was pointless lodging formal complaints because no action was taken.

The director of the largest commercial television station reported that the oblast administration had attempted to exert pressure on the channel to adopt a particular line during the election campaign. This concerned the local mayoral elections, however, and not the Duma elections. Resisting the pressure did not result in any adverse consequences. The state broadcaster, SGTRK, had experienced pressure during the gubernatorial elections, but not during the Duma election campaign. The directors of Media-Kholding complained of pressure from the governor. The oblast’ administration had threatened to evict the newspapers from the premises they rent in an oblast building, but the threat had not been implemented.

9.4 Media performance

With regard to the print media, quantitative monitoring was done during the election campaign of the coverage given to political parties in *Ural’skii rabochii* and *Vecherniye Vedemosti*. While *Ural’skii rabochii* covered only six parties, *Vecherniye Vedemosti* gave substantial coverage to eight parties, and a minimal amount of coverage to a further five parties. However, Fatherland-All Russia (OVR) got 43 per cent of *Vecherniye Vedemosti*’s coverage, compared to 15 per cent for Yabloko, nine per cent for Unity, eight per cent for May, seven per cent each for NDR and the Zhirinovsky bloc, five per cent for the KPRF and four per cent for SPS. The tone in which Yabloko, NDR, OVR and KPRF were mentioned was partially negative (although OVR and KPRF also had some positive mentions), whereas other parties were given neutral coverage, and half of Unity’s coverage was positive.

Ural’skii rabochii’s coverage was slightly more even for five of the six parties it covered. OVR had 25 per cent of its coverage, compared to 21 per cent for KPRF and 18 per cent for Yabloko, while NDR was given only five per cent of the space *Ural’skii rabochii* devoted to political parties. Two-thirds of the coverage for these

three parties was, however, negative in tone, whereas SPS and Unity, each with 12 per cent, had neutral coverage, as was the coverage of NDR (five per cent).

Although SGTRK/RTR television gave at least minimal coverage to 22 of the 26 political parties and electoral blocs that contested the elections, its coverage of Unity, 17 per cent of its total coverage, predominated. OVR came a close second with 15 per cent, May was given nine per cent, and most of the other parties that were covered were given four or five per cent of total coverage. The tone of the coverage of all the parties was neutral. SGTRK ran a considerable number of special election programmes.

The coverage of key figures shows a completely different picture, however. 47 per cent of the coverage went to Shoigu, followed by 18 per cent each to Zhirinovsky and Yavlinsky, whereas Zyuganov had nine per cent and Primakov six per cent of the coverage. The tone in which key figures were mentioned was predominantly neutral.

Oblastnoye TV also covered the whole range of political parties, but most time was accorded to Unity (30 per cent), followed by 10 per cent for the Bloc of General Nikolaev and Academician Fyodorov, nine per cent each for OVR and NDR, six per cent each for Yabloko, SPS, Civic Dignity, Russian All-People's Union and May, four per cent for the Stalinist Bloc, three per cent for Women of Russia and two per cent for KPRF and Spiritual Legacy. Although the tone of some of OVR's coverage was negative, in general Oblastnoye TV's coverage of all the parties was neutral.

Oblastnoye TV's coverage of key figures also suggests a different set of preferences than its coverage of political parties. Here, too, Shoigu's share of the coverage (55 per cent) was a great deal more than Yavlinsky's (20 per cent) and Yavlinsky received twice as much coverage as Primakov (10 per cent). Other key figures received minimal amounts of coverage and leaders of some large parties (for example Zyuganov, Zhirinovsky) were given no coverage at all.

Channel 4/TNT's coverage of political parties (mostly in news programmes, see graph 7.18) is a clear indication of the political sympathies of its president, Igor Mishin. Channel four devoted 57 per cent of the total time during which it covered political parties to Yabloko. May was accorded 15 per cent of the time, OVR nine per cent and Unity seven per cent, while SPS (five per cent) the Zhirinovsky bloc (four per cent) and KPRF (three per cent) lagged behind. A number of parties and electoral blocs received no coverage at all on Channel 4. With the exception of some negative coverage of the Zhirinovsky bloc and of OVR, the coverage on Channel 4 was predominantly neutral.

Among key figures Channel 4 covered, Prime Minister Putin led with 48 per cent, followed by Shoigu with 28 per cent. Zhirinovsky (five per cent), Primakov (four per cent), Luzhkov (three per cent), and Yavlinsky (two per cent) received far less coverage and some of Zhirinovsky's coverage was negative in tone.

The Russian All-People's Union received the largest proportion of time of Gubernia/Ren TV's coverage of political parties (33 percent), followed by KPRF (20 percent), Unity (15 percent), OVR (13 percent), Yabloko and May (six percent respectively), SPS (four percent), NDR (two percent) and the Zhirinovsky bloc (one percent). A number of parties and electoral blocs were not covered at all by Gubernia/Ren TV. Its coverage of political parties was, for the most part, neutral, although the tone of some of NDR's coverage was negative.

President Yeltsin received a surprisingly large proportion (44 per cent) of Gubernia/Ren TV's coverage of key political figures, followed by Shoigu (22 per cent) who received more coverage than Prime Minister Putin (18 per cent). Other political leaders lagged far behind: Yavlinsky with eight per cent, followed by Luzhkov (three per cent), Primakov (two per cent) and Zhirinovsky, Zyuganov, and Stepashin with one per cent each. All the coverage of key political figures was neutral.

ASV/TV6's coverage of political parties gave great predominance to Unity (62 per cent of the total time). SPS was given 11 per cent of the time, followed by OVR with seven per cent, May with four per cent, the Zhirinovsky bloc with five per cent, Yabloko, and SPAS with two per cent and NDR, Conservative Party of Entrepreneurs, Russian All-People's Union, Congress of Russian Communities and Movement of Yuri Boldyrev with one per cent each. The coverage of all the parties was neutral.

As on the other channels, Shoigu received overwhelmingly more coverage (61 per cent of the time) than other key figures on ASV/TV6, followed by Prime Minister Putin with 26 per cent. The only other key figures who were covered were President Yeltsin (five per cent), Zhirinovsky (three per cent), Berezovsky (two per cent) and Stepashin, Luzhkov and Primakov with one per cent each. Most of ASV/TV6's coverage of key political figures was neutral in tone.

In Channel 51/MTV's news programmes, the coverage of political parties was neutral, but it only gave time to eight of the political parties and electoral blocs taking part in the election. Most of the coverage was given to OVR (28 per cent), Unity (27 per cent), the Zhirinovsky Bloc (23 per cent), and Yabloko (16 per cent of the time). KPRF and May received some coverage (two per cent each), and the Movement in Support of the Army and SPS each received one per cent of the time.

In its coverage (all neutral) of key political figures, Channel 51/MTV devoted most time to Shoigu (58 per cent), followed by Prime Minister Putin (24 per cent). Of other key figures, Primakov and Zhirinovsky were each given four per cent of the time, Luzhkov received three per cent, Stepashin and Yavlinsky two per cent each, while coverage of President Yeltsin, Zyuganov, and Berezovsky took up one per cent each of the total coverage.

It is clear from the quantitative analysis of TV coverage of the election campaign that Sergei Shoigu, Minister for Emergency Situations, but also leader of Unity, dominated the airwaves on all the channels in Yekaterinburg, no matter how the time devoted to political parties was divided up. Since Putin was also well covered, and he declared that he supported Unity "in his personal capacity", this gave Unity a tremendous advantage over other parties. Peace, Labour, May received far less coverage than might be expected for a party that originated and had its headquarters in Yekaterinburg. Nevertheless, its local origins benefited it to the extent that a greater proportion of the electorate voted for it in Sverdlovsk oblast than in the country as a whole.

9.5 Election results

9.5.1 Party-list results by constituency *:

Constituency No. 161: Unity with 17.46 per cent of the vote
Constituency No. 162: SPS with 20.25 per cent of the vote
Constituency No. 163: Unity with 27.66 per cent of the vote
Constituency No. 164: Unity with 33.62 per cent of the vote
Constituency No. 165: SPS with 20.88 per cent of the vote
Constituency No. 166: Unity with 25.12 per cent of the vote
Constituency No. 167: Unity with 31.15 per cent of the vote

* For the full list of parties and electoral blocs and their performance in Sverdlovsk oblast', see Appendix 1.

9.5.2 Single-mandate elections*:

Constituency No. 161: Svetlana Nikolaevna Gvozdeva with 22.13 per cent of the vote, nominated by Unity.

Constituency No. 162: Election invalid; a greater proportion of the electorate (23.6 per cent) voted against all candidates than for the candidate with the highest vote

Constituency No. 163: Georgii Karpeevich Leont'ev (Independent) with 21 per cent of the vote.

Constituency No. 164: Valerii Afonas'evich Yazev, with 46.41 per cent of the vote, nominated by NDR

Constituency No. 165: Election invalid; a greater proportion of the electorate (25.57 per cent) voted against all candidates than for the candidate with the highest vote

Constituency No. 166: Zelimkhan Alikoevich Mutsoev (Independent) with 21.58 per cent of the vote.

Constituency No. 167: Valerii Pavlovich Vorotnikov, with 28.67 per cent of the vote, nominated by Spiritual Heritage.

* For a full list of candidates in the single-mandate elections, see Appendix 2.

10 Recommendations

After the 1996 presidential elections in Russia, the European Institute for the Media made a series of recommendations for the improvement of media performance during elections. These mainly concentrated on the issue of restructuring of existing state-controlled networks and papers to guarantee their editorial independence, the creation of public-service broadcasting organisations and the proper implementation of media and elections legislation. All of these issues remain pertinent today, three years later. Some new troublesome developments have taken place as well - particularly the control which financial and political interests exert on the media, including those that are partly or fully owned by the state. The amalgamation of private interests with state power is most disturbing in terms of future media developments.

On a positive note, several improvements were noted by the EIM team since previous elections were held in Russia, including the fact that many parties are now much more professional in their presentations through the media. Also, some of the free-time is now in a collective format, which has been helpful in discouraging tedious monologues. Finally, despite confusion in the law, some broadcasters have tried to regulate gross violations through the media by political parties, for example by rejecting ads that violate decency or incite racial hatred. For this, they should be commended.

The EIM would propose concentration on improvements, however, in the following aspects of media performance during elections:

10.1 Legislation

A key problem in Russia with existing legislation is its interpretation and the culture of implementation. The CEC, in attempting to be in conformity with all federal laws as well as international agreements, nevertheless created a problem when it interpreted the election law as precluding the statement of opinion by media or civil representatives through the mass media. It is possible to uphold the dictum ‘free, fair and balanced’ without restricting in this way the important right and duty of the media to act as “watchdog” during a campaign. The use of the law to selectively punish offending media outlets (as in the case under discussion against the reissue of TV-Tsentr’s broadcasting license) is an indicator of the problem of implementation.

Discrepancies between the laws “On Elections” and “On Mass Media” should be discussed and documented by media legal professionals and rectified as soon as possible. It should be emphasised that there does not appear to be a need for more law, rather a fair and realistic implementation of the existing law, although the lack of any regulation of political advertising is an important exception.

The Russian Federation is party to several pertinent international agreements including Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (99) 15 “Of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Measures Concerning Media Coverage of Election Campaigns”, which was adopted at the 678th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies in September 1999. The spirit of this agreement was not observed during the parliamentary elections in Russia 1999.

Russian public authorities should make this recommendation and other international agreements known to government outlets. ?he authorities, media organisations and associations of media professionals should disseminate information about the content of such agreements.

10.2 Right to reply

The CEC should urgently consult the directors and editors at major broadcasters and newspapers to work out a method of allowing politicians and parties a swift right of reply to attacks or what they consider unfair coverage during election campaigns.

10.3 Independent board for state-controlled broadcasters

The government should consider the creation of special advisory boards for state-controlled broadcasters, given the importance of the state broadcasters particularly during electoral campaigns. Such a board could comprise independent media experts and representatives of sections of civil society, to work together with the management of the companies involved to achieve a more balanced editorial policy. The link to government and government-oriented editorial policies demonstrated once again by Russian state-controlled television in these elections is out of place in a democratic environment. Such links should be devolved to create independent policies more in keeping with what the viewers might require, rather than what seems necessary to the government.

10.4 Clear labels for advertisements

One of the most critical issues in this campaign as in previous ones was the practice of hidden advertising in the media. Perhaps the clearest step which should be taken following these elections is that of labelling political advertising as such in all media. Broadcasters should make it absolutely clear, not just in advertising slots, but also during other programming, if the participants have paid to appear.

For newspapers, all political advertising or articles which are offered by parties should be clearly labelled as such. Ideally, they should be labelled 'Advertisement', or way at the beginning of the text that the material comes from the parties or politicians themselves, whether or not they have paid for it.

10.5 Discrimination

Newspapers should drop the practice of discriminating between parties as to whether they accept their advertisements. Every party should have equal access, on the same conditions and rates of pay, to all newspapers. The only reason for refusing an advertisement should be if its contents are libellous or in some other way seems to break the law.

10.6 Broadcasting in the regions

Anecdotal information shows that local governors and other officials are interrupting or shutting down television broadcasts of some private channels if they disagree with the regional political line. This is an unacceptable interference in the dissemination of information, putting some citizens at a serious disadvantage in the type of television they may watch. The EIM recommends far stronger support for the maintenance and even increase in the variety of television programming, especially non-state television, available to viewers outside of the central broadcast areas of Russia.

10.7 Lack of journalistic ethics

There is a worrying trend that some journalists themselves have abandoned even the pretence of free and fair coverage of elections. Part of this is due to the legal and logistical problems of covering the elections, but much of it is due to the enthusiasm with which Russian television broadcasters, for example, have embraced the airing of compromising material, or *kompromat.*

Kompromat serves two purposes. Its fast-paced and sensational style is popular with consumers and, when used to attack the political rivals of the company, it allows the company to toe the correct political line of its owners. It is an ominous sign that the most popular show on Russian television during the 1999 Duma campaign was the 'Sergei Dorenko Programme' on ORT, which featured sensational, but generally unsubstantiated allegations against Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov and other political opponents of the pro-government party.

If this type of programme becomes the model of political programming, Russian voters may be titillated and entertained, but they will be unable to receive unbiased information with which to make informed choices. One cannot suggest banning sensational shows that are designed to shock rather than inform -- as they are a part of every society's television broadcasting -- but they should not form the cornerstone of serious political reporting. The EIM recommends that journalists pay more attention to national and international norms of fair reporting, remembering their critical role in disseminating information professionally and fairly during election campaigns.