

TACIS

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

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The Phare and Tacis Democracy Programme

The Phare and Tacis Democracy Programme was launched by the European Commission in 1992 to help promote democratic societies in the countries of central and eastern Europe, and the New Independent States and Mongolia.

It covers the following countries: Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia (countries eligible for Phare) and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan (countries eligible for Tacis).

Phare and Tacis are the names of the European Union's initiatives which support the development of harmonious and prosperous economic and political links between the European Union and the above partner countries through the provision of grant finance to support the process of transformation to market economies and democratic societies.

The Democracy Programme forms part of the European Democracy Initiative of the European Parliament. Its general objective is to promote the concept of democratic society governed by the rule of law in central and eastern European countries and New Independent States and Mongolia. In particular, it aims to support

- increased knowledge of democratic practices at local and national level
- the work of non-governmental organisations which promote pluralist democratic societies
- the transfer of specific expertise and technical skills concerning democracy and the rule of law to professional groups and associations in these countries.

Some specific initiatives are taken by the Commission to meet these objectives: support for the monitoring of the Russian Duma elections, including media monitoring, was one such initiative.

This objective is also supported by providing grants to non-state, non-profit making bodies for projects in areas related to the Programme.

1 Introduction

At a crossroad between Europe, Central Asia, Russia and the Middle-East, the Transcaucasus region's strategic importance seems as much a curse as an asset. Over the past four years, the republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan have lurched from one ethnic conflict, coup or rebellion to another. Sceptics say that the instability is built into the geography and the ethnic composition of the region.

Nevertheless, the past year showed signs that the Transcaucasus may become more tranquil. The cease-fire between Armenia and Azerbaijan persists, the upheavals in multi-ethnic Georgia are currently more or less under control. The population longs for stability and an improved economic situation.

Developments in the three Transcaucasus states since the late 1980s show certain broad similarities. In all three countries, the emergence of a national movement had been heavily influenced by territorial conflict (i.e., the conflict between the Georgian leadership in Tbilisi and the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the struggle between the Azerbaijani leadership in Baku and the predominantly Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh).

Although these conflicts predated the demise of the USSR, they have continued to overshadow domestic political developments since. For instance, two successive Azerbaijani presidents were used as scapegoats and then ousted from power because of military defeats in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, the conflicts have consumed a disproportionately large share of public funds, thus aggravating the economic decline that resulted from the severing of traditional ties with Russia. Indeed, economic collapse in Armenia and Georgia in 1993-1994 was so catastrophic that tens, if not hundreds of thousands of people emigrated in search of a better life in Russia or Europe.

In addition, both Georgia and Azerbaijan have experienced the ouster of elected presidents (Georgia's Zviad Gamsakhurdia in January 1992; Azerbaijan's Abulfaz Elchibey in June 1993) and the repression of his supporters by former Communist Party leaders currently posing as national democrats (Eduard Shevardnadze and Heidar Aliiev).

Despite these parallels, however, the domestic political situation, the conduct of the elections, the role of the media and the coverage of the elections in the media were unique and different in each country.

Armenia had been the first union republic, in the summer of 1990, to elect a parliament in which the nascent national movement, rather than the Communist Party, had a majority. Levon Ter-Petrossian, head of the Armenian National Movement, was duly elected parliament chairman in August 1990 and Armenian president one year later. Yet his initial reputation as a liberal had been tarnished by his ongoing feud with the opposition Dashnaksutyun party, which in January of last year was barred from contesting the July 1995 elections.

In Georgia, the political scene had been dominated over the past six years by individuals, rather than political parties. Yet by late summer of 1995, Parliament chairman Eduard Shevardnadze had succeeded in sidelining virtually all those who could have challenged his authority. Consequently, a total of 53 parties from across the political spectrum were permitted to contest the elections, including two groups representing Gamsakhurdia's supporters and three separate Communist Parties.

In Azerbaijan, the picture was less felicitous. Since late 1994 President Heidar Aliev has arrested hundreds of people suspected of plotting his dismissal, and has systematically harassed opposition political parties. Several opposition parties were barred from participating in the elections and prior censorship of a dual nature (military and political) remains in force in direct contravention of the existing media law.

Russia has played a key role in shaping political developments in the Transcaucasus. Primarily, although not exclusively, by using the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia to exert pressure on the respective leaderships in Baku and Tbilisi.

Anti-Russian sentiments were widespread in the wake of the Soviet military intervention in Baku in January 1990. Consequently, the parliament, under pro-Turkish president Abulfaz Elchibey, voted against CIS membership in September 1992. It has been suggested that Moscow may subsequently have initiated the bloodless coup in June 1993, which culminated in Elchibey being ousted from power and the return of Heidar Aliev. Aliev, for his part, stubbornly resisted Russian pressure for the deployment of a Russian peacekeeping force in Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, Moscow expressed its displeasure with the Baku leadership by closing the frontier in December 1994, ostensibly to prevent Azerbaijan channelling aid to Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Georgia has experienced similar pressure, with hard-line elements within the Russian military providing logistical support to Abkhaz separatist forces in 1992-1993. The Georgian membership of the CIS was the price the then parliament Chairmen Eduard Shevardnadze was constrained to pay Russia to help quash a comeback attempt by ousted president Zviad Gamsakhurdia in October 1993. Georgia subsequently agreed to lease military bases to Russia.

Armenia's leadership enthusiastically agreed to membership of the Commonwealth of Independent States in December 1991, and in March 1995 to the permanent stationing of Russian troops on its territory. The exceptionally harmonious relation between Russia and Armenia has made considerable amounts of financial aid available, specifically to counter the effects of the economic blockade imposed by Azerbaijan.

Against this background, elections were held in the three republics. On 5 July 1995, the Armenian electorate voted in their country's second parliamentary election and in a national referendum on a new constitution. On 5 November 1995, the population of Georgia chose a new president and a new parliament, in a rather unique combination of presidential and parliamentary elections. Finally, on 12 November 1995, the Azerbaijani voters elected a new parliament and cast their ballot in a referendum on a new constitution.

Continuing its practice in several previous election campaigns in central and eastern European countries and New Independent States, the European Union agreed to fund monitoring of the media coverage of the electoral campaigns in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and asked the European Institute for the Media to undertake this task.

This is the final report of the three monitoring missions. It contains information on the background to the elections and on the structures of the media in the respective republics. It presents the findings and impressions of the monitoring teams on the election coverage. Finally, it seeks to make some recommendations which may improve the broader situation of the Transcaucasian media and which will be used by the Institute to determine future assistance activities.

Although the reports on Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan were produced separately, the amalgamation into one single report allows for comparisons. The main question may be how the media have developed since the three republics gained independence. The impact of the economic development and the political situation on the performance and state of the media can be addressed by comparing these factors with the findings in this report. The conclusions attempt to show that indeed both the economic and political situation have a significant influence on the ability of the media to cover elections in a fair, balanced and professional manner.

1.1 Staffing

Professor Bernd-Peter Lange (Germany), Director-General of the European Institute for the Media, was the projects director.

Dr. Iain Elliot (UK), Director of the British East-West Centre and formerly deputy-director of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty Research Institute, was the monitor in Yerevan and contributed the chapter on Armenia to this report.

Elizabeth Fuller (UK), supervisory research analyst of the Open Media Research Institute in Prague and specialist in the Caucasus was the monitor in Tbilisi and Baku and contributed the chapters on Georgia and Azerbaijan to this report.

Drs. Yasha Lange (Netherlands), projects manager of the East-West Cooperation Programme, was the assistant project manager in Armenia, supervised the monitoring in Georgia and Azerbaijan, and was the editor of this report.

The mission took place under the auspices of the East-West Cooperation Programme of the European Institute for the Media, of which **Dr. Alexei Pankin** (Russia) is the Director.

The infrastructure and monitoring staff in the republics was provided by local co-ordinators: **Karen Martirosian** in Armenia, **Michael Dzhindzikhavili** in Georgia and **Emin Makhmedov** in Azerbaijan. They arranged meetings, organised the quantitative monitoring and assisted in the gathering of relevant data.

1.2 Methodology

The three missions all commenced approximately three weeks prior to the elections and concluded on the day of the elections. Monitoring in Armenia was therefore conducted from 14 June until 5 July 1995; the mission in Georgia took place from 16 October until 5 November 1995 and the monitoring team in Azerbaijan worked from 21 October until 12 November 1995.

The monitoring teams were based in the respective capitals Yerevan, Tbilisi and Baku and followed a similar methodology to assess whether there was free and fair coverage of the elections in the three republics. The media coverage was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Additionally, the legal framework for the broadcast and print media in the election campaign was assessed.

The quantitative analysis of the election coverage on television and radio and in the press was conducted by a team of local assistants. They followed a methodology developed by the Institute in putting details of each programme and article into tabular form. The material analysed included both editorial matter - i.e. material which appeared as a result of the editor's decision - and the promotional material of candidates.

The qualitative analysis was conducted by Western monitors who interviewed relevant personalities from the media, political and regulatory fields. The monitors devoted particular attention to areas of concern such as impartiality of election coverage, the ease of access to the media for all political parties and candidates, balance in the presentation of various political perspectives, and the ability of the media themselves to report freely, fairly and professionally.

This report contains only a part of the material and information gathered by the monitoring team in the process of arranging and completing the mission. Anyone who wishes to have further information or to examine the original material in greater detail is invited to do so and should contact the Institute in Düsseldorf.

1.3 Background of the missions

The European Institute for the Media is a non-governmental policy-orientated independent research body operating in the field of European media development. It has significant previous experience in the field of media monitoring and since 1992 has, on behalf of the E.U., monitored elections in Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Russia (1993 and 1995), Moldova, Ukraine (parliamentary and presidential elections), Belarus (parliamentary and presidential elections), Hungary, Macedonia and Estonia.

The missions in the Transcaucasus have been funded by the European Union's Tacis Democracy Programme. The Tacis Democracy Programme was launched in 1992 to help promote democratic societies in the countries of the New Independent States and Mongolia.

1.4 Acknowledgements

Thanks for the successful accomplishment of the missions must go to the following: the staff of the Tacis Democracy Programme in Brussels; Mr. Iain Elliot and Ms Elizabeth Fuller; the staff of the monitoring teams in Yerevan, Tbilisi and Baku, in particular Karen Martirosian, Michael Dzhindzikhavili and Emin Makhmedov; The Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) and VERTIC, for providing most useful background information on the political situation in Georgia. Finally, the monitoring teams would like to thank all the people interviewed during the course of the mission for their co-operation.

Bernd-Peter Lange

Düsseldorf, March 1996

2 The Republic of Armenia

2.1 Basic facts

The Republic of Armenia is a land-locked country surrounded by Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey. Its 29,000 square kilometres of territory is largely mountainous and infertile, with less than a third suitable for pasture or farming. A major earthquake in December 1988 hit the northern town of Spitak, claiming some 25,000 lives. The most recent census put the population at 3.7 million, of which 96 per cent were ethnic Armenians, but 800,000 to a million Armenians are estimated to have left the country in recent years because of the economic hardships. Some three million Armenians already lived in the "diaspora" in the United States (more than 600,000), France (about 100,000), South America, Australia, Lebanon and Iran, as well as in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union. The capital, Yerevan, has more than a million inhabitants; other much smaller towns are Gyumri, Vanadzor, Razdan, Echmiadzin, and Armavir.

2.2 Historical and political background

Armenian history is traced back to the Urartu empire around the 9th century BC. The Kingdom of Armenia was formed about the 6th century BC with the union of the Haiasi and Armen tribes, and by the first century BC stretched from the Caspian through much of present-day Turkey, and parts of Iran and Georgia - a territory some ten times larger than Armenia today. In 301 Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity, and in 405 Mesrob Mashtots invented the Armenian alphabet, launching a golden age for Armenian literature. Armenia's position helped it flourish as a centre for trade, commerce, and cultural exchange, but also made it vulnerable to clashes between neighbouring states. In the 7th century it fell under Arab rule, and after regaining its independence, lost its sovereignty to the Ottoman Empire from the 16th to the 19th century. Christian Russia appeared to offer some protection from growing oppression and the terrible massacres of 1894-96. Armenians are still demanding recognition by the Turks of the 1915 genocide, when as many as 1.5 million Armenians are estimated to have been killed or deported.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917 Armenia again briefly won independence under a government dominated by the radical nationalist Dashnaksutyun party, but the need for protection from the Turks made the Armenians look to the White Russians under General Deniken. Appeals to the United States to assume a League of Nations mandate over Armenia were unsuccessful. The advance of the Red Army brought Armenia under Russian Bolshevik rule in 1920, although the native communist party had never been strongly supported. Under Stalin Armenia suffered cruel purges as did the other nations in the USSR, but also saw the Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh brought under Azerbaijani administration, a controversial situation which could not be democratically decided under Soviet rule. Among the Armenian nationalist dissidents who opposed Communist Party rule were several who are still active in Armenian politics, including Paruir Hairikian, who spent 17 years in Soviet camps, prisons and exile.

The Armenian population of Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast were increasingly insistent in 1987-1988 that they should be allowed to unite with Armenia. Mikhail Gorbachev's failure to deal with the growing tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis encouraged the growth of political opposition in Yerevan to Moscow rule. Following the peaceful

demonstrations of almost a million people in Yerevan in spring 1988, the Soviet authorities used more brutal methods of control, leading to loss of authority for the local Communist Party. The intellectuals who formed the Karabakh Committee expanded their demands to include greater sovereignty, de-Russification of the local leadership, and multi-party elections. When Gorbachev came to Armenia to see for himself the devastation of the earthquake in December 1988, he denounced the Karabakh Committee, the leaders of which, including Ter-Petrossian, were arrested and imprisoned in Moscow for six months, from December 1988 to May 1989.

The elections for the Armenian Supreme Soviet in May 1990 took place in a mood of political apathy and disillusion with Moscow as a source of protection against Turks and Azerbaijanis. After Communist Party deputies transferred their support to the Armenian Pan-National Movement (APNM), the successor to the Karabakh Committee, it achieved a majority in the new parliament, of which Levon Ter-Petrossian was elected chairman in August. Armenia had therefore a non-communist government well before the final collapse of the USSR in December 1991. A declaration of independence was adopted in August 1991, and the government set about establishing separate national armed forces, bank, currency and a new multi-party system. In the September referendum the Armenian electorate voted overwhelmingly for independence from the USSR, and Ter-Petrossian was then elected president. Armenia formally became a member of the United Nations in March 1992.

The economic collapse, energy crisis, and rising unemployment lost the government popular support and led to clashes in parliament. In June 1992 the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) (*Dashnaktsutyun*) which was the strongest opposition party, demanded that the government recognise the independence of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (proclaimed in January by the Dashnak controlled Karabakh parliament). Ter-Petrossian took countermeasures against his political opponents, and appealed to the world community for aid. On 29 June State Television broadcast a ninety-minute speech by the president, in which he announced the expulsion from Armenia of the ARF leader Hrair Marukhian and accused the party of links with the KGB and violations of the law on political organisations. The ARF was refused the right to reply on television.

The Dashnaks were among the seven opposition parties, out of eight represented in parliament, which united in the National Alliance formed in summer 1992 to campaign for the government's resignation, and for the recognition of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic. Their repeated public demonstrations failed to force a resignation, or to replace the government with a new government of national accord.

2.3 Suspension of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF)

These measures culminated in the president's announcement on another television appearance (28 December 1994) that ARF activities were to be suspended; he accused its leadership of involvement in drug trafficking and of links with the secret Dro terrorist organisation. They were specifically accused of involvement in the assassination on 17 December of Humbartsum Galstyan, the former mayor of Yerevan. ARF offices and its leaders' homes were searched by security forces, and ARF newspapers and associated journals were closed. In January ARF political activities were suspended for six months, removing the party from participation in the elections of 5 July.

At its hearing on 12-13 January 1995 the Supreme Court accepted the argument of the Ministry of Justice that the ARF was in violation of the Law on Non-Citizens, since of 13 ARF leaders, nine were not Armenian citizens, although resident in Armenia, while seven lived abroad and had never been resident in Armenia. They were not entitled to be members of political

organisations in Armenia. On the second accusation, of links with the criminal "Dro" organisation, the court would decide after further investigation.

A meeting of the ARF Bureau was reportedly held in Moscow from 19 to 25 May 1995; the party's leaders blamed its persecution on the personal intervention of the president himself, who by his "absurd allegations" was seeking to isolate the main opposition party and drive it from Armenia. On 13 July the Justice Ministry announced that the ARF had failed to submit its new rules as required by the law on social and political organisations, and therefore would not be registered for the second round of elections to be held in 24 constituencies on 29 July. An ARF spokesman said (*Interfax*, 13 July) that the rules had to be presented bearing the party's official stamp, which had been confiscated by the authorities.

On 28 July state security arrested a group accused of planning to assassinate a number of prominent Armenian politicians on 29 July during the second round of elections. Among the arrested was ARF leader Vagan Oganesyanyan, and a member of the president's security guards, a former volunteer fighter in Karabakh. The Security Ministry claimed they were linked with Dro terrorists. Another ARF member, Garnik Isagulyan, a former deputy of the Armenian parliament was also accused of being involved in the alleged plot. (*ITAR-TASS*, 1-3 August 1995) Other opposition parties protested at the treatment of the ARF. Paruir Hairikian, leader of the Union for National Self-Determination, described the arrests as a return to "a Cheka-style dictatorship that we will fight against as best we can". (*Interfax*, 8 August 1995).

Coordination Council of Opposition Parties

The ten main opposition parties had attempted to find common ground for cooperation before the elections. At a news conference on 14 June a Coordination Council was announced with an executive headed by Vazgen Manukian, chairman of the National Democratic Union and a former prime minister. The Council included nine full members: National Democratic Union, Union for National Self-Determination/Christianity, Scientific-Industrial and Civil Union, ARF Dashnaktsutyun, National Union- Dashnaktsutyun, Democratic Party of Armenia, National Progress, National State and Women of Armenia

The Communist Party of Armenia joined the Council as an associate member. The opposition parties rejected the draft constitution and demanded that the elections be postponed to allow all political forces to play an equal part in the elections; that parties and candidates refused registration should be reconsidered; that balance in the coverage of parties and their programmes should be introduced in the state mass media; that the persecution of the ARF be stopped. In their joint statement they said:

"The administration which came to power on behalf of the nation, is seeking to establish dictatorship in the republic. Pursuing its narrow interests, it violates the law and does everything in its power to establish injustice and immorality... Based on the will of the people, we are ready to provide an opportunity for the people of Armenia to express its will during the elections and referendum on the constitution." ¹

¹ *ITAR-TASS*, 15 June; *Noyan Tapan*, 21 June 1995, p.7

3 Armenia before the elections

3.1 Government

Independent Armenia under president Levon Ter-Petrossian had a governmental system widely regarded as transitional. The Prime Minister was nominated by the president, subject to approval by parliament (the Supreme Council), a single-chamber representative body. Its 260 members were elected from single-member districts for a five-year term, and formed the highest legislative body in the country. The parliament had 16 committees, which together with the 22 national ministries and 10 state administrations, were involved in preparing draft laws. The judicial branch was formed from the Supreme Court and District Courts. There is a local government structure consisting of 37 administrative regions, having some legislative and taxation authority. In April 1991 the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was made domestic law, helping to guide Armenia's transition while a new constitution was drafted to replace the Soviet constitution.

The president of the republic of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, advocates a firm government to ensure stability. He pursues a consistent application of constructive government policies: good relations with neighbouring states; privatisation of land; denationalisation of industry; creation of a free-market economy based on private property; protection of the most important elements of a welfare state.

Speaking to the country on 3 July, he acknowledged that the draft constitution being submitted to referendum was not perfect, but it "answered the demands of the country and for at least a few decades could ensure the stability and security of the state, and its normal social and economic development". He maintained that whereas in 1990 the opposition forces were united in their determination to end communist totalitarianism, liberate Artsakh, and win independence for Armenia, in 1995 the parties and social groups opposing the ruling bloc did not amount to an effective opposition. He expected that in time a serious social democratic opposition would emerge to balance the liberal democratic parties, but did not think that extreme nationalist forces would ever dominate the Armenian political scene.

Ter-Petrossian's attitude to the attacks on him in the mass media is instructive:

"I take a philosophical attitude to criticism accusing us of betraying state and national interests, bribery and lawlessness. We have achieved what we were striving for. We fought for democracy, to create a democratic state, so that the people would have the opportunity to express their opinion of the authorities - so I can't complain. If I could choose between an absence of democracy so that the authorities would not be accused of corruption, treachery and tyranny, and our victory, I would choose the latter². Let them bad-mouth the authorities day and night, but let there be democracy, rather than having us look like angels without it."

² Ter-Petrossian indeed takes a philosophical approach, since in fact he (incorrectly) paraphrases Goethe, who stated: "If I had to choose between injustice and order on the one hand, or justice and disorder on the other, I would always choose the latter" (ed.).

He argued that criticism should not be confused with mere abuse “but this is a question of time, and depends on the maturity of any society”. He accepted that there was still much to do in the struggle against crime, and that there were still cases of illegal actions being taken by the law enforcement agencies themselves.

Freedom of speech, of the press, and freedom of assembly and association, are of course central to the democratisation process, and appear to be practised by Armenians as a matter of right, despite occasional attempts by official organisations and some unidentified groups to suppress these democratic trends. In the weeks before the elections there were regular meetings on Freedom Square (by the National Theatre) organised by opposition parties to criticise the president and government, and to promote their own platforms. There were also two camps set up by a group of hunger strikers protesting the treatment of alleged political prisoners; parents of the men accused of involvement in the murder of the former Mayor of Yerevan were claiming that they had been tortured. Another group, stewardesses of Armenian Airlines, were demanding the reinstatement of dismissed colleagues, and the removal of the government official responsible.

Apart from the discussion below of the role of the media in the elections, it is important to mention here that the voters received much of the information about the candidates in their particular constituency not from the media, but directly from the candidates themselves, speaking at local meetings; from their friends and neighbours canvassing support round the doors; and from leaflets distributed to homes or stuck on walls and windows.

3.2 Economic conditions

Lacking raw materials and indigenous energy sources, Armenia under the Soviet regime imported semi-finished products and fuel from elsewhere in the USSR to prepare heavy engineering, light industrial, and chemical products for export to other Soviet republics. The republic was also a major contributor to the Soviet military-industrial sector, especially in laser technology and electronics. Non-ferrous metallurgy was another major sector of the economy. Armenia produced molybdenum, aluminium, and rare metals such as selenium and tellurium for Soviet industry.

Armenia is now the victim of Soviet centralised planning, finding great difficulty in reforming its economic structures to more rational and balanced outputs. This process is all the more difficult in that the country has been deprived of most of its former energy supplies. Azerbaijan and Turkey imposed a trade and transport blockade because of the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, cutting oil, gas, and fuel product pipelines. The civil war in Georgia, and disagreements with the Georgian government, also cut supplies, including gas from Russia. The earthquake of 1988 destroyed some ten per cent of industrial capacity, and led to the closing down of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant. The future of several of the Soviet-period hydro-electric schemes is now hotly debated; the water level of scenic Lake Sevan has fallen drastically because too much water has been channelled to hydro-power stations.

3.3 Social problems

Many refugees have fled from conflict zones, further complicating social problems of unemployment and falling wages. Minimum pensions were as low as \$3-\$4 per month; average wage around \$6. Most Armenians have seen their living standards drop from a cruel combination of reduced income and power cuts, leaving many without electricity for heating and light most of each day even in the worst months of winter. Armenians have shown great

ingenuity, using rechargeable car batteries and wood-burning stoves, but the patience of most has long been exhausted, and perceived solutions such as the re-opening of the Medzamor Nuclear Power Plant have become important election issues.

Education has suffered greatly from the economic collapse. School and university buildings are in need of repair. There is a shortage of school supplies, from writing paper to new textbooks. Teachers and professors are moving to other, better-paid work. Parents, hard pressed to feed their families, have to face problems of finding money for school fees when before all education was provided free by the state. Education minister Ashot Bleyan has been widely criticised for introducing a fee-paying system for higher education and some subjects in middle school. The health service is also sorely hit by reduced resources.

4 The parties, the candidates and the elections

It was generally agreed that there were too many parties and candidates for the electorate to be able to assess them properly, quite apart from the inadequacies of the media. Moreover, the names of some parties or organisations were probably chosen deliberately to add to the confusion. Not all voters would be able to decide, for instance, which Liberal Democratic Party to vote for, and some may have voted for the Republic Bloc unintentionally. The following political parties or social organisations registered successfully and were included on the ballot sheet:

- Agrarian Democratic Party/*Agrarain Jokh'ovurdakan Kusaktsutyun*
- Armenian Autocratic Party
- Armenian Monarchist Party
- Armenian Revolutionary Federation/*Hai Hekh'apokhakan Dashnaktsutyun*
- Communist Party of Armenia/*Hayastani Kommunistkan Kusaktsutyun*
- Democratic Party of Armenia/*Hayastani Demokratik Kusaktsutyun*
- *Haykandukht* traditionalist popular party
- Liberal Democratic (*Ramkavar Azatakan*) Party
- Mission/*Arakelutiun*
- National Progress/*Azghain Arachentats*
- National Social Democratic Union/*Azghain Jokh'ovurdakan Miutyun*
- National State/*Azghain Petutyun*
- National Union - Dashnaktsutyun Alliance
 1. Constitutional Rights Union
 2. Artsakh-Hayastan
 3. Zharang/Heritage National Conservative Club of East Armenia
- National Union for Self-Determination/ Christianity / *Azghain Inknvoroshman Miutyun-Kristonakan*
- Populist Organisation
- Republic Bloc/*Hanrapetutyun Miavorum*

This pro-government election bloc was formed from the following parties:

 1. Armenian Pan-National Movement/*Haiots Hamazghain Sharjum*
 2. Christian Democratic Union
 3. Republican Party of Armenia/*Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun*
 4. Social Democratic (*Hnchak*) Party
 5. Liberal Democratic Party
 6. Intellectual Armenia Union
- Scientific and Industrial Civil Union/*Ghitakan Ardyunaberaken Kakh'akatsiakan Miutyun*
- Shamiram Party. A women's party drawn mainly from the wives of high-ranking officials; pro-government.
- *Will/Kamk* and Armenian Federation Alliance
- Women of Armenia
- Workers of Armenia

4.1 Background information on major parties before the elections

Armenian Pan-National Movement (APNM)

Founded in September 1989, the liberal democratic APNM brought together most of the Karabagh Movement committees. It was the largest parliamentary faction with 55 MPs, and included president Levon Ter-Petrosian among its leaders. Membership around 10,000. Has regional organisations, a central administration, republican council and annual conference which discusses and adopts the party programme. Supports privatisation and radical economic reform; taxation to further social welfare policies. Foreign policy aims to preserve Armenia's sovereignty and independence, while pursuing friendly relations with all neighbouring countries. Some problems with Georgia, and relations still strained with Azerbaijan over Karabagh; the APNM favours strengthening Karabakh's independence from Baku while furthering peace negotiations. Pursues close links with US and Western Europe. Cautious approach on involvement of diaspora in Armenian affairs. Active support for the Ter-Petrosian Constitution.

Christian Democratic Union

Founded in August 1990 by a group of democrats associated with the Karabagh Movement; leader Azat Arshakian; has a membership estimated at 1,000. Had three MPs. Decentralised organisation, administered by political council. Supports privatisation, friendly relations with neighbouring states, including peace negotiations with Azerbaijan while maintaining Karabakh's independence. Backs government's policies, supported presidential version of constitution.

Republican Party of Armenia

Founded in April 1990 to pursue nationalist policies; leader Ashot Navasardian was sole MP. Membership estimated at 1,000. Regional groups coordinated by executive council. Supports privatisation and some social welfare policies. Pursuit of national interests in foreign policy; unification of Karabagh with Armenia; no loss of sovereignty to Russia. Favoured parliamentary version of constitution. Sees diaspora as part of the Armenian nation, with right to citizenship on accepting its responsibilities.

Social Democratic Hnchak Party

Founded 1887 in Geneva, 1991 in Yerevan. Chairman of diaspora administration - Vahrich Jagian; chairman of independent organisation in Armenia - Yeghia Nacharian. Fairly autonomous regional organisations, with central administration elected by conference. Membership estimated at more than 1,000. Two members of parliament. Supports privatisation, but maintaining state control of military industrial complex. Favours state intervention to achieve full employment, social welfare policies, measures to stop emigration. Advocates cooperation with Russia and process of economic integration of former Soviet republics, while maintaining political independence. Wants Turkey to recognise genocide and agree territorial concessions. Supports firm line with Georgia and independence for Karabagh. Favours presidential constitution. Opposes granting citizenship to diaspora.

Liberal Democratic Party

Split from Liberal Democratic Ramkavar Azatakan Party in 1994 under leadership of Vigen Khachaturian who was expelled from the historic party after ideological differences arose.

Shamiram

Founded before elections (19 April 1995) to support government policies; name derived from a Babylonian princess who loved a king of Armenia. Women's party drawn mainly from wives of high-ranking officials: Shogher Matevosian, wife of president's press secretary Levon Zurabian; Anahit Torosian, wife of Vahan Papazian, Minister of Foreign Affairs; leading actress Gayane Sarukhanyan. Aims to raise position of women in Armenia, and to help government create a stable society. Pursues links with women's organisations abroad. Programme of good works:

hospital visits; support for schools, children's homes; visits to women's prisons to improve conditions, arrange amnesties for non-dangerous prisoners.

Communist Party of Armenia

Founded in 1920; re-registered in July 1991 after CP lost power. Some 50,000 members, with 24 members of parliament. First Secretary of CP Central Committee is Sergei Badalian. Some 600 primary organisations, 38 urban and regional committees; conference elects Central Committee whose decisions are binding on members. Supports socialist command economy for heavy industry and agriculture, but accepts privatisation of service sector, small businesses, light industry. Wants restoration of social security measures; full employment; free health service; state education; state housing programme; increased pensions; heavy taxation. Favours confederative union with Russia; self-determination for Karabakh; granting citizenship to Armenians from the diaspora. Advocates own version of constitution with councils(soviets) substituting for executive presidency. In opposition to government policies.

National Democratic Union

Founded in 1992; leaders David Vardanian and Vazgen Manukian from nationalist wing of Karabagh Movement. Membership estimated at 100, but had ten members in parliament. Conference of district representatives elects administrative council. Supports privatisation of service sector, construction, light industry; expansion of social security system. Advocates good relations with neighbouring states while promoting Armenia's sovereign rights. Wants close cooperation with Russia, but against creation of union or confederation. Supports independence of Karabagh. Favours dual citizenship for Armenian diaspora. In opposition to government; advocated parliamentary version of constitution.

National Union for Self-Determination/Christianity

Founded in September 1987 by Paruir Hayrikyan, anti-communist dissident; was party's sole member of parliament. Cooperated with the Karabagh Movement. Membership estimated at 10,000. Conference convened every three years to elect executive body; has regional organisations and missions in US and France. Supports privatisation, social welfare policies, state intervention for reducing unemployment and stopping emigration. Advocates alternative energy sources rather than reactivating the Medsamor nuclear power plant. Promotes Armenian sovereign rights in seeking improved relations with neighbouring states; defends Karabagh independence. Favours granting dual citizenship to diaspora Armenians. In opposition to government policies; critical of presidential constitution; favoured a constituent assembly.

Liberal Democratic Party

Founded in 1921 in Constantinopol, bringing together the Liberal (*Azatakan*) and Democratic (*Ramkavar*) parties; leaders Ruben Mirzakhanian and Orthosis Gyonjian. Membership estimated at 7,000, with 17 members of parliament. Has 35 regional party associations, with delegates conference electing executive Republican Administration. Supports comprehensive privatisation and free-market competition, minimum state intervention in the economy; a social security system based on non-governmental organisations. Regards membership of the CIS as a transition stage to a less dependent national economy and separate defence system. Favours cooperation with Russia without yielding to Moscow control; encourages joint projects using political and financial assistance of Western democracies. Full support for an independent Karabagh. Advocates full cooperation with Armenians of diaspora, including the granting of dual citizenship. Worked for reconciliation of presidential and parliamentary constitutions.

Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaksutyun)

Founded in 1890 in Tbilisi by Armenian socialist revolutionaries. Membership estimated at 8,000, with 18 members of parliament. Decentralised organisation with collective leadership and daily operations managed by specific party bureaux. Against privatisation before adequate legal framework in place; favours state control of energy and transport and comprehensive state system of social security. Prefers efforts to lift the blockade and development of conventional energy sources to reactivation of Medsamor Nuclear Power Plant. Against revival of USSR but accepts need for close cooperation with Russia. Demands that Turkish authorities acknowledge the Armenian genocide before establishing diplomatic relations. Supports independence and self-determination for Karabagh. Favours equal citizenship for Armenians in Armenia and diaspora, bringing Armenians together on territory of historic Armenia. In opposition to government and advocated parliamentary version of constitution. In December 1994 Ter-Petrosian ordered a six-month suspension of ARF activities.

Agrarian Democratic Party

Founded in 1992 by former members of the Communist Party. Membership estimated at 1,000; had seven members of parliament; chairman: Telman Dilanian. Conference every two years elects central administration; operates through regional and urban organisations. Supports collective farms and criticises rapid privatisation of agriculture, but not in principle opposed to gradual privatisation. Advocates state welfare system, and intervention to ensure full employment and stop emigration. Favours the restoration of the USSR and friendly relations with neighbouring countries; supports granting citizenship to Armenians from diaspora. Advocates independence for Karabagh through direct negotiations between Stepanakert and Baku. In opposition to government policies; favoured the parliamentary version of the constitution.

4.2 Electoral law and electoral commissions

Deputies of the National Assembly were to be elected by citizens on the basis of “free, universal, equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot” (Law on Elections, Article One). Of the 190 deputies of the National Assembly, 150 were to be elected in single-member constituencies by the majority system. Forty were to be elected for the country as a whole by proportional representation from those nominated on party lists. The referendum on the new constitution was to be held on the same day. The Central Electoral Commission allowed only eleven of the nineteen parties which applied to register, and some of the rejected parties initiated legal proceedings against it.

The Republic Bloc was widely accused of manipulating the elections of chairmen for the regional and district electoral commissions which were to conduct the elections and count the votes. Article 11 of the electoral law stipulated that in cases when a district commission failed to elect a chairman within the specified time, he should be appointed by the superior regional electoral commission - for the most part controlled by the Republic Bloc. For example, in one case when the Republic Bloc representatives were in the minority in a district commission, they refused to vote, ensuring that the regional commission could then select a chairman that suited the Republic Bloc. In other cases candidates most likely to be elected were reportedly threatened with losing their jobs or promotions unless they stepped down in favour of “more suitable” candidates.

At a meeting of the Supreme Council on 18 May opposition deputy Arshak Sadoyan accused the Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, Robert Amiran, of violating the electoral law in manipulating the chairmanships of regional electoral commissions. In May, of 150 constituencies 106 had elected their chairmen; only 19 were representatives of the opposition.

By the end of June only one opposition chairman, Karen Ekimian of the National Democratic Union, remained. He accused the Central Electoral Commission of frequent violations of the Electoral Law. He and other members of electoral commission No.2 had been threatened and assaulted; two opposition members were illegally drafted into the armed forces.

The Central Electoral Commission announced that elections in 13 constituencies were invalid, and appointed new chairmen, of whom 12 were from the Republic Bloc. According to opposition sources, 700 people were refused registration as candidates, but none of the Republic Bloc candidates was refused. Eight political parties which claimed to have gathered the correct number of signatures were also refused registration. A resolution of the Central Electoral Commission on 24 May deprived Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan of the right to vote, although they had participated in all elections held in Armenia since 1990.³

The 150 constituencies were subdivided into 1634 electoral districts; 1,369 candidates stood for election under the majority system - an average of nine for each constituency. A further 570 candidates from 13 parties and socio-political organisations were on the party lists for election under the proportional election system for the remaining forty places. Expenditure on the elections was about 120 million dram (430 dram = \$1). Each constituency received 100,000 dram and each electoral district 28,500 dram. The Central Electoral Commission received 647 written complaints and suggestions. Some 2,370,000 people were entitled to participate in the elections and referendum, according to Robert Amiryan, chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, speaking at a press conference in the Armenia Hotel on 4 July. (See too *Respublika Armeniya*, 5 July 1995).

4.3 Results of the parliamentary elections

The Republic Bloc was able to claim an overwhelming victory after the results were published. The turnout was not high, although the queues at the polling stations might have suggested otherwise; 54,9% balloted in the parliamentary elections and 55,6% in the referendum. Possibly because procedures were not adequately explained beforehand, a total of 34,7% of the votes cast for the proportional representation system were rejected as invalid (411,743 out of 1,183,573) but this aspect also added to doubts as to the validity of the elections.

The new constitution was approved by 68% of those who voted. The results of the parliamentary elections are provided in the table below. As for the proportional system, only the results of those parties which according to the electoral commission report of 11 July exceeded the five per cent barrier are contained in the table.

³ *Noyan Tapan*, 17 May 21 and 28 June 1995

Party	Proportional	Majority	Total
Republic bloc	20	98	118
Shamiram	8	--	8
Communist Party of Armenia	6	1	7
National Social Democratic Union	3	2	5
National Union for Self-Determination	3	--	3
Liberal Democratic Party	--	1	1
Scientific and Industrial Civil Union	--	1	1
Armenian Revolutionary Federation	--	1	1
"Independents"	--	44	44
Total	40	148	188

Division of seats by parties following the parliamentary elections on 5 July 1995

Two vacancies remain to be filled. Of the 44 places which went to candidates described as "independent", only 4 seats went to candidates widely regarded as genuinely independent, while 40 seats went to formally independent deputies, actually working with the Republic Bloc.

The ruling parties of the Supreme Council had therefore greatly increased their control of voting in the new National Assembly, with 166 of the total 190; This was made up as follows:

- Parliamentary faction of Republic Bloc
 - Including:*
 - 1. *Christian Democratic Union* 4
 - 2. *Republican Party* 4
 - 3. *Liberal Democratic Party (not the opposition LDP)* 5
 - 4. *Social Democratic Party (Hnchak)* 4
 - 5. *Intellectual Armenia* 4
 - 6. *Armenian Pan-National Movement* 97
- Shamiram 8
- "Independents" 40

Of the remaining seats, 18 were regarded as forming the opposition; they included the seats won by the Communist Party of Armenia, the National Democratic Union, the Union for National Self-Determination, the Liberal Democratic Party (*Ramkavar Azatakan*), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnaktsutyun*) and the Scientific and Industrial Civil Union.

There was little optimism among opposition leaders that their accusations that the results were falsified would be upheld on appealing to the Constitutional Court, which was still to be established, as it would consider only appeals from president, Government, or one third of all deputies to the National Assembly. However, the reports of international observers will certainly raise doubts about Armenia's membership of the Council of Europe and other international bodies which demand solid evidence of progress in building democratic institutions. The elections and the referendum were initially described by international observers as "free, but not fair". At a later stage, Hanneke Gelderblom, chair of the parliamentary delegation and responsible for the report on the conduct of the parliamentary elections in Armenia, made the more diplomatic statement that there "had been violations", of which she considered the suspension of Dashnaktsutyun the most serious.

5 The media before the elections

Of the 428 media organisations registered with the media registration department of the Armenian Ministry of Justice, less than 40 per cent functioned regularly in the run-up to the elections, and some five per cent were in a state of almost complete paralysis. The 284 registered newspapers included less than ten dailies: *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* (15,000 copies); *Azg* (7,000 copies); *Lragir* (7,000 copies); *Respublika Armeniya* (5,000 copies); *Haik* (3,000 copies); *Aravot* (2,500 copies). Twelve of the 49 registered parties and public organisations had their own publishing organs, and most of them appeared irregularly.⁴

According to Hacob Avetikian, chief editor of *Azg*, the organ of the Liberal Democratic (*Ramkavar Azatakan*) Party, press freedom had deteriorated over the past three years because of the intolerant attitude of the government. After the president's 28 December speech nine newspapers, a press agency and a publishing house were closed down. Only 18 of the 50 newspapers still published in Armenia had some political content, and of those about half were pro-government - and they had a much larger circulation. With under 50,000 copies of newspapers in total a day, less than five per cent of the electorate, he calculated, would be influenced by the press. Others would draw their information from the state-run television and radio. Avetikian stated:

"The question is whether it will be possible to overcome the current difficulties in Armenia (with the ruling bodies continuing to amass capital, and intolerance to the free press growing) and turn the independent mass media into a real basis for democracy."⁵

5.1 Arduous working conditions

Journalists in Armenia have to work in appallingly difficult circumstances. They suffer the same material deprivations as the rest of the population, but the power cuts of course affect them more than most. For opposition journalists the high cost of newsprint, renting premises in government buildings, and restricted access to government meetings and reports amount to one major aspect of unfair competition. The authorities have added delays or refusals of registration to the difficulties facing opposition parties which wish to launch a new publication. This was the case with both the National Democratic Union and the Scientific and Industrial Civil Union. In addition, several opposition papers have faced unsolved criminal attacks, hassles from the state printing house or suspension. A detailed outline of all incidents is given below.

February - 3 March 1994

In the Spandarian district the Civil Court charged the opposition paper *Golos Armenii*. The prosecutor claimed the paper had published rumours and some of the articles had allegedly insulted the prime minister and the president of the Republic of Armenia. A three month suspended sentence was demanded. The editorial board of *Golos Armenii* considered the demand a rude violation of the freedom of speech and an infringement of the right to publish an opinion. Following several court sessions the prosecutor had to withdraw the case and the Court ruled that nobody's rights or lawful interests had been breached.

⁴ *Noyan Tapan*, 3 May 1995

⁵ *Noyan Tapan*, 7 June 1995

February 1994

The Press-Centre of the Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs revoked the accreditation of David Petrosian, the correspondent of *Ekho Moskvy*, a Russian radio station in Yerevan. The official reason was the journalist's visit to the head department and other agencies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to gain information other than that provided by the Ministry's press-service. However, according to Petrosian, the genuine reason was his coverage of an opposition-leader at a press-conference, published in early February in the Russian paper *Sevodnia* (Today). His article depicted the politician as a future challenger for the incumbent president. This allegedly irritated Vahan Papazian, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who personally annulled Petrosian's accreditation. The Press-Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its willingness to accredit another correspondent immediately. However, the radio station declined and David Petrosian continues to work as a correspondent without accreditation.

April 1994

Vardges Petrosian, Deputy of the Supreme Council (parliament) of Armenia, a renowned writer, publicist and chief editor of the weekly *Yerkir Nairi* (Nairi Country) was shot to death. Officially no motives have been suggested, but rumours have indicated that personal reasons triggered the killing. Despite considerable awards put up by the law-enforcement agencies for assistance in investigation, the murderers have not been found.

August 1994

Governmental information agencies refused to provide official information to correspondents of non-governmental media, following guidelines stipulating that they shall distribute information concerning the Republic's leadership and state institutions merely to the governmental agency *Armenpress*. Other media in Armenia have to pay *Armenpress* a fee to receive information. The conduct was widely considered to monopolise the provision of information and, some critics alleged, an attempt to restore totalitarian customs and subdue the media. According to them, both Article 2 (prohibits monopolisation) and Article 4 (right to receive information) of the decree *About press and other mass media* were breached. The guidelines were eventually changed following protests in a number of outlets.

September 1994

Seven young men intruded the editorial office of *Golos Armenii*, and destroyed the office belongings of Chief Editor Flora Nakhshkarian. The incident ceased after the unplanned arrival of the security of Arina, the advertising firm which is also located in the House of Press. The editorial board alleged that the attack was due to the publication of several very critical articles on top officials in Armenia. The criminals were not found.

October 1994

The editorial office of the *Azg* (Nation) daily - the paper of Ramkavar-Azatakan - was set on fire during the night. A stone wrapped in material saturated with highly inflammable liquid was thrown through the window. By mere luck, the damage was less than could be expected. The editorial judged the attack as "a crime against the Armenian press." The perpetrators were not found.

Television journalist Aram Abrahamian was assaulted by three men at the entrance of his house. He suffered serious facial injuries, concussion and was taken to hospital. Initially, the former Press-Secretary of the president accused the opposition party ARF Dashnaksutyun, the communists, the National-Democratic Union and Ashot Manucharian's. He later withdrew these allegations. The perpetrators were not found.

The subordinates of the plenipotentiary representative in Shirak twisted the arms of a correspondent of the *Haylur* news-agency and expelled him for three months to the reserve servicemen. They also threatened him with his life on various occasions. *Yerkir* reported that the correspondent was told by the representative himself that "...if you behave foolishly, we'll send you to the army..."

Michael Vardanian, Gyumri Government representative, together with several other representatives invaded the Gyumri-based office of the *Haylur* news-agency and attacked three parliamentary deputies: Arshak Sadoyan, David Vardanian and Rudik Hovhannesian (who were invited by journalists) and ransacked the offices. The damage was approximately 10 million drams (\$ 25,000). A directly linked court appeal was rejected, since the prosecutor included the case into the general assault on assault of the deputies of the Supreme Council in Gyumri.

October 1994

Following the frequent cases of violence against (representatives of the) mass media, over 30 media outlets signed a joint statement addressed to the government. It reads:

"We, representatives of mass media outlets in the Republic of Armenia, vehemently denounce the recent violence. It limits pluralism and curtails the freedom of speech. We demand sturdy measures from the president and the law-enforcement agencies, in order to protect journalists and safeguard their working conditions. In connection with our protest against the attacks and the subsequent lack of action of the police, we recall the signature of the president of Armenia under all international agreements guaranteeing the protection of media-professionals and their ability to work unhampered. Taking these responsibilities into consideration, we, the journalists of Armenia, hope the government will take prompt measures to ensure human rights and the freedom of speech. Failure to take these responsibilities threatens the democracy in Armenia and will damage our international prestige.

"We, the media professionals, are fully aware of our responsibilities towards society and will fulfil our professional duty. Simultaneously however, we demand from the government to create the necessary conditions for proper functioning of the mass media, both important for society and state."

An official reaction from the government has not been received.

November 1994

The Chief Editor of *Azg*, Hakob Avedikian, was assaulted by strangers near his residence. Avedikian was seriously injured. According to him, the violence against his paper has taken an organised character, and the inertia of the government implies that it indirectly supported the attacks. On 8 November, the press-secretary of the president, Levon Zurabian, denounced the assault and assured that the law-enforcement bodies would take the appropriate measures to protect the media outlets and journalists. The perpetrators have not been found.

Armen Baghdassarian, a correspondent of *Azg* was attacked by three strangers when leaving his office. The men introduced themselves as policemen, then twisted Baghdassarian's arms and hit him several times. Baghdassarian suffered seriously facial injuries. Following some provisional first aid in the editorial office, he was rushed to the hospital, where he had to stay two weeks. On 23 November, an editorial titled "We will not keep silent" stated that no arrests related to the attacks had been carried out, that certain people wanted to establish an atmosphere of violence, mutual accusations, distrust and intolerance and that a precious accomplishment of young Armenian democracy - the freedom of speech - was under threat.

December 1994

The editorial office of *Shrdjan* (Period), the paper of the National State party, was set on fire. The damage was significant, all the computers in the office were destroyed. Deputy of the parliament and leader of the National State, Samwel Shahinian said at a press-conference: "I don't *suppose*, I just *know* that the current government is guilty of what has happened". He considered the arson deliberate and an act of political terrorism, which could spread widely in the country due to the passivity of the government, and especially the law-enforcement. He also said that *Shrdjan* would even be published in case of a "nuclear explosion". The arsonists have not been found.

Following the presidential decree on the temporary suspension of the ARF Dashnaksutyun, several papers, directly or indirectly related to the party, were closed. The daily *Yerkir* (the official organ of the ARF) and the weekly *Azatomart* (the official organ of the ARF Bureau, it has issues in Armenian and Russian); a number of periodicals whose chief editors were members of Dashnaksutyun: *Aragast* (women's weekly), *Munetik*, *Marzashkharh* (sports weekly), *Nork* (periodical of the Union of Writers) *Aspar*, *Mitk*, *Andradarts*; the printing house *Michael Varandian* (Armenian-Canadian joint enterprise) and the news agency *Haylur*, all had to suspend their activities. Although *Yerkir* and *Azatomart* are the official organs of the party, the other outlets are merely related to Dashnaksutyun by the party-membership of their director or editor-in-chief. Nevertheless, the property of all outlets was either confiscated or destroyed by officers of the State National Security Department, without a warrant but referring to the presidential decree of December 28. According to Armenian law, however, media outlets can only be closed after a decision by the Supreme Court. Yet, the resolution of the Supreme Court of Armenia (January 12, 1995) concerning Dashnaksutyun did not stipulate closure of related media outlets or confiscation of property. Nevertheless, the outlets remain suspended and approximately 100 journalists have lost their jobs.

February 1995

Employees of the suspended media outlets organised a "sit down" strike in front of the president's residence and demanded the consent to resume their work. They claimed their professional and human rights, laid down in the decree *On press and other mass media* were being breached. The strike continued for three weeks and terminated with the submittal of a request to the prosecutor's office, demanding to halt all illegal actions against the barred newspapers and allow their publication. The press-secretary Levon Zurabian advised the protesters to appeal to the High Court. The newspapers had, however, been suspended *without* a Court decision and it was therefore unlikely that judicial authorities would have considered the case.

A number of opposition and independent outlets rendered moral support to their cornered colleagues.

The weekly *Marzashkhar* published one issue, but subsequently the editorial office was ransacked and the paper could not possibly pursue normal functioning. The editor-in-chief, Roland Sharoyan, was released after six weeks custody on 10 February due to an "absence of corpus delicti", but his case has not been dismissed and his freedom of movement remains limited.

January - February 1995

The first few months of 1995 witnessed continuous pressure of the state publishing house Periodika - the only publishing house suited for periodicals and the owner of the House of Press, where many papers have their editorial office - on the non-aligned opposition paper *Golos Armenii*. In January, Periodika requested *Golos* to leave their premises in the House of Press. The management of the paper refused and demanded legal grounds, since the rental

agreement runs until 1 January 1996. Periodika lacked such juridical motivation, but continued to exert pressure by cutting of the energy supply to *Golos Armenii* during working hours.

The main opposition parties (Ramkavar-Azatakan, ARF-D, ADP, UAI, ACP, NDSU, UNSD/C, SICU) demanded from the government that pressure on *Golos Armenii* would halt.

May 1995

The Director of the state publishing house Periodika indicated to the editor-in-chief of opposition daily *Golos Armenii* that the paper would not be published any longer, unless the editorial board would vacate their office. Since *Golos Armenii* had no debts and fulfilled all its obligations, the threat was considered a flagrant violation of an agreement signed between the editorial board and Periodika. The paper therefore appealed to the State Arbitrage. The Department for Governmental affairs however hardly concealed their intention of folding *Golos Armenii*: officials instructed by higher institutions appeared to plan closure of the newspaper before a court decision.

According to the editor-in-chief, Flora Nakhshkarian, hampering *Golos* was a clear attempt to weaken the opposition during the election campaign. She emphasised however that the paper would not support any particular party and that 4 employees would run as deputy on behalf of 4 different political parties.

11 May was the first day *Golos Armenii* was not published and Flora Nakhshkarian appealed to her colleagues for help. She requested other editors to allocate space in their newspapers for material prepared by *Golos*' journalists. The dailies *Aravot* (non-aligned) and *Azg* (Ramkavar-Azatakan party), and the weeklies *Urartu* (independent Russian-language), *Shirjan* (National State party) and *Iravunk* (Union of Constitutional Right) complied and published *Golos*' articles. The suspension was denounced by all the opposition newspapers and political parties.

May 1995

The secretariat of *Reporters sans frontieres* sent an open letter to president Levon Ter-Petrosian, requesting him to use all eligible power to ensure that the publication of *Golos Armenii* could resume.

The Armenian president Levon Ter-Petrosian wrote a letter to Vrezh Markosian, director of Periodika. The text has been published in *Hayastani Hanrapwetutiun* and reads:

"Having no legal rights to interfere either in a dispute between two juridical sides - your publishing house and editorial board of *Golos Armenii* - or in a decision made by the State Arbitrage, I ask you to postpone the implementation of the verdict until the end of the parliamentary elections in order to avoid an impression that someone attempts to limit the opposition's freedom of speech during the pre-election campaign".

Following a 12-day-long interval, *Golos Armenii* resumed publication. The editorial board expressed gratitude to the newspapers that devoted space to their material and wrote:

"A unique example of a newspaper published within several other newspapers has been set. Armenian journalists clearly objected to the encroachment of the freedom of speech. *Golos Armenii* thanks all the readers, organisations, parties and diplomatic missions for their solidarity with the newspaper and their support to our struggle for freedom".

July 1995

On the day following the elections, *Lragir* ceased to be published for one week. The state publishing house Periodika refused to render due services, since the newspaper allegedly had a debt of 2 million drams (some 5,000 US dollars). However, several (pro)government papers have debts exceeding 50 million drams (approximately 125,000 dollars). After the outstanding sum was transferred, *Lragir* resumed publication on 13 July. It is, nevertheless, quite clear that the state monopoly of publishing and disseminating periodicals does not benefit the development of an independent press in Armenia.

Although it is generally difficult to judge whether the government is involved in the described acts of terrorism, in some cases the hand of the authorities is evident. The revocation of David Petrosian' accreditation, the preferential treatment received by *Armenpress*, the rather uncooperative attitude of Periodika, the suspension of the various Dashnak media outlets and the removal of Radio Liberty's Armenian service from the widely available cable network, can all be attributed to the government.

In other cases it was less acts of terrorism than economic difficulties which removed newspapers from the streets. The Union for National Self-Determination has the following titles: *Azatutyun* (Liberty); *Hairenik* (Fatherland); *Svoboda* (Liberty - in Russian); *Kanch Nakhnyants* (Call of the Ancestors); *Ankakhutyun* (Independence); but largely for financial reasons they were not appearing in the period before the elections. When Vardges Petrosian, deputy of the Supreme Council and chief editor of Yerkir Nairi (Nairi Country) was shot and killed on 15 April 1994 it was rumoured that personal rather than political factors were involved; but the murderers were not discovered.

Clearly journalists in Armenia are fighting hard to defend the freedoms vital to the proper conduct of their profession. There are newspapers which defend these freedoms, but they are themselves open to criticisms that they indulge in poorly sourced ad hominem attacks on government officials, prefer opinion to factual reporting, and lack balance or objective analysis. The authorities are no doubt innocent of many of the accusations directed at them. But they must accept some responsibility for the economic problems suffered mainly by opposition media, and for the failure to ensure working conditions free from the threat of violence. And they are certainly guilty of using the state-funded television and radio stations, and the government press, in the narrow interests of the ruling parties, depriving citizens of their right to comprehensive and balanced coverage of all the mainstream political forces.

6 Media coverage of the elections

6.1 The regulatory framework for the media

The Law on the Press and Other Mass Media which was adopted by the parliament in October 1991 proclaims freedom of the press and the right of citizens and organisations to establish and operate media. Articles cover the protection of news sources, rights and duties of journalists, right of reply, and protection from libel. Article 2 states that:

Media in the Republic of Armenia media are free and not censored. The citizens of the Republic of Armenia have the right to express their opinion and to receive from the media actual, accurate and correct information on any subject of social life. Monopoly over the media is prohibited in the Republic of Armenia.

Besides the fact that the last sentence of Article 2 has been violated with the preferential treatment of *Armenpress* and the difficulties journalists experienced in obtaining official information, certain Articles in the Law on the Press and Other Mass Media leave room for undesirable interpretation. The following articles are particularly relevant:

Distributing state secrets, specified by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Armenia, is prohibited. Information promoting war, violence, national and religious enmity, pornography, drugs, criminality, or information containing lies and unchecked information is not allowed. Information concerning the private life of citizens should not be published without prior permission.

The media outlet may be suspended by court ruling for a period of three months in case Article 6 of the present law is infringed.

The media outlet is closed in case it continues to violate Article 6 following the initial three months suspension. The media outlet may also be closed by the owner.

Abuse of the freedom of speech, disseminating false information, defame a person's honour or dignity and breaching the rights and legal claims of citizens and organisations is considered a violation of the media law.

A similar duality is contained in the Constitution, which was adopted by referendum on 5 July. The second section of the document (main rights and freedoms) contains several articles with a direct or indirect connection to the media. Firstly, the freedom of speech is clearly and broadly stipulated. Subsequently, a number of restrictions, which again can be subject to opportunistic interpretation, are introduced. The following two Articles are most relevant:

Everyone has the right to hold an opinion. It is prohibited to force someone to renounce or change his opinion. Everyone receives the freedom of speech, including seeking, receiving and disseminating information and ideas through any type of media, independent of state borders (article 24).

Article 44 stipulates a rather broad range of exceptions to Article 24: “

The fundamental human and civil rights and freedoms established in Article 23-27 of the Constitution can be limited only by law if that is necessary for the protection of state and societal security, social order, the health and mores of society, and the rights and freedom and honour and good reputation of others.

Both the Law on the Press and Other Mass Media and the Constitution do guarantee the freedom of expression for individuals and media organisations. Unfortunately, it is debatable when the “social order, the health and mores of society, and the rights and freedom and honour and good reputation of others” are threatened or genuinely require protection from the state. The various cases described in this report do not point towards an overly tolerant attitude of the government, but do not prove the existence of overt censorship either.

6.2 The regulatory framework for media coverage of the elections

The right of the mass media to cover the election campaign could have been guaranteed in greater detail. Article 7 of the Law on Elections states that:

Representatives of social-political organisations, mass media (press, television and radio) and accredited representatives of registered candidates, may all be present at meetings of Electoral Commissions, during registration of candidates, during the voting on election day and during the sealing and opening of ballot-boxes and the vote counting.

The Law does not state the right to be present at rallies, meetings of political parties or gatherings of state and public bodies. Moreover, the Law fails to stipulate the right to distribute information thereof, and fails to oblige social-political organisations and state bodies to give journalists access to information.

The use of state-owned mass media in the election campaign was first mentioned in Article 25 of the Election Law, which states that:

Electoral Commissions and respective state organs are obliged to secure equal possibilities for use of state owned national media by social-political organisations participating in the elections on a party list basis, and for use of state owned local-scale media for candidates participating on majority basis. The Central Electoral Commission secures the possibility of free use of state media by social-political organisations or individual candidates within the limits of the united electoral fund. All candidates or social-political organisations can use state owned media also by paying from their own assets, but not more than twice the amount of the time or space allocated by the Central Electoral Commission may be purchased.

The rather general obligation concerning the provision of free time contained in the Election Law was specified in the *Resolution of the Central Electoral Commission On the Order of Electioneering of Candidates to Deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia*, which was adopted by the Chairmen of the Central Election Committee on 24 May 1995. Due to the relevance of the document, the full text of this Resolution is given below.

1. Citizens of the Republic of Armenia have the right to freely discuss the political, business and personal qualities of candidates and to freely campaign at meetings and via the mass media. Candidates, social-political organisations and confidants have the right to organise meetings with voters.
2. Electoral Commissions and corresponding State Bodies have to provide candidates and social-political organisation participating in the elections *on a party-list basis* with equal opportunities for free access to the *national* media. Similarly, candidates and social-political organisations participating in the election on a local *majority* basis, will be granted equal opportunities in the *local* media.
3. Representatives of social-political organisations participating in the elections on a party list basis are allocated 30 minutes of free airtime on the first television channel of the Republic of Armenia. The representatives are obliged to apply for the airtime 10 days in advance.
4. Representatives of social-political organisations are provided with an opportunity to participate in a round table discussion for two hours (four times), in accordance with the order stipulated by the Central Electoral Commission.
5. Representatives of social-political organisations participating in the elections on a party list basis are allocated 30 minutes of free airtime on national radio.
6. Free access for registered candidates participating in the elections on a majority basis is restricted to 5 minutes on local television and 5 minutes on local radio.
7. Candidates and social-political organisations participating in the elections are allowed to buy additional airtime for political advertising. This may, however, not exceed twice the time allocated freely by the Central Electoral Commission.
8. Members of the Central Electoral Commission are entitled to receive 10 hours of television and radio broadcasting.
9. Social-political organisations participating in the elections on a party list basis are entitled to receive 0.25 page for use of political propaganda in the papers *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* and *Respublika Armeniya*. The material has to be submitted to the Central Electoral Commission 3 days before publishing.
10. Registered candidates participating in the elections on a majority basis are entitled to receive 0.25 page for use of political propaganda. The material has to be submitted to the local Electoral Commission 3 days before publishing.
11. Registered social-political organisations participating in the elections are allowed to publish and distribute announcements, leaflets and other propaganda material.
12. Printed propaganda material may be put everywhere, besides on the buildings where Electoral Commissions are seated.
13. Live television programmes are recorded and the tapes are kept until the end of the elections.

14. The schedule for allocation of free access for candidates and social-political organisations participating on a respectively majority or party-list basis are to be approved by a joint decision of the Central Electoral Commission and the State Board of Television and Radio Broadcasting.

15. According to Par. 5, Article 25 of the Law on Elections of Deputies of the National Assembly, candidates or social-political organisations are under no circumstances allowed to distribute money, food or other commodities during the election campaign. Neither can they present themselves using the name of state enterprises or public organisations. Upon confirmation of such infringements, the registration of the candidate or social-political organisations concerned can be declared invalid by decision of the Central Electoral Commission.

16. Electioneering, meetings, demonstrations and gatherings of people in front of the building where voting is taking place is prohibited on the day of elections.

17. All appeals concerning infringements of the decree on electioneering have to be submitted to the Central Electoral Commission.

The decision to allocate time/space in national media to political parties participating on a party list basis, and to restrict the candidates for deputy on a majority basis to the local media, is sensible since it prevented an overload of free access on state broadcasting outlets. The total time of election broadcast accumulated to one hour daily. To the best assessment of the monitoring team, this free time on radio and television has been allocated fairly. It was not researched whether the candidates participating on a majority basis have received the eligible time in the local media.

Article 4 provides the opportunity for political parties to take part in Round Table discussions. These were indeed held daily, lasted two hours and featured three different political parties each broadcast. The monitoring team considers this effort at fairness of the Central Election Commission laudable, mainly since it might have contributed significantly to voters enlightenment.

The actual allocation of space in the state-owned newspapers, as provided for in Article 9 and 10, has not been meticulously appropriated. This is, however, most likely to be unintentional and mainly due to the parties that submitted the propaganda. Only Shamiran received no free space, the Republic Bloc placed a 1,274 cm² advertisement, and the opposition parties NDSU, NP and DPA all got approximately 1,850 cm² in *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* and *Respublika Armeniya*.

Finally, two omissions in the regulatory framework for media coverage of elections should be mentioned. Firstly, there were no regulations whatsoever related to the provision of balanced coverage in newscasts, documentaries and analytical programmes. The unbalanced reporting of state-owned outlets indicate the importance of guidelines for fair and balanced coverage in programmes other than free or paid access. Although candidates were theoretically entitled to receive a right of reply (see the annexed Media Law, Article 24), no candidate or political party attempted to secure it - which possibly illustrates the cynical thought that they would not get it anyway.

Secondly, the absence of an official body specifically established to supervise the course of the media coverage of the election campaign is regrettable. A council of observers with the task of overseeing certain ethical standards and assessing the objectivity and balance of the coverage could have played a useful guiding role.

6.3 Television

Of the Armenian media, by far the greatest outreach is obtained by Armenian State Television. Channel One (National) was established in 1956, and - electricity supplies willing - it broadcasts six hours a day (18.00 to 24.00) to the whole of Armenia. Channel Two (Yerevan) was established in 1978; it broadcasts four hours a day (19.00 to 23.00) to some 80 per cent of Armenian territory. Apart from some small revenues from advertising, they are funded by state subsidies and are clearly pro-government in programme content.

In addition there was the new television company "A 1 +" established in May 1995 which drew its funding from advertising and video-information sales. It generally took a politically neutral stance and concentrated on entertainment programmes. It used the State Channel Two airtime on Saturdays and Sundays (19.00 to 23.00) and was not a major source of election information. On 3 August 1995 it was reported that its broadcasts had been suspended and that employees were leaving on vacation. According to unofficial reports, however, the station was being closed because the authorities objected to the Russian-language "Post Scriptum" programme broadcast on Sundays. The station had a contract for broadcasting on Channel Two over a three-year period; it did not specify any closing down for vacations. The contract, however, was signed with Tigran Hakobian, the head of State TV and Radio, whose dismissal by president Ter-Petrosian was announced on 6 July.

According to *Efir*, the weekly programme listings published by the State TV and Radio Administration: "In the energy crisis prevailing in our republic in recent years, watching television has become a matter of chance for the population." Although hardly standing up to scientific scrutiny, a spot poll conducted for the weekly on the number 26 bus suggested that the most watched programmes in the week of 19-25 June were the daily news broadcast "Herald" and the police information bulletin "02". In second place were the comedy programme "Number 1"; the documentary about Armenians abroad, "Planet"; the pre-election commentary "Political Patience" and two films. Third place was shared by another State news broadcast "Capital" and three entertainment programmes on "A1+". Fourth place went to the slot provided by the electoral law for political parties to put over their platform to the electorate: "Pre-electoral campaign"; and the pro-presidential constitution programme: "A New Constitution for an Ancient People".

Apart from such press items and equally anecdotal evidence gathered by asking a random selection of people what they had watched between power cuts, or on television sets powered by rechargeable car batteries, it is difficult to say whether there was any deliberate attempt to use the electricity shortages to reduce viewing of opposition party broadcasts.

The editorial time on state-financed television was, euphemistically speaking, rather unequally divided. Newscasts, documentaries and political analysis devoted 92% of the airtime to the Republic Bloc. A telling indication of the openly pro-government stance is the fact that a blatantly biased programme "Political Patience" was compered by the deputy chairman of State TV and Radio, Vahram Martirosyan. The leadership of the Liberal-Democrat Ramkavar Azatakan Party was so incensed by the programme's attack on them that they turned to the State Procurator's Office claiming that it had violated the Electoral Law.

Arutyun Karapetyan, a member of the party's leadership and chief editor of its journal *Paikar*, said that Martirosyan had come far since he was a young poet and translator, but seemed to have accepted his role in the State service as being to discredit all but the ruling party. Karapetyan regretted that the expectations of recent years for media to play a major role as watchdogs of democracy were giving way to a fear that the government monopoly on television threatened a return to Soviet agitprop, or even Goebbels-style propaganda. "Of course we

respect the political views of any citizen, including the compere of the programme, but here it is a matter of a state official, the deputy head of State TV and Radio. An order is being executed from the ruling party and other associated organisations." (Interview with Karapetyan on 30 June 1995; see too *Urartu* , No. 24, June 1995, p.6)

Vahram Martirosyan denied that he had slandered the Ramkavar Azatakan leaders because he was merely citing what had already been said by people who had formerly been in the same party and had left for ideological and other reasons. He did not seem to think that this would actually tend to reinforce accusations of bias. "It seems to be accepted that the opposition can say what it wants, how it wants, about the authorities. But official organs should pamper and indulge the opposition. The opposition thinks that it is a national treasure, which should be treated with special care." (*Urartu* , No.24, June 1995, p.7)

On 4 July, the day before the elections, the opposition Union for National Self-Determination/Christianity had the slot on Channel One from 18.25 to 18.55, while the final slot from 19.10 to 19.40 went to the ruling Republic Bloc. Later news broadcasts and other programming promoted the government parties and a "yes" vote for the presidential constitution. The programming on Channel Two was also heavily biased in favour of the government parties; "Political Patience" ran from 21.10 to 21.30. The president himself was given ninety minutes to promote the platform of the Republic Bloc on 3 July, and this broadcast was repeated the following day on both channels, as well as on State Radio. An interview with the monitor was shown on the "Capital" news broadcast, including his positive comments about the conduct of the elections, and cutting his critical remarks.

Cable television is popular and widespread, but appears largely to be restricted to entertainment programmes and pirated films. The monitor found a major exception to this in the Ashtarak Cable Television Studio, situated in the historic town of some 28,000 inhabitants lying to the north-west of Yerevan. The director, Vagram Botsinyan, (interviewed on 1 July 1995 at the studio, 47 Yerevan Street, Ashtarak) showed his equipment and a range of programming produced on the premises from artistic films to news reports. They transmit for 7-8 hours a day, and some 45 per cent of the programming is produced in their own studios. They estimate the audience at 30,000, and are planning to extend operations to the neighbouring Echmiadzin region. Charges are moderate (about \$12 to be linked to the network, plus just over \$1 a month subscription) especially compared with the cost of newspapers. The studio employs some 50 people, and Botsinyan insists that his journalists produce balanced material with careful citing of sources. Both local and some national politicians were paying the studio to prepare their election material since they were able to offer better service at lower prices than State television. Candidates were charged \$10 a minute for their personal appearances, but in the pre-electoral debates they were invited to appear free of charge. This was confirmed by local politicians interviewed the same day, and the level of programming viewed, both party political material and round table discussion on the elections, certainly seemed higher than State Television in terms of objectivity and professionalism.

6.4 Radio

The State Radio programmes revealed a pro-government bias similar to that of television. The Republic Bloc candidates were heavily promoted (93,2% of all editorial coverage) and opposition parties denounced. Discussion of the presidential constitution was strongly weighted in favour of a "yes" vote. The private company HAI FM-105.5, although established as an apolitical station financed by advertising and educational programmes, with some 80 per cent of its air time devoted to music, also played a role in the elections. In the pre-election two months it broadcast the series "The Choice Is Yours" in Russian and Armenian, every day at 8.00 and 15.00 containing views and information favouring the ruling parties. Transcripts were published in the Russian-language *Respublika Armeniya* and the Armenian-language *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*.

6.5 Press

The high cost of newsprint, together with the lack of advertising revenue and the low average income of the population make running an independent newspaper in Armenia extremely difficult. As with the electronic media, the situation favours the government and the ruling parties. Press reviews on radio and television, which in theory could compensate for the small circulation of the newspapers, in practice amount to little more than the incestuous recycling of the pro-government material already broadcast on the news and feature programmes, since they are drawn largely from the government and ruling party newspapers, rather than summarising the most interesting articles of the day, including those in the opposition press.

Local newspapers are suffering particular difficulties. For example, *Ashtarak*, the organ of the local council in the town of Ashtarak, has been so short of newsprint that the "weekly" newspaper appeared only seven times in the first half of 1995. According to the editor, Pavel Nazaryan: "Regional newspapers are dying out..."⁶

While most accept that there is now freedom of speech in Armenia, many argue that despite the variety of views to be found in newspapers there is not yet genuine freedom of the press. A poll conducted on the eve of the elections by the Youth Research Centre of the sociology department of Yerevan University came up with interesting results: only 26 per cent believe that there is sufficient variety of publications to ensure a reliable supply of information; the vast majority deny this, pointing to the massive closure of newspapers over the past year, which put hundreds of journalists out of work and deprived tens of thousands of readers of their favourite source of information. Precise percentages were given for those who linked the increase in physical attacks on journalists with pre-election political passions and political games (20,4 per cent); with the general lack of law and order (14,5 per cent); with suppression of free speech and attempts to conceal the truth (21 per cent). Many expected attacks on journalists to increase in the days immediately before the elections (47 per cent). "Only 6,2 per cent" thought that there was no need to have objective information about everything, that journalists "shouldn't stick their noses where they don't belong" but should leave it to the powers that be to decide what information to give out. However, the scientific basis of this poll is open to doubt, since *Golos Armenii* which reported it (on 1 July) gave no information as to the numbers polled, or the form of questioning. But the newspaper did comment accurately enough that "not all our journalists are able to distinguish precisely where objectivity ends and mere abuse begins".

⁶ *Respublika Armeniya*, 27 June 1995, p.2

Nonetheless, as an article by Georgy Kubatyan pointed out, journalism in Armenia has moved a long way from the censorship of the Soviet period:

“Democratic freedoms about which we didn't dare even dream, have been absorbed into the flesh and blood of each of us. Indeed, it would be a sin for professionals of the pen to forget just how it was earlier.”⁷

To illustrate the polarised newspaper landscape in Armenia, two papers are discussed elaborately below. Subsequently, a brief overview of the other monitored newspapers will be given.

6.5.1 *Respublika Armeniya* : Pro-government voice

With the benefit of state subsidies, a pro-government newspaper such as *Respublika Armeniya* can maintain a staff of some 15 people, although the circulation is 5,000 and the price as low as 25 drams (for the four-page Tuesday through Friday issues, and 40 drams for the 32-page Saturday issue). The newspaper is in many respects professionally produced, but reveals its political bias in its pro-government coverage of all election issues.

- Coverage of all but the pro-government parties was negative.
- A series of articles (15, 16 June; 1 July) on the Dro organisation, whose alleged links with the Dashnaktsutyun party were one of the reasons put forward for that party's suspension, was clearly aimed at justifying this action.
- Coverage of the presidential constitution was aimed at achieving a “yes” vote in the referendum.
- The recommissioning of the Medsamor Nuclear Power Station was intensively covered, but invariably in the form of assuring readers of its safety, and dismissing other opinions as rumour-mongering: “Officially, once and for always, I declare that such rumours are purely political and propagandist in character, fogging the true picture.” (Arkady Avakyan, head of the Armenian Directorate for Nuclear Energy, interviewed in the issue of 16 June).

News reports with direct bearing on the pre-electoral campaign showed a clear slant to the presentation of information. The demonstrations and clashes of 21 June were covered at length in *Respublika Armeniya*, but more with opinion pieces denouncing the demonstrators than with facts; even a brief front page report from the “News Department” on 22 June found the space to comment: “All this carries a strong odour of provocation. Whom does it serve?”

On 29 June *Respublika Armeniya* devoted most of its front page to attacking the independent candidate Narek Mesropian, and the newspaper *Golos Armenii* in which his articles appear, alleging that both were in the pay of the ARF Dashnaktsutyun: “Those who have read his articles know, of course, this astonishing mixture of nervous bile, sick hatred, mind-dulling suppositions, and almost detective-like sharpness which nourishes all the articles of this, in a certain sense, gifted journalist.”

The Saturday supplement issue of 1 July published two articles attacking the NDSU candidate Vazgen Manukian; a further article in the series alleging links between the secret Dro organisation and the Dashnaktsutyun party; other attacks on opposition parties; several articles positively assessing Republic Bloc policies; a promotional, page-long article on Nadezhda Sarkisian, a singer who was also a Shamiram party candidate in the elections; and nine articles urging a “yes” vote on the constitution.

⁷ *Respublika Armeniya*, 24 June 1995, p.6

The following issue (Tuesday, 4 July), the last before the elections, was even more blatantly pro-government. Of its four pages, the front page and a large part of page three was given over to reprinting the television speech of president Levon Ter-Petrosian; the whole of page two was devoted to an interview with vice president Gagik Arutyunian; much of page three carried the speech of the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Babken Ararktsian; page four had an article taking issue with *Vremya* for publishing material critical of APNM policies, another denouncing *Golos Armenii* for attacking a Shamiram leader, and a third exposing the weaknesses of the Communist Party programme. Only the fourth article, which usefully outlined the voting system facing the electorate the next day, had any pretensions to objectivity.

On the plus side, *Respublika Armeniya* is professionally produced, covers national and international affairs fairly comprehensively, and certainly provides a serious forum for presenting to the Armenian public the government position and the platform of the ruling bloc of parties. For example, on 20 June Hovanes Ighitian, deputy chairman of the APNM, was given almost half a page to develop his arguments about his party's policies, and at the same time he made some very sensible points about the present stage of Armenian politics in general:

“Today in the civilised world there are two or three political forces: left, right and centre. In my view, after these elections a roughly similar situation should develop in Armenia also. Fifty parties is too many for us; all the more so when many of them are essentially just the same apart from their names. The first step has already been taken. I have in mind the Republic Bloc which unites several parties that have given up many tactical disagreements for the sake of achieving unity of strategic aims.”

He expressed regret that opposition parties had united largely on the basis that they were against the government rather than on some positive alternative programme. “For all of us, for the state as a whole, for any democratic government, a strong, constructive opposition is a blessing.”

The newspaper serves as an official record. On 21 June, for instance, it published the draft constitution in full. (Apart from publication in the official press, the monitor noted that the draft was also available in cheap booklet form in book shops). What seemed missing, however, for any newspaper genuinely wishing to raise the understanding of the public as to the main issues involved, was an attempt to provide a balanced analysis of the content, or a forum for supporters and critics of the constitution to argue their case. Of the two lengthy discussions published in the issue of 22 June, both were strongly in favour of the constitution.

6.5.2 *Golos Armenii*: Outspoken opposition

Golos Armenii has four pages, and appears on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; in the weeks before the elections it had a circulation of 5,235 and cover price of 50 drams. In direct contrast to the pro-government newspapers, *Golos Armenii*, which carries on its mast head “Independent Newspaper”, regularly carried articles opposed to the policies of the Republic Bloc.

- Coverage of the government and Republic Bloc parties was invariably negative.
- Clear sympathy for the ARF Dashnaktsutyun, and strong denunciation of its suspension as a deliberate ploy of president and government to remove the main opposition party from the elections.
- Coverage of the constitution issues was aimed at encouraging a “no” vote in the referendum.

- The decision to recommission the Medzamor Nuclear Power Station was portrayed as an election ploy to win votes by promising sufficient electricity to make the coming winter more bearable than in recent years. The newspaper questioned why Ter-Petrosian had advocated its closure in the first place, only to have it recommissioned before the elections. Nonetheless, scientific arguments both for and against recommissioning were presented to readers (see for example the issues of 10 June 1995 and 1 July 1995).

A survey of issues published over the three weeks leading up to the elections demonstrates the newspaper's anti-government stance. Front page items on 13 June, for example, were overwhelmingly negative in reporting preparations by the authorities for the elections. An article in the *Washington Post* of 8 June was summarised, with prominence given to criticisms of Ter-Petrosian's treatment of the Dashnaktsutyun party. Two lengthy articles attacked the draft presidential constitution. A report of the meeting between Babken Ararktsyan, Chairman of the Armenian Supreme Soviet Presidium, and Vladimir Shumeiko, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Russian Parliament, deplored Shumeiko's voicing support for the ruling party as interference in Armenia's internal affairs; it went on to cast doubts on Shumeiko's personal integrity.

An interview with Agasi Arshakyan, chairman of the Scientific and Industrial Civil Union, quoted him as saying that "lawlessness in the pre-election campaign is becoming the main method of persuasion for the authorities". He accused Robert Amiryan, chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, of failing to uphold the electoral law; several SICU representatives had wrongfully not been registered, and in the case of constituency No. 50 he claimed that the SICU representative, Ashot Manucharyan, was deprived of registration because he would be standing against the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Babken Ararktsyan. Arshakyan claimed that a "documentary" film blackening Manucharyan's reputation had been shown four times on state television. Moreover, the SICU representative on the constituency electoral commission, Artashes Oganessian, had been called up for military service in violation of the Electoral Law (Section 3, Article 8). Among the other opposition voices provided with a forum was Vazgen Manukyan, who said that the people must be roused to fight the injustices perpetrated by the authorities. "Otherwise it will not be the opposition, or some party or other, which suffers defeat, but our whole people, our state, our nation."

On 15 June the main item was by the newspaper's chief political commentator Narek Mesropovich Mesropyan, who as usual attacked the authorities with highly opinionated arguments. A second front-page contribution by Mesropyan was highly unusual, however; it announced his candidacy for Erevan constituency No.7, and appealed to readers to help in his campaign: "The constant harassment of the newspaper, the threat by the authorities to close it, the struggle of the editors to defend the *Voice*, and the experience gained in protecting human rights, have compelled me to put forward my candidacy for election to the National Assembly." The press conference of ten opposition parties on 14 June was fully reported, and their leader Vazgen Manukyan was quoted as saying that theirs was not merely a struggle of the opposition forces against the authorities, to seize power themselves; it was for "the future of all the people, for the future of our children". He continued: "We call on you, the journalists, on the whole healthy part of the nation, to unite with us for the future of a free and flourishing Armenia". Objectivity and balance are clearly not always the most highly prized journalistic virtues in Armenia.

The issue of 17 June carried a lengthy direct criticism of president Ter-Petrosian, claiming that he had violated the Electoral Law by beginning three days early his pre-electoral campaign on behalf of the Republic Bloc and the draft constitution. The front page also carried a snide attack on the senior presidential advisor, Gerard Libaridian. A report on the work of the Central Electoral Commission mentioned in particular the refusal to register Lyudmila Arutyunyan, the

well-known academic and critic of the government; this was interpreted as a deliberate step to improve the chances of the pro-government candidate: "After all, no one could doubt that in any genuine elections Lyudmila Arutyunyan would win, and it would be naive to suppose that the CEC didn't know this."

The newspaper reported a letter smuggled to Amnesty International from Arsen Artsruni, arrested in connection with the Dro affair. He denied involvement in terrorism and murder, and claimed that he was tortured to obtain a false confession. Readers who had seen the air stewardesses on hunger strike in their tents on Theatre Square had the opportunity to read their letter protesting at the alleged corruption and incompetence of the Armenian Civil Aviation Administration. *Golos Armenii* serves as a useful newspaper of record for documents of protest and opposition, which seldom receive a mention in the pro-government press. The main item on 20 June was headlined "The Parliament of Unfulfilled Hopes" and was largely a criticism of PAM policies.

The demonstrations and clashes in Yerevan on 21 June were covered in much greater detail in *Golos Armenii* than in the government media. The issue of 22 June devoted almost half the front page to a report from the spot which included five photographs; normally the front page has more opinion than reporting of news. There was still room for a lead article headlined: "Falsification Is the Only Hope for PAM" which criticised the work of local electoral commissions. The next issue (24 June) was able to cover the clashes in greater detail. The lead item, an opinion piece by Narek Mesropyan, was headlined: "For Dissidents - Prison, Bullets and Poverty". He began:

"While not having harboured any illusions about the present regime, I confess that I could not believe until the very last moment that the authorities would declare so frankly their determination to remain at the helm of the state not only through lawlessness, falsification, lies and outright deceit, but also through their willingness to spill blood. Now that bloodshed is an accomplished fact, it remains only to admit that we all thought much more highly about these people than they actually deserve."

In the same issue (front and second pages) the newspaper published its "chronicle of a crime", reporting the events after two days of extensive research and interviews, and describing it as the most complete version. It concluded: "Not only did the services whose duty it was, fail to protect the people, it was the very authorities elected by the people who fired on them."

No high priority is given to keeping reporting separate from commentary. Factual reporting is probably most common in items such as that covering a press conference called by opposition leaders such as Paruir Hairikyan, Agasi Arshakyan, and Vazgen Manukyan to discuss the clashes on Theatre Square; the speeches are close enough to the position of *Golos Armenii* to be reported almost without comment.

On 27 June *Golos Armenii* led with a half-page article criticising the four premier ministers of the "Third Republic" (Vazgen Manukyan, Gagik Arutyunyan, Khosrov Arutyunyan, and Grant Bagratyan) for failing to solve Armenia's economic problems. On 29 June the newspaper published a statement by Armen Oganisyan withdrawing his candidacy, because he did not wish to participate in the "dirty spectacle" of unfair elections. The same issue continued the series of articles attacking the draft constitution and a second series under the rubric: "Why I left the APNM".

In an article on pages one and two, the editor of *Golos Armenii*, Flora Nakhshkaryan wrote:

“*Golos Armenii* is not just an empty sound for us; we try to reflect and evaluate all the most important events in our life, especially those that are negative. After all, the semi-official press for which the government pays with taxpayers' money doesn't do this. Indeed, the semi-official press actually purveys misinformation to us on our own money.”

Page two gave Sergei Badalyan, first secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia, a forum to present his party's programme and attack the authorities. A lengthy article on pages one and three cast doubt on the probity of the electoral process, citing Stalin's words: “How they vote is not important. The important thing is who counts the votes.” It went on to denounce Shoger Matevosyan, the wife of the president's press secretary Levon Zourabyan, who was standing as a representative of Shamiram, suggesting among other personal attacks that she was gaining unfair support from General Vano Siradegyan, Minister of Internal Affairs.

The final issue before the elections appeared on 4 July carried a front-page editorial urging readers to seize their chance to free themselves from “the political bankrupts trying to place all the possibilities of our nation and of our fine country at the service of their own corrupt interests”. They should overcome their apathy for long enough to vote for opposition candidates and to vote “No” in the referendum. Deputy editor Narek Mesropyan had a prominent advert urging voters in constituency no.7 to vote for him as a proud supporter of the Dashnak line. A long article on pages three and four surveyed Armenia's fate since the previous elections, stating that “Five years ago the gentlemen from the APNM carried out a coup and drove their own people into an absolute hell”. The other articles carried much the same message as these.

6.5.3 Other newspapers monitored

Aravot is a small circulation (2.500) daily, which was recently (January 1995) founded by the Labour Collective. It reported neutral, and can therefore be considered as a positive exception to the polarised Armenian newspaper landscape. The paper devoted space to both the Republic Bloc (38,2%) and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (33,5%) and various other parties. In these articles, *Aravot* conveyed information rather than its opinion.

Azg was founded in 1991 by the Labour Collective and currently has a circulation of 7.000. The paper appears daily and supports the Liberal Democratic Party (*Ramkavar Azatakan*, ARAP). It published ARAP's platform, featured various candidates of the party, covered all activities related to the party and in total devoted 78% of the editorial space to ARAP.

Haik is a daily which has been founded in 1989 by the currently ruling Armenian Pan National Movement. Consequently, 92% of the editorial space in the 12 issues monitored concerned the Republic Bloc. The paper carried the BR's manifesto on the front-page, devoted space to various BR candidates and repeatedly expressed its support for the constitution. Articles regarding the opposition attempted to discredit the parties featured.

Hayastan is one of the older daily newspapers in Armenia: it was founded in 1920; the circulation is about 10.000. The paper is believed to be oppositional, but devoted most of its space to independent candidates. Of the remaining space, 55% concerned the Republic Bloc and 33,9% the Communist party of Armenia. However, since the total is fairly limited, these figures should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Hayastani Hanrapetutyun is the Armenian equivalent of *Respublika Armeniya*, which is discussed above. The paper was founded in 1990 and receives subsidies from the government, which allows for a low cover price. The circulation is nearly 15,000. The overwhelming dominance of the Republic Bloc surpassed even *Respublika Armeniya*: 96,8% of all election related articles concerned the ruling party.

Iravunk, like *Mer Khosk*, should probably be considered a propaganda sheet rather than a newspaper. All election related material concerned the National Union-Dashnaktsutyun. The "articles" are in fact mere statements of the NU-D; e.g. a declaration of the NU-D, a NU-D candidate criticised the CEC, the NU-D denounced the constitution, etc.

Lragir was founded in December 1993 by the MD Publishing House. It appears daily and has a circulation of 7,000. The paper supported the current government, which was illustrated by the 12 issues monitored. Of all editorial space, 49,7% was devoted to the Republic Bloc. It would, however, be unfair to consider the paper purely as a mouthpiece of the government. Opposition rallies were covered and candidates from the NDSU, CPA, ARFD and SICU appeared daily in the paper.

Mer Khosk was founded in 1991 by the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party (CPA). It showed in the content, since all articles in the three issues monitored concerned the CPA, the advise of the CPA to vote "no" in the referendum, or CPA's candidates contesting on a majority basis.

Shrjan is a small circulation weekly newspaper, which strongly support the National State party (NS). Of the three issues monitored, most space (51,2%) was devoted to the Republic Bloc, but this was mainly satirical or downright negative. The 38,3% allocated to NS included the manifesto, the full party list and various interviews with NS candidates. The paper strongly opposed the constitution, and carried five large articles in which a "no" vote in the referendum was advocated.

Urartu is a small circulation weekly (3,000), which was founded by the Labour Collective in July 1992. During the period monitored, merely two issues were published, in which mainly representatives of the opposition featured.

Vremya also has a circulation of approximately 3,000, and has been founded in 1992 by the Armenian Foundation for Technological and Intellectual Development. It appears twice a week and six issues were monitored. Most space was given to the Communist Party of Armenia (22,6%), the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (19,8%) and other opposition parties. Interestingly, a front-page article urged the procurator to allocate free time on television to Arakelutiun, to enable them to rebut the slanderous attacks made in the programme "Political Patience" (which featured above as an example of partiality of state broadcasting).

7 Conclusions

Throughout their long recorded history, the people of Armenia (a small nation surrounded by more powerful neighbours) have struggled to survive a succession of misfortunes on a massive scale that would surely have crushed a more numerous but less resilient people. Wars, massacres and natural disasters have inevitably left their mark on the national character: "Even when we laugh, you will see a tear in our eyes..." They claim that only the Jews compare in the tragedy of their fate. "We must protect the last Jew, because after them it will be the turn of the Armenians." Their sometimes bitter sense of humour has been learned in a hard school.

The findings of the monitoring team with regard to the media situation can be summarised as follows:

1. The quantitative analysis of the media coverage demonstrates that the registered parties, both opposition and pro-government, were able to benefit from the half an hour of free access to state radio and television, plus up to one hour paid access, as stipulated in the regulations. They also had half a page, free of charge, in the state press to promote their agenda. A series of round-table discussions on state television gave viewers the opportunity to evaluate the issues as presented by party representatives.

2. An examination of all the major newspapers - Armenian and Russian - in the Republic shows no indication of direct censorship. A wide range of opinions regarding the election and the Constitution was available to readers, including articles highly critical of the government and in which very strong language was used.

3. The media in general suffer from the country's economic and social difficulties. Frequent power cuts interrupted viewing of some election programmes, although no deliberate pattern could be identified. Lack of advertising revenue and very low income levels mean that the number of newspaper copies published seldom surpasses 15,000 and for most opposition newspapers is closer to 5,000. Some opposition party titles no longer appear due to financial difficulties.

4. The small circulation of the press in Armenia places great responsibility on state funded television and radio to give fair representation to the whole range of political opinion in the republic. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the programmes recorded and monitored in the pre-election period demonstrates an overwhelming pro-government position in areas from news reporting to the choice of entertainment films.

The series "Political Patience" compiled by the deputy president of State Television, Vahram Martirosyan, in its bias and ad hominem attacks, is a particularly clear example of journalism which falls far below the best standards.

5. This pro-government position of the electronic media, while by no means exceptional in the countries of the former Soviet Union, has serious consequences in terms of lack of balanced information on the major issues. This is of particular importance where a complex subject, such as whether to vote for or against a new Constitution, is to be decided on by the electorate, and in this respect Armenian state radio and television failed to provide the service which the public has a right to expect.

6. Although the situation regarding law and order is reportedly improving, there have been several cases of the use of Molotov cocktails, the ransacking of opposition newspapers and of serious physical attacks on journalists and editors which were repeatedly raised in the course of interviews. Last December, following the presidential decree suspending the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutyun) the party's newspapers were closed down and some 100 journalists lost their jobs.

In January the opposition newspaper, Golos Armenii, was asked to vacate premises in the state owned House of the Press, despite having a lease until January 1996. The newspaper was widely supported by other non-governmental newspapers and has continued to circulate although it is still under threat of eviction. Government ownership of the main printing houses can be regarded as a means of putting journalists under pressure. These factors have clearly influenced the working climate for journalists in the pre-election period.

7. The monitoring team noted with interest the development of local, non-governmental cable television as witnessed in Ashtarak. This station aims to provide subscribers (who are several times greater in number than the circulation of most newspapers) with a full range of news and entertainment programmes. All local candidates had the opportunity to explain their views to voters on this cable station, which has plans to expand operations to Echmiadzin.

8 Media outlets in Armenia

8.1 State financed television

Name of channels	Channel 1
Date of establishment	1956
Founder / owner	the State
Funding	State subsidies and advertising
Director	Tigran Akopyan
Address	5 Alek Manukian str., Yerevan, 375025
Phone	55-8021 / 55-8010 - General; 55-5038, Chairmen
Fax	55-5333
Hours of broadcasting	Six hours daily, from 18.00 to 24.00 hour.
Area covered	Whole territory of the Republic of Armenia
Programming	News programmes (30% of broadcasting time), artistic programmes and feature films.
Services offered	Advertising, rent of equipment
Political affiliation	Pro-government
Staff	1.500 employees for both channels and four state radio stations

Name of channel	Channel 2
Date of establishment	1978
Founder / owner	the State
Funding	State subsidies and advertising
Director	Tigran Akopyan
Address	5 Alek Manukian str., Yerevan, 375025
Phone	55-8021 / 55-8010 - General; 55-5038, Chairmen
Fax	55-5333
Hours of broadcasting	Six hours daily, from 18.00 to 24.00 hour.
Area covered	80% territory of the Republic of Armenia
Programming	News programmes (30% of broadcasting time), artistic programmes and feature films.
Services offered	Advertising, rent of equipment
Political affiliation	Pro-government
Staff	1.500 employees for both channels

8.2 Local non-governmental television

The information on on-governmental television appended to the reports on Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan is taken from an Internews report on non-governmental television the Transcaucasus (July 1995). The authors state that local non-governmental television stations in the Transcaucasus are rather small, low-staffed/powerful and many lack proficient equipment. In the report, the authors point at the extremely local nature of independent television in the Transcaucasus and the important interconnection between energy, political power and television. "Television stations must balance their need for electrical power with their need for political support". The control is exercised by local sponsors who monitor the output of the stations for political and economic reasons, rather than by the government, since most stations had few problems in obtaining full licence and frequencies.

Name of channel	A 1+
Date of establishment	April 1991
Founder / owner	Mesrob Movsesian and Levon Gevorkian
Funding	Video news sales, government (40%) and advertising
Director	Mesrob Movsesian
Address	15 Grigor Lusavorich str, Yerevan
Phone	58-5427 / 56-0761 - General
Fax	56-1618
Hours of broadcasting	Four hours on Saturday and Sunday
Area covered	Most parts of Armenia, except north and around Gyumri.
Programming	Russian and Armenian films, local news, round table discussion and cultural programmes.
Services offered	Video news sales and advertising
Political affiliation	Neutral

Name of channel	Mair Aerenik
City	Yerevan
Director	Sambel Grigorian
Telephone	488166 / 443413
Total viewership	1.5 million
Hours of broadcasting	Twenty hours per week
Area covered	Yerevan
Programming	Rebroadcasting of films and two hours of own programming (news, interviews).

Name of channel	Ashtarak TV
City	Ashtarak
Date of establishment	1987
Director	Vagram Botsinyan
Telephone	25730 / 25729
Total viewership	40.000
Hours of broadcasting	Infrequent, due to energy problems
Area covered	Ashtarak
Programming	Different programmes, including news. Five hours of own programming.

Name of channel	Razdan TV
City	Razdan
Date of establishment	1991 (grew out from a local party newspaper)
Director	Menatsakan Aratunian
Telephone	24865 / 27701
Total viewership	200.000
Hours of broadcasting	Three hours daily
Area covered	Razdan
Programming	Private announcements, 20-30 minutes of news daily, advertising.

Name of channel	Interkap
City	Vanadzor
Date of establishment	1992
Director	Samvel Arutyumyan
Telephone	58110 / 35080
Fax	20547 / 40737
Total viewership	200.000
Hours of broadcasting	Daily
Area covered	Vanadzor
Programming	Popular movies

Name of channel	Shant
City	Gyumri
Director	Mr. Artur
Total viewership	500.000
Hours of broadcasting	Shant has been of the air the first half of 1995, but has restarted broadcasting in July 1995
Area covered	Gyumri
Programming	Local news, translating Turkish international news into Armenian and children broadcasting.

8.3 Radio

Name of station	First national channel
Date of establishment	1938
Founder (owner)	State
Address	5 Alek Manukian str., Yerevan 375025
Phone	55-4057 / 55-0582
Fax	55-5333
Hours of broadcasting	18 hours daily(6.00 - 24.00)
Area covered	Whole territory of the Republic of Armenia
Audience share	80%
Political affiliation	Pro government
Financial sources	State subsidies, advertising
Services offered	Advertising, rent of equipment

Name of station Tciatcan (Rainbow, second channel)
Date of establishment 1956
Founder (owner) State
Address 5 Alek Manukian str., Yerevan 375025
Phone 55-4057 / 55-0582
Fax 55-5333
Hours of broadcasting 6 hours daily (11.00 - 17.00)
Area covered Whole territory of the Republic of Armenia
Audience share 5%
Political affiliation Pro government
Financial sources State subsidies, advertising
Services offered Advertising, rent of equipment

Name of station Stereo-studio (third channel)
Date of establishment 1975
Founder (owner) State
Address 5 Alek Manukian str., Yerevan 375025
Phone 55-4057 / 55-0582
Fax 55-5333
Hours of broadcasting 7 hours daily (10.00 - 17.00)
Area covered Yerevan
Audience share 15%
Political affiliation Pro government
Financial sources State subsidies, advertising
Services offered Advertising, rent of equipment

Name of station Foreign broadcasting
Date of establishment 1940
Founder (owner) State
Address 5 Alek Manukian str., Yerevan 375025
Phone 55-4057 / 55-0582 / 55-1513
Fax 55-5333
Hours of broadcasting 9 hours daily
Area covered Middle East, Europe, North and South America
Political affiliation Pro government
Financial sources State subsidies, advertising
Services offered Advertising, rent of equipment

Name of station HAI FM-105.5
Date of establishment December 1994
Founder (owner) Tarkhanian Anahit / Egiastian Gagik / Shaginian Suren / Vagradian Armen
Director Tarkhanian Anahit
Address 1/3 Byusand str., Yerevan, 375010
Phone 52-9868
Fax 151-048 (AT&T)
Hours of broadcasting 24 hours daily
Programming Music (80%), Information (10%) and advertising (10%)
Area covered Yerevan and Ararat valley
Political affiliation Apolitical
Financial sources Advertising (50%) and programming studies (50%)
Services offered Advertising, programming studies
Staff 25 employees

8.4 Press

The following is a list of the main newspapers, magazines and news agencies in Armenia. The circulation figures should be treated cautiously.

Name of publication	Aiastani Anrapetutyun (Republic of Armenia)
Periodicity	Daily
Date of foundation	October 1990
Founder	The Armenian parliament
Address	2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floors 13 and 14, Yerevan 23
Phone	52-6974
Fax	53-8611
Editor-in-chief	Aidin Morikyan
Circulation	10.000
Staff	15
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Neutral; mostly publishes decrees, orders and resolutions by the Armenian parliament and government
Funding	State subsidies, as well as proceeds from advertising
Area of circulation	Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

Name of publication	Aiastan (Armenia)
Periodicity	Daily
Date of foundation	December 1920
Founder	The labor collective
Address	2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floors 5 and 6, Yerevan
Phone	52-6612, 53-8630; in the United States, (788 52) 28-1425
Editor-in-chief	G.Abramyan
Circulation	10.000
Staff	20
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Opposition to the current regime. The paper mostly covers the problems of Armenia's underprivileged and working people;and is influenced by Armenia's former establishment
Funding	Donations from sponsors
Area of circulation	Yerevan and other major Armenian cities, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and the United States
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

Name of publication **Aik**
Periodicity Daily
Date of foundation 1989
Founder Armenian National Movement (ruling party)
Address 2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floor 11, Yerevan 23
Phone 53-8684, 52-7701
Fax 56-3452
Editor-in-chief Artsrun Pelanyan
Circulation 7.000
Staff 10
Language Armenian
Political orientation Pro government
Funding Donations from the Armenian National Movement
Area of circulation Yerevan, Armenia's cities and districts, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave
Channels of distribution Retail sales

Name of publication **Aravot**
Periodicity Daily (morning)
Date of foundation January 1995
Founder The labor collective
Address 2 Arshakunyats str., Yerevan, 375023
Phone 52-8752
Editor-in-chief Aram Abramian
Circulation 2500
Staff 4
Language Armenian
Political orientation Neutral
Funding Proceeds from advertising
Area of circulation Armenia
Channels of distribution Retail sales

Name of publication **Azg (Nation)**
Periodicity Daily
Date of foundation March 1991
Founder The labor collective
Address 47 Anrapetutyan Street, Yerevan 375010. In the United States: CO22122 Sherman Way Suit 203, Canoda Park ca 91303
Phone 52-1635. In the United States - (818) 340-9819
Fax 52-4961
Editor-in-chief Akop Avetikyan
Circulation 15.000
Staff 15
Language Armenian
Political orientation Liberal democratic, opposition to current authorities
Funding donations from Armenia's Liberal Democratic Party *..
Area of circulation Yerevan, all other major Armenian cities, some districts in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and the United States
Channels of distribution Retail sales

* Armenia's Liberal Democratic Party was founded recently. It advocates liberal bourgeois values, aims to support the middle class and to build a free market economy, dominated by big and medium sized capital. The party is seeking ties with Russia's democratic forces.

Name of publication	Erkir (Land)
Periodicity	Daily
Date of foundation	February 1992
Founder	Dashnatsutyun's Central Committee
Address	50a Eznik Korbatsi Str, Yerevan 375010
Phone	53-7292
Editor-in-chief	Edward Arutyunyan
Circulation	21.900 *
Staff	20
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Opposition to current authorities
Funding	Foreign investment, financed by Armenian diapora
Area of circulation	Armenia
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

* The paper has not been published over the last eight months, due to the suspension of Dashnatsutyun. It has currently not resumed publication.

Name of publication	Golos Armenii (Voice of Armenia)
Periodicity	Daily
Date of foundation	1991
Founder	The labor collective
Address	2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floor 7, Yerevan 375023
Phone	52-7723, 52-8906, 56-5822
Editor-in-chief	Flora Nakhshkaryan
Circulation	5.335
Staff	15
Language	Russian
Political orientation	Independent, but slightly critical on the government..
Funding	Donations from sponsors (allegedly financed by Moscow sources)
Area of circulation	Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

Name of publication	Lragir (News)
Periodicity	Daily
Date of foundation	December 1993
Founder	The MD publishing house
Address	5 Arshakunyats Prospekt, Yerevan 23
Phone	58-0492, 52-4564
Fax	58-0492
Editor-in-chief	Aikaz Khairiyanyan
Circulation	7.000
Staff	15 employees
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Pro government
Funding	Donations from the Merkury concern
Area of circulation	Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

Name of publication	Respublika Armenia
Periodicity	Daily
Date of foundation	September 1990
Founder	Supreme Council of the Republic of Armenia
Address	2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, floor 9, Yerevan 23
Phone	52-6975 / 56-5993
Fax	53-8811
Editor-in-chief	Armen Khanbabayan
Circulation	5.000
Staff	15
Language	Russian
Political orientation	Neutral; mostly publishes decrees, orders and resolutions by the Armenian parliament and government
Funding	State subsidies, as well as proceeds from advertising
Area of circulation	Yerevan and other major Armenian cities, as well as some districts and the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave
Channels of distribution	Retail sales
Name of publication	Vremya (Time)
Periodicity	Twice a week
Date of foundation	1992
Founder	Armenia's Foundation for Technological and Intellectual Development
Address	2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floor 3, Yerevan 375023
Phone	52-2961, 52-6946
Fax	57-0858
Editor-in-chief	Ruben Satyan
Circulation	5.000
Staff	10 employees
Language	Russian
Political orientation	Neutral
Funding	Donations from Armenia's Foundation for Technological and Intellectual Development, as well as proceeds from advertising
Area of circulation	Yerevan and Russia
Channels of distribution	Retail sales
Name of publication	Ai Zinvor (Armenian Warrior)
Periodicity	Weekly
Date of foundation	1993
Founder	The Armenian Defence Ministry
Address	5 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Yerevan 23
Phone	52-8349
Editor-in-chief	Vrezh Ispaelyan
Circulation	10.000
Staff	15 employees
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Neutral
Funding	Donations from the Armenian Defence Ministry
Area of circulation	Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

Name of publication **Ankakhutyun (Independence)**
Periodicity Weekly
Date of foundation October 1987
Founder The Association of National Self-Determination
Address 2 Degatan Street, Yerevan 10
Phone 58-1864; in the United States - 919-1636
Fax 56-3452
Editor-in-chief Vram Mashuryan
Circulation 5.000
Staff 10
Language Armenian
Political orientation Opposition to the current regime (similar alignment as Svoboda)
Funding Donations from the Association of National Self-Determination.
Area of circulation Yerevan, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, the United States, Western Europe
Channels of distribution Retail sales

Name of publication **Aragast (Sail)**
Periodicity Weekly
Date of foundation 1991
Founder The Armenian Women's Union
Address 3 Marshal Bagramyan Prospekt, Yerevan 375019
Phone 56-3832
Editor-in-chief Alvard Petrosyan
Circulation 5.000
Staff 8 employees
Language Armenian
Political orientation Neutral; the newspaper covers women's problems
Funding Donations from the Armenian Women's Union and from sponsors
Area of circulation Yerevan
Channels of distribution Retail sales

Name of publication **Azatamart (Liberation War)**
Periodicity Weekly
Date of foundation April 1991
Founder The Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation "Dashnaktsutyun"
Address 181 Zavaryan Street, Yerevan 375070
Phone 52-6975
Editor-in-chief Musheg Mikaelyan
Circulation 10.000 *
Staff 10
Language Armenian
Political orientation Opposition to the current authorities (like *Erkir*)
Funding Donations from the founder
Area of circulation Armenia, major cities and districts
Channels of distribution Retail sales

* The paper has not been published over the last eight months, due to the suspension of Dashnaktsutyun. It has currently not resumed publication.

Name of publication	Botan
Periodicity	Weekly
Date of foundation	1992
Founder	The Kurdish branch of the Armenian Writers' Union
Address	24 Vramshapua Street, Yerevan 375002
Phone / fax	53-0995
Editor-in-chief	Korda Mad
Circulation	3.000
Staff	7 employees
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Supports the political view of Kurdish intellectuals
Funding	donations from the founder
Area of circulation	Yerevan
Channels of distribution	Retail sales
Name of publication	Epokha (Epoch)
Periodicity	Weekly
Date of foundation	1991
Founder	Armenia's Youth League and the labor collective
Address	2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floor 15, Yerevan 375023
Phone	52-9473
Editor-in-chief	Vartan Grigoryan
Circulation	7.000
Staff	10 employees
Language	Russian
Political orientation	Strong opposition to the current authorities, parallel to Russia's centrist forces
Funding	Donations from a sponsor, the Sigal firm
Area of circulation	Armenia, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, Russia
Channels of distribution	Retail sales
Name of publication	Gnchak Oyashnany (Armenia's Social Democrats)
Periodicity	Weekly
Date of foundation	January 1993
Founder	Armenia's Social Democratic Party (Gnchakyan)
Address	12 Bairoa Street, Yerevan
Phone	52-4713
Editor-in-chief	Egia Nacharyan
Circulation	5.000
Staff	8
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Not clear cut
Funding	Donations from the founder
Area of circulation	Yerevan, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave (the regional capital of Stepanakert only)
Channels of distribution	Retail sales

Name of publication **Iravunk (the right)**
Periodicity **Weekly**
Date of foundation **1989**
Founder **The Constitutional Rights Union**
Address **50A E.Kokhbatsi str., Yerevan, 375001**
Phone **53-2676 / 53-2725 / 53-2730**
Editor-in-chief **Haik Babukhanian**
Circulation **4000**
Staff **5**
Language **Armenian**
Political orientation **In opposition to the current authorities**
Funding **Donation from the CR Union**
Area of circulation **Armenia**
Channels of distribution **Retail sales**

Name of publication **Mer Khosky (Our Word)**
Periodicity **Weekly**
Date of foundation **1991**
Founder **Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party**
Address **2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floor 11, Yerevan**
Circulation **14.000**
Staff **8**
Language **Armenian**
Political orientation **Communist**
Funding **donations from the Central Committee of the Armenian Communist Party**
Area of circulation **Yerevan, Armenian districts, the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave**
Channels of distribution **Retail sales**

Name of publication **Svoboda (Freedom)**
Periodicity **Weekly**
Date of foundation **1992**
Founder **The Association of National Self-Determination**
Address **15 Grigor Lusavorich Street, Yerevan**
Phone **56-2916**
Fax **56-3452**
Editor-in-chief **Vladimir Grigoryan**
Circulation **3.000**
Staff **8**
Language **Russian**
Political orientation **Opposition to the current regime.**
Funding **Donations from the Association of National Self-Determination.**
Area of circulation **Yerevan and Stepanakert (the capital of the Nagorno-Karabakh).**
Channels of distribution **Retail sales**

Name of publication **Urartu**
Periodicity **Weekly**
Date of foundation **July 1992**
Founder **The labor collective**
Address **2 Arshakunyats str., Yerevan, 375023**
Phone **52 9212**
Editor-in-chief **Josef Verdian**
Circulation **5000**
Staff **6**
Language **Russian**
Political orientation **Neutral, independent**
Funding **Proceeds from advertising**
Area of circulation **Armenia**
Channels of distribution **Retail sales**

Name of publication **Vostikanakan Lratu (Police News)**
Periodicity **Weekly**
Date of foundation **1992**
Founder **Ministry of Interior**
Address **130 Nabaldyan Street, Yerevan 375025**
Phone **55-1027, 59-6838**
Editor-in-chief **Aram Avetisyan**
Circulation **20.000**
Staff **15 employees**
Language **Armenian**
Political orientation **Pro government**
Funding **Subsidies from the republican budget and donations from the Ministry of Interior**
Area of circulation **Yerevan, Armenian major cities and districts, the Nagomo-Karabakh enclave**
Channels of distribution **Retail sales**

Name of publication **Yerekoyan Yerevan (Evening Yerevan)**
Periodicity **Weekly**
Date of foundation **1957**
Founder **The Yerevan Mayor's Office**
Address **2 Arshakunyants Prospekt, Floor 10, Yerevan**
Phone **--**
Editor-in-chief **Nikolai Yengibaryan**
Circulation **4.000**
Language **Armenian**
Political orientation **Neutral, no political publications, covers the city's problems.**
Funding **Subsidies from Yerevan's city budget**
Area of circulation **Yerevan**
Channels of distribution **Retail sales**

Name of publication	Paikar (Struggle)
Periodicity	Monthly
Date of foundation	January 1995 (Publ. in Boston,USA from 1922-1924)
Founder	Harutyun Karapetian / Ruben Mirzakhanian
Address	19A Koryun str.,Yerevan, 375009
Phone	52-3302 / 52-1495 / 52-6403
Editor-in-chief	Harutyun Karapetian
Circulation	1000
Staff	4
Language	Armenian
Political orientation	Liberal-democratic
Funding	Subscription, sponsor's investments
Area of circulation	Armenia, USA, Greece, France, Germany, Austria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iran, Syria
Channels of distribution	Subscription (400 copies) and retail sales

8.5 Newsagencies

Armenpress - State owned
Isahakian St 28, 4th floor
Yerevan
Tel: 526702, 526692

Noyan Tapan - Independent, mainly political,
economic and business information.
Isahakian St 28, 3rd floor
Yerevan
Tel: 565965, 524279

Shark - Independent, various information
Isahakian St 28, 1st floor
Yerevan
Tel: 529942, 522034

Fact - Independent, various information
Arshakuniats St 2, 15th floor
Yerevan
Tel: 523672, 529216

9 Monitoring tables Armenia

The following acronyms are used in the monitoring tables:

ADP	Agrarian Democratic Party/ <i>Agrarain Jokh'ovurdakan Kusaktsutyun</i>
Arak.	Mission/ <i>Arakelutiun</i>
ARAP	Liberal Democratic (<i>Ramkavar Azatakan</i>) Party
ARFD	Armenian Revolutionary Federation/ <i>Hai Hekh'apokhakan Dashnaktsutyun</i>
BR	Republic bloc/ <i>Hanrapetutyun Miavorum</i> . This pro-government election bloc was formed from the following parties: Armenian Pan-National Movement/ <i>Haiots Hamazghain Sharjum</i> Christian Democratic Union Republican Party of Armenia/ <i>Hanrapetakan Kusaktsutyun</i> Social Democratic (<i>Hnchak</i>) Party Liberal Democratic Party Intellectual Armenia Union
CPA	Communist Party of Armenia/ <i>Hayastani Kommunistkan Kusaktsutyun</i>
DPA	Democratic Party of Armenia/ <i>Hayastani Demokratik Kusaktsutyun</i>
NDSU	National Social Democratic Union/ <i>Azghain Jokh'ovurdakan Miutyun</i>
NU-D	National Union - Dashnaktsutyun
NP	National Progress/ <i>Azghain Arachentats</i>
NS	National State/ <i>Azghain Petutyun</i>
NSU/C	National Union for Self-Determination/ Christianity / <i>Azghain Inknvoroshman Miutyun-Kristonakan</i>
Shamiram	Shamiram Party
SICU	Scientific and Industrial Civil Union/ <i>Ghitakan Ardyunaberaken Kakh'akatsiakan Miutyun</i>

9.1 Television

Channel 1 - State

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent editorial	Free	Paid
ADP	--		30	--
Arakelutyun	--		30	--
ARAP	27	4,8%	30	48
BR	522	92,1%	30	85
CPA	--		30	--
DPA	--		30	--
K/D	--		30	--
NDSU	--		*--	30
NP	--		30	--
NS	--		*--	25
NSU/C	--		*--	60
Shamiram	13	2,3%	30	2
SICU	5	0,8%	30	--
Total	567	100,0%	300	250

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* The free access allocated to these political parties was broadcasted on 17, 18, and 19 June respectively.

CHANNEL 2 STATE

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARAP	20	7,4%
BR	247	91,8%
Shamiram	2	0,8%
Total	269	100,0%

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9.2 Radio Monitoring

RADIO 1

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent	Free	Paid
Arakelutyun	--		30	--
ARAP	24	4,4%	30	40
BR	519	93,1%	30	--
CPA	--		30	--
DPA	--		30	--
K/D	--		30	--
NDSU	--		30	--
NS	--		30	--
NSU/C	--		30	--
Shamiram	14	2,5%	30	--
SICU	--		30	--
Total	557	100,0%	355	40

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9.3 Newspapers

ARAVOT (10 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARFD	3,358	33,5%
BR	3,838	38,3%
CPA	405	4,0%
NDSU	50	0,5%
NP	535	5,4%
NS	936	9,3%
NSU/C	70	0,7%
Shamiram	538	5,3%
SICU	305	3,0%
Total	10,035	100,0%

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AZG (17 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARAP	11,897	78,0%
BR	2741	18,0%
Shamiram	375	2,5%
SICU	230	1,5%
Total	15,243	100,0%

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GOLOS ARMENII (10 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARAP	1,222	8,3%
ARFD	1,020	6,9%
BR	8,297	56,3%
CPA	1,510	10,2%
DPA	380	2,6%
NDSU	643	4,4%
NS	228	1,5%
NSU/C	170	1,2%
Shamiram	892	6,0%
SICU	382	2,6%
Total	14,744	100,0%

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HAIK (12 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARAP	832	4,2%
ARFD	216	1,1%
BR	18,149	92,0%
CPA	480	2,4%
NP	53	0,3%
Total	19,730	100,0%

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Hayastani Hanrapetutyun (20 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent	Free
ADP	--		760
Arakelutyun	--		486
ARAP	--		1.848
ARFD	--		--
BR	19,492	96,8%	1.274
CPA	324	1,6%	468
DPA	--		1.790
K/D	--		912
NDSU	--		900
NP	--		851
NS	--		--
NSU/C	--		--
Shamiram	204	1,0%	--
SICU	114	0,6%	--
Total	20,134	100,0%	9.289

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HAYASTAN (8 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ADP	518	7,8%
BR	4,117	61,8%
CPA	1,909	28,7%
NDSU	110	1,6%
Total	6,654	99,9 %

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IRAVUNK (2 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial
NU-D	5.186
Total	5.186

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LRAGIR(12 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARFD	910	8,7%
BR	5,200	49,7%
CPA	50	0,5%
DPA	128	1,2%
NDSU	1,781	17,0%
NP	697	6,7%
NSU/C	336	3,2%
Shamiram	681	6,5%
SICU	677	6,5%
Total	10,460	100,0%

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MER KHOSK (3 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial
CPA	9.891
Total	9.891

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RESPUBLIKA ARMENIA (15 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent	Free
ADP	--		954
Arakelutyun	--		725
ARAP	131	0,8%	--
ARFD	*2,628	16,6%	--
BR	9,235	58,4%	--
CPA	--		540
DPA	--		--
K/D	--		825
NDSU	959	6,1%	1.080
NP	--		954
NS	--		1.080
NSU/C	--		1.200
Shamiram	1,473	9,3%	--
SICU	1,383	8,7%	1.080
Total	15,809	99,9%	8.138

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* negative

SHRJAN (3 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
BR	*2.971	51,2%
NDSU	520	9,0%
NS	2.222	38,3%
Shamiram	90	1,5%
Total	5.803	100,0%

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* The space devoted to the Republic Bloc was mainly satirical.

URARTU (2 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ARAP	925	31,0%
CPA	150	5,0%
Shamiram	962	32,2%
SICU	950	31,8%
Total	2,987	100,0%

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VREMIA (6 issues monitored)

Party/Union	Editorial	Per cent
ADP	287	10,6%
ANP	710	26,2%
ARAP	59	2,2%
ARFD	537	19,8%
BR	132	4,9%
CPA	613	22,6%
NDSU	24	0,9%
NP	117	4,3%
NU-D	81	3,0%
SICU	153	5,6%
Total	2,713	100,1%

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