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MEDIA BULLETIN

EDITORIAL

BY VICKEN CHETERIAN

The media in the South Caucasus is in search of a new identity. The old generation of the Soviet style journalists lost their social role ten years ago, as the emerging nationalist movements very rapidly brought to surface «samizdat» or underground publications to become the dominant journalistic style.

The «new journalists» were often borrowed from other professions; doctors and engineers were converted into journalists, pushed into their new profession out of political engagement or because their old professions lost their meaning as the Soviet economy collapsed. Whatever the case of their personal motivation, the «new journalists» were radically detached from the older, politically loyal reporters, engaged not to glorify the Party, but for the cause of the newly popular nationalism.

This new generation tasted the kind of freedom that their colleagues did not even dream of a decade back. But freedom emerged within the chaos of the collapse of the empire, and the emergence of new states with the conflicts it caused. Often, the new journalists were part of these conflicts, seeking not the truth but what they could define at that moment as their «national interests».

Today, the new journalists seem to be themselves surpassed by the events. Popular political activism has declined, marginalizing in its way political publications. Boulevard dailies, scandals and sensational news have overshadowed the publications of the intellectual-na-

tionalist. The censorship of the state has more or less disappeared, but instead appeared the financial constraint, in a region where «free market» is the property of the mighty few, and where the purchasing capacity of the population is dramatically low, and where a publicity market is still embryonic. Freedom of expression, the major achievement of the new journalists, is itself controversial: many young journalists, who lack serious education or solid training in the profession, mistake this freedom with the right of publishing whatever they think fit, whether true or not, without respecting basic media regulations.

What can media projects do in this search of the new identity? Our project is an attempt to bring together journalists from the various parts of the Caucasus and think together to understand the evolution the mass media is going through. Here, we present the English translations of papers presented in the Dzaghkatsor conference, discussing the challenges of the journalists in the Caucasus, their role in covering the conflicts, the way they perceive international projects to encourage the media sector. One of the authors here even suggests that Westerns aid projects take a step further and provide direct subventions to the infrastructure of the media sector, a role played by the state in the Western countries. From our part, we will continue the series of our debates, which, with its bilingual Russian-English publications, is an attempt to understand the evolution of the media sector in the Caucasus. •

THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TRANSCAUCASIAN JOURNALISTS TOOK PLACE

BY HAGOP ASATRYAN

The fourth conference within the framework of Caucasus Media Support Project took place in Armenia on 18-20 October, 1997. It was organized in the mountain resort town of Tsakhkadzor. This time the program was joined by the OSCE mission in Georgia, which organized the arrival of the Abkhazian and Ossetian journalists in Armenia. For the first time the participants had the possibility to discuss not only professional problems (the new journalism, problems of journalistic education and training, the critical analysis of the western media support projects) but also the conflicts in the Caucasian states. It was not surprising that the hottest, most interesting and emotional discussions were about the Georgian-Abkhazian, Georgian-Ossetian and Armenian-Azerbaijani conflicts. The journalists from the six recognized and unrecognized states told about the role of mass media in the coverage of these conflicts. Journalists agreed that the mass media has a huge impact on the formation of the public consciousness which in its turn plays a key role in the resolution of any conflict. As a result of discussions the Azerbaijani journalist Kyamal Ali and his Armenian colleague Vahram Aghajanian initiated the creation of the «TRUST» information center in the Transcaucasus aimed at the exchange of an objective and nonpartisan information. Although there is already a commercial and informational exchange between the information agencies of Armenia, Georgia and

Azerbaijan, the journalists supported the request of the Editor in Chief of Kavkaz magazine of Tbilisi, to create correspondent bureaus in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Kyamal Ali is already cooperating with the Armenian paper AZG, which prints his articles sent from Baku.

The participants of the conference met with the Prime Minister of Armenia Robert Kocharian, president of Nagorno-Karabakh Arkadi Ghukasian, with the members of Armenian opposition parties.

Three journalists from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia participated in a month long training program in Switzerland. This journalists are Tofigakhanum Kasimova (paper Zerkalo), Arman Jilavyan (Snark Information Agency) and Temo Cheishvili (Iveria Expressi). Arman Jilavyan and Temo Cheishvili share their impressions from the training in this issue of the bulletin.

And the most important-what should we expect next year? The project broadens its geography. The Caucasian journalists will be joined by their colleagues from the former Yugoslavia. In 1998 conferences will take place in Baku, Tbilisi, Yerevan and Sarayev. There will be trainings in Switzerland and Moscow.

Lets hope that everything planned for 1998 will be accomplished, and the cooperation of journalists of our region will not only broaden but strengthen. •

THE TRAINING IN SWITZERLAND

Arman Jilavyan, SNARK Information Agency: Within the framework of the Swiss project on development of the mass media in the Caucasus in November 1997, three journalists from Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan were invited for a training in Switzerland. The project included working meetings with the officials from the UN, ICRC and other international organizations with headquarters in Geneva. The meetings with journalists and other representatives of the Swiss media were indeed very interesting from the professional point of view.

The unique social-state structure of the Swiss Confederation, the division of power between the federal and cantonal governments, the principle of direct democracy, socio-economic policy and the most sacred of Switzerland - the principle of Neutrality was at the center of our attention. The program was unique as among other things it was providing broad possibilities for development of our own initiative and the possibility to work over the topics which were of personal interest for each participant. We had the opportunity also to establish personal and professional contacts so vital for the successful work of any journalist. Frequent and hot discussions between me and my Azerbaijanian colleague proves that today the journalists from the conflicting parties can talk and discuss things looking at each other directly and not through the aim of the gun. I think that today the journalism in all three republics suffers from the self-centrist and exceptionalist complexes and feelings. The month in Geneva allowed me to look at our countries from outside and understand how the Europe sees us.

Talking to foreign journalists and representatives of international NGOs active in our region revealed that the West views the so called "information war" in quite an ironic way. Accepting the strength and the firepower of the "information weaponry" they nevertheless noted that the journalists, particularly from the Caucasian republics, very often forget their immediate professional duties and try to act as diplomats, politicians, and even the military strategists. Today Europe is well informed about the situation in the Transcaucasus, and therefore the lame attempts of propaganda from the conflicting parties are met with irony and irritation. For example, as noted some Swiss journalists, no one from those who has been to the European museum at the exhibit of "3000 Years of Armenian Culture" will not believe a single word of any sophisticated anti-Armenian propaganda. I think this gives a food for thought.

The process of professional maturity is deeply personal. Nevertheless the programs like the Swiss project of support of mass media of Caucasus can largely promote the development of a strong, healthy journalism in our countries.

Temo Cheishvili (Iveria Expressi):

The training program of the Transcaucasus Media Support Project took place in Geneva in November 3-28. The aim of the program was to introduce participants with the government of Switzerland, local media and international organizations in based in the country. An independent journalist Vigen Cheterian who works in Geneva is in charge of the project which is financed by the Fed-

eral Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. Within the framework of the project there have already been conferences organized in the Caucasus and aimed at promoting exchange of information and experience between participants from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The training in Switzerland was part of this project and was attended by Tofigakhanum Kasimova (Nurani) of paper Ayna (zerkalo) from Azerbaijan, Arman Jilavyan of Snark Information Agency from Armenia and the author of this article Temo Cheishvili of Iveria Expressi paper from Georgia.

The participants had the possibility to familiarize with the activities of the Swiss and international organizations and to meet the representatives of the UN headquarters in Geneva, UNCTAD, ILO, UNICEF, DHA, UNHCR and others.

Involvement of these organizations into different aspects of the public life of the Transcaucasus is growing and we had the possibility to discuss the problems of our countries with respective UN departments as well as with the International Committee of the Red Cross actively working in our region.

The agenda was full of meetings with the Swiss authorities and media. The lectures of the Swiss officials and scientists on the federal system of the state were useful for the Caucasian journalists as our region is full of conflicts between the central and local powers and the federal model is viewed as a possible key to the resolution of these problems.

The program contained possibilities for the professional growth. We learned the principles

of functioning of the Swiss media, and the meetings with leading media as the Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Télévision Suisse Romande allowed to exchange professional experience and practice. Especially important was the meeting at the training center of Swiss journalists in Lausanne where we saw how Swiss journalists get a training.

We also had the possibility to meet the representatives of Swiss scientific circles. Meetings with students and professors of the famous Geneva Institute of International Studies were an excellent opportunity for us to disseminate information on political and economic currents in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and to understand the vision of Caucasian problems by the Swiss scientific circles.

The final part of the program was left for the individual work allowing us to work over the chosen themes. As a Georgian journalist I got the possibility to follow the Georgian-Abkhazian negotiations taking place in Geneva, meet the participants and get a first-hand information. Nevertheless one of the most important virtues of the project was the dialog between us-the three journalists, which revealed existing information gaps. We did not know a lot about our neighboring states, and what we knew was often incorrect and insufficient. The project helped us to partly fill this gap.

Let us hope that attempts like this project will go on, refining the professionalism and strengthening the cooperation of the Transcaucasian journalists. The established contacts, acquired knowledge and experience will stimulate the participants to work with a renewed enthusiasm. •

ANALYSIS OF WESTERN MEDIA PROJECTS, AND CRITICAL REGARD TO FOREIGN MEDIA PROGRAMS

BY **ELDANIZ ALIEV (ANS-TV)**, AND **SHAHIN RZAEV**, THE COORDINATOR OF THE PROJECT IN **BAKU**, MANAGER OF **GAYA** PRESS DISTRIBUTION AGENCY

From the very beginning of the review of the Western media projects we would like to mention the comparative passivity of Western grantors in Azerbaijan. Compared to the neighboring Transcaucasian countries Azerbaijan is obviously not lucky enough. For example The Eurasia Foundation has allocated about 500 thousand USD for media support projects in Armenia and has supported only two projects in Azerbaijan. This fact proves that some funds have a biased approach in their activities and sometimes are guided by political or other reasons...

Boris Navasardian, (President of the Yerevan Press Club) : “ If allowed I would like to make a small clarification. The point is that part of funds of Eurasia Foundation are raised by Americans of Armenian origin, that is why the foundation faced some problems in opening its branch in Azerbaijan.”

Shahin Rzaev: I am very grateful to Mr. Navasardian it is really an important clarification. As far as we know Eurasia Foundation has nevertheless opened its office in Baku recently. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan is also unlucky in another aspect - it hasn't got a wealthy Diaspora. But as it usually happens, if there is no luck in something there is a luck in another thing. Azerbaijan is lucky because it possesses abundant natural resources and as a result huge investments are made into the Azerbaijanian economy. Big Western oil companies were the first to come to our market but they were followed by other companies, gradually developing a basic infrastructure with a lucrative advertising market for the mass media. Thus, at present the vast majority of our media can assert its own independence. However, this does not mean a refusal

to receive grants and other forms of media support.

One of the first organizations suggesting a joint Transcaucasian project was Helsinki Citizens Assembly. For the first time after the establishment of the cease-fire, HCA organized a meeting of youth on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border in 1994. Our journalists participated in that meeting and two of them are taking part in this conference now. Later the Transcaucasian office of HCA together with the London based Eurodialogue organization held a seminar for journalists-peace-keepers in Tabakhmele (Georgia). Some ideas expressed at that seminar worth attention, particularly the idea of creation of an association of journalist-peacekeepers which would advocate the atmosphere limiting a new wave of animosities among people.

Among others it is worth mentioning the project of the Georgian Institute for Peace and Democracy, supported by the British Vertic organization and TACIS. This project included the creation and dissemination by e-mail of a topical digest of newspapers of three Transcaucasian countries. Those digests caused a wide repercussion in our region. We must emphasize the important role of electronic communication with the absence of a direct phone line. Human Rights Center of Azerbaijan renders invaluable assistance to our journalists by creating an electronic communication network and providing free access for our mass media.

One of the most successful projects was the publishing of the “Advertising and Marketing” bulletin carried out by the Union of Journalists of Azerbaijan Yeni Nisil (New Genera-

tion). By the way this project was supported by Eurasia Foundation. Natick Zarbaliev, co-author of that project took part in our second conference and you can read his speech in the second bulletin of the Mass Media of Transcaucasia.

The numerous journalism training programs should be discussed separately. Usually, the journalists are invited to a Western country where they attend lectures on freedom of speech and democracy. Having indisputable valuable importance such projects are a bit out of the context of the real state of affairs in post-Soviet Transcaucasia.

Endeavors to organize mutual visits of journalists of conflicting countries from one country to another are far more interesting. The first such attempt was made by HCA which organized the visit of the editor-in-chief of newspaper Istighlal Zardusht Alizade to Armenia and Karabakh. Later, BBC radio service succeeded in organizing a tour of its correspondent Zulfugar Alizade and Alexey Manvelian to Armenia and Azerbaijan crossing through Karabakh. About 10 radio-reports

prepared by them aroused a great interest of our public. Unfortunately there are still significant obstacles in the process of implementation of such endeavors. For example Vertic failed to hold seminars in Baku and Yerevan. Lets hope that our visit to Armenia will play a positive role in establishment of further immediate contacts and pave the way for a visit of Armenian journalists to Baku.

In our view, the mass media of Azerbaijan gradually becomes a profitable business. First media-corporation like ANS and Zerkalo are emerging in our country. Probably this situation determines a low interest in submitting projects for grants. Instead, more and more business-plans for obtaining loans for further development are submitted to financial institutions.

Concluding, we would like to draw attention to the vital importance and contribution of such projects for the media development. Probably an organization of a separate seminar on fundraising will be quite useful. It would help to bypass the mediators and save time. •

ANALYSIS OF WESTERN MEDIA PROJECTS, AND CRITICAL REGARD TO FOREIGN MEDIA PROGRAMS

BY VASIL MAGLAPERIDZE, CHIEF-EDITOR OF KAVKASIONI NEWSPAPER.

The rules are entirely dictated by the sponsoring party leaving us to accept the help with gratitude or refuse to accept it. It is clear that we all understand the big importance of this aid but I think it is necessary to discuss one general shortcoming. The relations between the post-soviet media and the international organizations remind the relations between a doctor and a patient, when the doctor, for the sake of his own professional prestige, prefers to thoroughly treat a simple scratch on the finger ignoring serious wounds. But everything must be the opposite. The process of democratization on the post-soviet territory is largely defined by the press, which has to solve serious problems in order to protect its independence. At the last stage of the transition period the press suffers most of all. At the last stage of the destruction of socialism the high activity of the society and the general emotional phone were promoting the development of the press. Today the press is a luxury.

The main problems of the Mass Media of the Caucasian region are the small circulation, poor financial base, lack of advertising, the low pace of development and the much lower standards compared with the Western media. This situation creates a basis for a visible or invisible pressure on the press.

Our region witnessed numerous wars but nevertheless it was possible to create several world class business enterprises in any sphere but media. Not because the journalists are not entrepreneurial, but simply because there is less demand for their product. This does not mean that the society doesn't need the press. Even the opposite, it needs it more than before, but the citizens are forced to think first

of all about the daily bread and one cannot accuse them for it. Thus, the aid of international organizations and funds gains a special importance and it is not only the money which counts (it is possible to procure finances here too). But there is a danger of misuse of this money.

The assistance of international organizations continues to flow in and I am grateful for it, but I think that it could have been used more reasonably. Briefly it is not necessary to waste all the medications for that small scratch on the finger.

The types of assistance are mainly the following:

- grants for different goal oriented projects;
- training courses where the western media professionals share their experience with our journalists;
- organization of different conferences of journalists on the local and regional levels discussing different professional problems but always with a feasible touch of political context;
- different competitions aimed at awarding journalists.

This list might be incomplete but it doesn't matter in this case. It is often spoken about the preference of a more intensive assistance but this depends on the possibilities of those assisting, and I want to talk about the efficient use of the already existing means.

On the former soviet territory and in the Caucasus there is no common assistance program for the mass media. This is a much needed approach as a strong press promotes a strong democracy, creating guaranties of the protection of human rights etc. The western assistance passes through different bureaucratic

barriers, disperses, and its main part is consumed by the objective or subjective interests of the holders of bureaucratic powers. This situation is similar to the destiny of the humanitarian assistance which Georgia was getting through different channels from all around the world, but only a small part of which was being justly distributed, with the majority appearing on the markets. I might be wrong but I think this was happening not only in Georgia and not only because of local disorganization. The grant system is good but not everybody is ready for drafting of respective programs. I think there are groups which are professionally busy getting grants. It would have been better if besides granting money, the donors would have seriously prepared the potential receptors. I think the goal-oriented grants are not always justified, when for example the grant is given for only buying a computer and not a table for it, thus artificially fitting the demand into the grant. A more general grant with more independence for its use would have been better, of course with respective guaranties.

It would have been better if together with grants, there would have been possibilities of long term low interest credits as in other spheres. At any case I think it would have been better to accumulate all the donations into a single fund of media assistance and charge it with a responsibility to improve the general scenery and the efficiency of media. This will

create a possibility for a complex and goal oriented work, aimed at organizing conferences, lectures or trainings. For example recently in one of the organizations specialized in assistance to the press, I told about a joint project created by the Georgian and Ossetian journalists and requested a small sum to start with. The project was approved but we were told that for the moment it is impossible to finance the purchase of a computer and there is only a possibility to finance a joint conference. We were offered to propose the theme and invite local and foreign journalists to read lectures. We are always as happy to meet our Ossetian colleagues as them to meet us, but for the moment we needed a computer and not lectures. They offered to grant funds for the purchase of the computer only next year as this year there are only funds left in the lecture/conference fund which was actually bigger than we needed. Such an approach is not surprising for former soviet citizens but we were surprised. The meetings between journalists are vital, but we meet only when we accidentally find ourselves in the plans of a financing organization and not when we desperately need it. The same is true about lectures and computers.

Our region is tired of wars and it is very important to have peaceful and stable media. The policy in this direction has to be coordinated and goal oriented. •

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WESTERN MEDIA SUPPORT PROJECTS

BY BORIS NAVASARDIAN; PRESIDENT OF THE YEREVAN PRESS CLUB

Evaluating activities of Western foundations and other donors aimed at development of free media in post-totalitarian countries, and in particular, in Transcaucasia, we have to admit (and having admitted to submit) that the most efficient way for them is closed.

The main thing that could sweepingly change the media landscape in our countries is the establishment of so-called paradigmatic media. Working on the level of international standards of high quality and responsible press, these beacons of free press would have either pulled up competitors to their own level or at least have the trash ousted off the market. Actually, funds allocated by the Western foundations and grantors in conjunction with professional potential of our journalists would have enabled each Transcaucasian country to create four or five paradigm media units of different kinds i.e. newspapers, information agencies, TV and Radio stations. The very existence of these media even under the conditions of partial democracy would have solved many problems such as the impartial coverage of elections, promotion of economic reforms, "reproduction" of professional journalists, etc. Briefly, all main directions that the Western foundations are involved with in post Soviet media, would have been provided in natural way.

However, the described idyllic picture is as simple as unrealistic as there is no and cannot be a universal criteria for grantors to define who and what should be selected for the implementation of an expensive program on creating a certain paradigm media.

Under the conditions of highly politicized press, involvement of journalists in different structures and the clan driven societies it is

very easy for promoters of democracy to miss and kick a ball into its own goal. Considering the scale and responsibility of such programs any mistake could completely discredit the Western media support projects.

Therefore the refusal of these funds to channel big sums of money directly into the newspapers and electronic media is quite understandable and acceptable. As well as the whining of some editors complaining about purposeless wasting of huge funds where the media is hardly surviving and journalists get scanty wages. Certainly, some portion of funds does go to media. However these are only micro projects of estimated 10 -20 thousand USD which are spent on solving the current survival problems and to some extent the partial technical upgrading put not for a complete renewal.

Meanwhile, the main part of funds are spent on so-called infrastructure programs. These are various training programs and meetings focused on exchange of experience on various trends in journalism. They cover the legislation in media, professional ethic, modern communication technologies, management, research on the condition of media, seminars and conferences on the coverage of conflicts and the strengthening of professional unions organizations. The recent fashion on projects on the development of the advertising market and the cooperation between the strategic allies i.e. press and the NGO (the "fourth power" + the "third sector" formula) seems rather promising.

It is logical to place the financing of non-commercial and specialized, expert media in the category of infrastructure projects. Exclusively

thanks to this grants we publish youth, feminist and economic editions and TV-radio programs. Hence the foreign foundations assume the obligation which in civilized countries is reserved to the government i.e. subsidizing the non-commercial information and publishing projects. Instead the government spends that money on propagandistic brain-washing of population.

The quality of infrastructure category projects and ideas is notably higher than in the category of direct financing, but its efficiency remains lower than desirable due to the absence of requests on the part of the media. Professional knowledge, ethic and legal norms disseminated within frameworks of these projects are usually inadequately ignored by the media. Vagueness of the conception of corporate interests of journalists leads to underestimation of the role of professional unions, which under the conditions of de-totalitarianism of information sphere could act as a mediator between the press and the state and society, promoting the transformation of media into an independent and self-regulating institution.

However, there will be no requests until the press gets to a certain level which is only possible with financing which in turn goes to the very same educational programs the request for which has not been formed yet because.... Such a vicious circle which makes you think about the efficiency of the grant system and the absurd conflicts between the mass media and structures thought to support it, breaking out from time to time on the ground of Western media support projects.

Ideally the grants would have covered the supporting and non-commercial programs and the information - publishing business would have been able to receive loans and investments. Unfortunately the leading media corporations are not yet interested in our region. We need our own Maxwell which financed the development of free press in his homeland, Czech

republic. I want to emphasize the importance of investments by professionals of publishing business rather than wealthy foreigners as it is important to receive the standards of quality of mass media tied to these investments. To some extent the lack of efficient investments could be compensated with the loan program developed by Eurasia Foundation aimed at strengthening mass media and considering the creation of alternative printing facilities.

But a substantial progress, as it was already mentioned, is possible only when an overall economic situation in our countries improves. When media becomes financially independent, the wealth, dignity and common interests will force it not only not to frown at the distribution of grants on infrastructure programs, but also to want to finance such programs themselves. For the time being, Western media support projects can work efficiently mainly concentrating on individuals and educating and preparing professional journalists, managers and media experts and waiting for better times to come.

Beside conceptual problems there are also a number of local, peculiar ones effecting the implementation of Western media support projects in Transcaucasia or at least in Armenia. The complicated and ever changing environment and tasks require a high professional level of implementation of the financed programs. A simple desire or enthusiasm won't help. This fact is often ignored by donors trying to artificially enlarge the circle of recipients sacrificing the program quality. Some Western foundations and organizations have precepts on enlargement of grant- recipients network, which ingrain a "grant for the sake of grant" practice.

Majority of grantors lack long-term public relations strategy which leads to an inadequate reaction to the foundation activities. There are a number of wide spread cliché presenting the Western foundations as pursuing their

political interests in post-Soviet countries, which usually run counter to the interests of a given state and hence, the organizations financed by foundations are “agents of influence.”

Sometime press reflects that opinion and there are even some papers in Armenia specialized in “anti-grant propaganda.” Ironically, these papers have applied to the Western foundations for assistance themselves apparently seeking a status of an “agent of influence”.

Theoretically there could be some donor organizations pursuing political goals but I would assume a courage to insist that the majority of programs are aimed at realization of principles and objectives stated in our constitutions and supported by our leaders in numerous declarations and international conventions. Finally, it is important for our public to know that with rare exceptions, the foundations allocate funds not for an organization but for a project, a work thoroughly stipulated by a contract.

A weak public relation policy resulting in rumors is quite handy for governing bureaucrats who take the financing of alternative projects by alternative funds quite nervously and readily join the voices talking about the “political sabotage” and “agents of influence” within the media.

Even in the offices of well-known international or foreign organizations one can come

across a staff that do not possess comprehensive information on local situation. As a result of their incompetent meddling, huge sums are spent on duplicating programs causing a destruction of the inner balance and an artificial creation of competing groups.

Often quasi non-governmental organizations, so called GONGOS initiated and organized by the government to serve their structures, receive grants. In this respect a program initiated by Eurasia Foundation is quite useful. This program tries to coordinate the programs so as to avoid a duplication, and promotes a regional cooperation between the recipients creating a regional association of promoted programs and projects. There is still an unfulfilled project proposed by the Armenian and Georgian journalists to start a Web site on Internet posting all Transcaucasian media support projects financed by various donors in order to avoid the inefficient spending of financial resources.

Talking about the efficiency of regional projects it is necessary to mention, without any exaggeration - a historic precedent - the visit of Azerbaijanian journalists to Armenia. Without being able to visit easily each other and cover the events witnessed rather than received from a third party, we would not be able to perform our professional duties.

Hope that in the near future Armenian journalists will be granted the same opportunity. Even for the sake of this chance alone it was worth to have this project. •

THE NEW JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTIC EDUCATION

BY ELENA IMEDASHVILI, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF INFORMATION AGENCY
BLACK SEA PRESS

The of topic this discussion - training of journalists - is both a painful and an odd one at the same time. The topic is an odd one because I think that if a person lacks talent, any university will fail to turn him into a journalist. And if the talent is there, why bother to study then?

And the topic is a painful one because my agency, the Black Sea Press continuously faces the problem of shortage of professional staff. The question is -do we need journalism departments at all? In many Western countries two-year post-graduate programs are practiced widely. It is a highly efficient way of bringing into journalism mature people specialized in a certain field. fields came to journalism. Our standard five-year long course which for most of journalism students is a lost time is a parody on education with rare exceptions. The journalism departments at Georgian universities today are suffering from a nearly total absence of proper technical equipment, text-books and professors who had left journalism a long time ago and has well forgotten what it is.

Attempting to find out the number of universities in Georgia with journalism departments and the number of people graduating from them each year, I made an inquiry to the Ministry of Education of Georgia. The official information on this is not complete and precise, as private universities fell out of the competence of the Ministry of Education, but a rough estimate made by their experts varies between 500 to 800 people graduating with a Journalism Diploma. Our agency is flooded with helpless young graduates holding a diploma in journalism. Over all of the period of functioning of our agency, out of all these ap-

plicants we chose only one who was able to work, while during the same period we hired a doctor, physicist and an engineer. To our and their surprise they proved to be good reporters.

If I were a dean of the Department of Journalism, I would have first of all fired 90 per cent of professors and then the same amount of students. I am far from a thought that majority of students are inept. It is the efficiency of education process which is extremely low. It seems to me that the problem starts long before the entrance exams. Hardly any of the applicants imagines what the journalism is. They don't know that after 5 years of study anyway. One of the standard requirements for applicants to qualify for entrance exams is to submit any publication in the press. How the majority of applicants manage to do this is not a secret. By pulling strings, relatives or parents ask editors to publish any material. Papers or information agencies publish forged materials and put the name of the future applicant under this material.

I believe that the method of training of journalists must be radically changed. First, it is necessary to make the applicants pass through a initial course of training with a strong emphasis on basic practical education including even such details as the use of a tape recorder. Another solution is an internship contract between the universities and media. However, in an ideal situation the journalistic departments of universities must run their own papers, information agencies, radio-stations. Under the present conditions and scarce financial resources this way is probably unfea-

sible for a single given university but several journalism departments from different universities could probably put together a joint publishing project.

But what should the journalism departments teach? Or what should an ideal journalist be able to do before applying, say to our agency? He or she must be able to use a tape recorder, computer, fax machine, camera etc.; must know foreign languages and be well informed about the events. Unfortunately the graduates of journalism departments which visit our agency are not informed about the situation in the country and the world and sometimes are unable even to tell the difference between the legislative and executive branches of the government, let alone any finer nuances. The tendencies today require narrowly specialized reporters to cover economics, politics, international relations etc. Hence the journalism departments must introduce thematic specialization. Another course which must be integrated into their curriculum is the psycho-

logical training and inter-personal relations. This will help to get rid of shyness.

Still another aspect is the training of journalists already working in the field. With the ever advancing technologies and styles, the older generation of professional journalists feels uneasy with the new machines and sometimes doesn't even know how to use a computer. There are no training centers for journalists and not everyone can afford to attend language, computer and other courses.

As for Western training and exchange programs they are irregular and sporadic. From time to time a visiting Western journalist offers lectures or seminars, or someone manages to get into an internship program, but this involves only a limited circle of people and is not done systematically. If there was a center in Georgia which would regularly organize training of journalist and would have been open for everybody, we would have solved lots of problems. •

THE PROBLEMS OF THE ABKHAZIAN PRESS UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF CONFLICT

ZURAB ARGUN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE NATIONAL TV-RADIO COMPANY OF ABKHAZIA; CORRESPONDENT OF "INTERFAX" NEWS AGENCY IN ABKHAZIA.

Note of the Editor: The Abkhazian and South-Ossetian journalists were also participating in the conference in Tsakhkadzor but owing to technical reasons it was not possible to get the transcripts of their reports. In order to fill in this gap it was decided to use parts of comments and interviews which they gave to the project coordinator, reporter of Azg daily Hakob Asatryan.

Q: What is the condition of the Abkhazian media?

A: The press, particularly newspapers and magazines are in a very difficult situation. The newspapers do somehow manage to be published but most of the magazines which were published before the conflict have ceased to exist. It is simply too expensive to publish magazines considering our economical situation, the blockade, the lack of money to even buy bread. The situation with the television and radio is more bearable with both being state structures. This does not necessarily mean that the state provides finances for us-no, we earn it ourselves and manage to look better, especially when it comes to the monthly wages. The vast majority of papers, except the official parliament paper Respublica Abkazia, face a great deal of problems. Even though it is supported by the state budget, Respublica Abkazia is indeed very popular and all issues are sold out bringing a stable income to the paper.

At present, we do not publish a paper in Armenian, but there are intentions to start broadcasting in Armenian, Arabic and Turkish at the state radio and preparations for the construction of a studio are on the way.

Q: At this conference much was said about a so-called "information vacuum." Isn't it difficult to function under these conditions?

A: I completely disagree with the idea of us being in the information vacuum as we nev-

ertheless are aware of what's happening around. Certainly, the most intense exchange of information is with Moscow and of course it is not enough. After the communication lines were totally cut off in April-May 1997, the situation deteriorated drastically. Although later we were using a commercial satellite communication but it had only one channel and did not meet our needs. Even Abkhazpress information agency was deprived of the possibility of sending information to Moscow. Journalists who worked for Russian and foreign media found themselves in a desperate situation. Georgia insists that Abkhazia communicates only through Central Communication Station in Tbilisi, Abkhazians refuse assuming that Georgians will tap the lines-the head of the National Security of Georgia was dismissed on accusations of bugging telephone lines. Of course there are also some technical problems, and the telephone cable is damaged on a long section between Abkhazia and Georgia. During the latest negotiations with Georgia our Prime Minister warned that unless communication line is restored as previously, via Sochi, we will solve this problem ourselves.

Manana Gurgulia- Deputy editor-in-chief of the Abkhazpress State Information Agency.

During the war the state television of Abkhazia was mainly showing military operations.

It is wrong to assume that it was a pure information without propaganda. The TV worked for six days a week, three hours a day, half of which were own programs and announcements and the other half were feature films, documentary and archive materials about war. I think now it is necessary to reduce the air-time allocated for the archive materials. The

Ministry of Information and Press and Abkhazpress information agency were created after the war. It is necessary to mention that today we still suffer an information blockade. The Russian language Republic of Abkhazia newspaper has a circulation of 15 thousand copies, and the Abkhazian language Apsne only 3-5 thousand copies. Among independent papers it is worth to mention Echo Abkhazii and Nujnaya Gazeta.

SOUTH OSSETIAN JOURNALISTS ON THE CONFLICTS AND THE MASS MEDIA

The members of the South Ossetian delegation to the conference in Tsakhkadzor included the Editor in Chief of the South Ossetian TV Givi Khuriev, director of RES Information Agency Batradz Kharyabov, Editor of Molodej Ossetii newspaper Andrey Kochiev, reporter of Molodej Ossetii Inal Pliev and the producer of RYUO State Television and Radio company Izolda Believeva.

There are three main newspapers in the South Ossetia: Yujnaya Ossetia, Khurzari and Molodej Ossetii. There are also three regional - community papers which are published more or less regularly: Velikoe Sobranie, Shtirnikhas and Zerkalo.

In his interview with Hakob Asatryan, the Editor-in Chief of Molodej Ossetii paper Andrey Kochiev said:

-Our main problem is the weakness of the publishing base. We don't even use computers and are forced to work on the old publishing equipment. There are 9 papers in the Republic with the two of them being published in both the South and the North Ossetia. These papers are printed in the North Ossetia where the publishing equipment is more sophisticated, but the materials are prepared in the South Ossetia.

There is a censorship but it concerns only two central papers. Molodej Ossetii is also a state paper but we do not encounter any censorship, moreover, the Molodej Ossetii is the only paper which criticizes the authorities. We are still much in the communist atmosphere with a communist majority in the parliament.

Q: And how is the political situation reflected in the press?

A: Naturally the negotiation process with Georgia covers a big space. These negotiations are more successful compared to those between Abkhazia and Georgia. This is used by Georgia to show the world community that on this direction everything is settled. But it is not so. The conflict is just frozen but it is not less complicated then the Georgian-Abkhazian one. Of course the signed memorandums and meetings of Presidents Chebirov and Shevardnadze have a positive impact on our relations, but the South Ossetia is not going to give up its idea of independence. The question of integration processes within Ossetia discussed during this conference has never been and will never be taken off the agenda. First is the recognition of our republic, second is the unification with the North Ossetia. I don't see why the first goal will anyhow harm the second.

Inal Pliev, reporter of Molodej Ossetii:

Q: How does the South Ossetian press cover the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and what can be done by the journalists working in the conflict zones to find a common ground to work on?

A: Generally these conflicts are very similar. The general opinion in Ossetia is that Karabakh is a part of Armenia as well as South Ossetia is part of Ossetia. Georgia, Azerbaijan, as well as the world community have to recognize the right of these nations to self determination. Of course there are no daily reports about your republics in our press, and the Russian TV remains the only source of information, but we consider it not giving a complete picture of events. I think we should see each other more often. Even during these 3 days in Tsakhkadzor our approaches grew closer and we found a common ground in lots of questions. The unrecognized states have to cooperate and it is too bad that it hasn't happen until now. A positive solution of one of these conflicts will stimulate the positive outcome in other conflicts. •

THE NEW JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTIC EDUCATION

BY ARIS KHAZINIAN, AZG DAILY, YEREVAN.

The new journalism in Armenia has started its formation already in a period of the Soviet reality which was then called "perestroika." For a short period the Armenian journalism was developing within the mainstream of perestroika style information but since 1988 it emerged as distinctively different from the information streams of the late post-soviet "style modern", and being the first in the USSR, started to openly discuss the taboos which were before locked in the national consciousness. This was the period of emergence of the opposition press which at that time became the printed matter of the overwhelming majority of population of Armenia. With a high degree of confidence I can state that in 1989, in terms of democratization and uncompromising presentation of information the journalism in Armenia was far ahead of other territories of the still existing USSR.

In 1988-89, our republic became a hub of information, spreading political, military, national, social and seismic information to the rest of the world. Previously unprecedented high demand of people for dependable information on variety of issues and a severe shortage of media made up the ground for the existence of the post-embryonic existence of the Armenian journalism. The same severe shortage of new professionals and new local media in the context of formation of the national ideology and the upsurge of national spirit caused a strong inflow of journalists and just enthusiasts into this sphere of human activity. Under the conditions of total or partial absence of legitimate forms of executive, legislative and judicial powers, the new Armenian press had all the preconditions to become the

"forth power" not only because of the support of media by the people, but also because of the support which media itself was providing to the future authorities of the state. At that period of time there was a direct connection between journalists of local media and the leaders of the national-liberation movement which was often growing into a friendship or just sympathy.

It is necessary to mention that at the dawn of formation of the new Armenian journalism, the main carriers of information were the graduates of Yerevan State University Armenian philology department and journalism department of the Moscow University. Armenian students of that period generally had a high level of national consciousness, firm principles and uncompromising sense of civil duty. Students and graduates of other Universities also participated in the formation of the new Armenian journalism with some of them becoming prominent journalists and holding important management positions in the media.

At the same period of time the sector of journalism at the Philological department of the University declared its independence and became a separate department. The same happened to the department of photojournalism at the Armenian State Pedagogical Institute. In addition, several other educational institutions began offering journalism courses aimed at meeting the demand for professional education.

However at present, half of the journalistic corps has not got a respective professional

education which does not prevent them from being real professionals. I guess the same situation could be traced in other Transcaucasian countries.

Meanwhile there is a huge gap between the present and previous (6-10 years ago) situation in journalism. At the bottom of this gap lies a boundary between the demands for different kind of information and ways of obtaining it.

If at the beginning of the nineties there was a mass of local information prevailed the number of journalists, today situation is diametrically opposite.

A cauldron of correspondents is filled to the brim with persons called journalists, however, only a small part of them can be considered a carrier of a precise, dependable and serious information. It is interesting to mention that this small part consists mainly of the representatives of the first wave of the new journalism and this fact has its explanation.

Unfortunately the present situation in Armenia does not allow obtaining of a necessary information from a "competent official". The clear isolation of bureaucracy and the pathological fear of statesmen to say something which could run counter to the opinion of the higher selves has made this impossible.

Only the old friendship between journalists of the first wave and ever unchanged authori-

ties makes it more or less possible to get information and this keeps the rating of these journalist high, even though there are great deal of those from the same wave, who for political, partisan or simply moral principles avoid any contacts with the authorities and their entourage.

In the situation when it is impossible to get a necessary information, the journalists unite into professional guilds prompting a more active stand over the more passive one. Besides the Union of Journalists of Armenia which is a former soviet creation and as a such functions only formally rather than actually, we have two press clubs The Yerevan Press Club and The National Press Club. I would like to single out the active, politically sensitive and flexible activity of the National Press Club. It is there that the young journalists joining the club get the possibility to meet many political figures for the first time. The Club also initiates many practical endeavors. Unfortunately the absence of the Law on Mass Media and the desperate financial situation in journalism do not foster development of more active and practical cooperation. Even if a journalist is deprived off its supervising role, the strong potential energy gradually transforms into a kinetic energy clearing up a way for a journalist to a transfer from the camp of those barking up the wrong tree to the camp of those baying at the moon. •

THE NEW JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTIC EDUCATION

BY KARINE KHODIKIAN, GARUN MAGAZINE.

Characterizing the post-soviet Armenian press and trying to make even a superficial analysis of formation of the new democratic press from the very outset up to present would require a lot of time. Hence, I would touch upon some aspects which I believe would give an idea about that period of history which we ourselves witnessed and shaped to some extent.

I have divided that time into certain periods marking the emergence, achievements and defeats of Armenian democratic press.

The first period - 1988-1991.

The “Perestroyka” mood of expectations of changes, the beginning of the national-liberation movement, a gradual transformation of the idea of independence into the creation of an independent state. A naïve, excited, furious and cautious press. First heralds of the new printed word, the so called “samizdat” (i.e. not printed by the state) papers, such as Mashtots, The Voice of Artsakh, ...Yev ayln (etc) and others.

The Theatrical Square in front of the Opera became a huge open air campus paper with analytical articles, comments and daring and funny caricatures.

The official press was exposed to the pressure from “above” and from “below” and was going through a tough period of identification of its stand under the new conditions.

Even after the events of Sumgait the orthodox official press continued to move on its own momentum providing readers with articles on “Armenian extremists” violating the norms of international friendship while non official papers rapidly found the necessary tune in the coverage of events. Owing to its daring and freedom-loving staff the Garun magazine became a real herald

of future changes with its circulation hitting 100,000 copies between 1989-1990.

Pioner Kanch, the official of The Communist Children’s Organization (pioneers), imperceptibly but confidently found itself in the first ranks of daredevils and started to publish the chronicles of the Armenian National-Liberation movement. Newspaper Avangard and Yerekyon Yerevan were casting off chains of Soviet censorship still functioning at that time. All of these became a fertile ground and the first shoots did hesitate to appear soon.

The second period 1991-92.

Creation of new papers of various directions and trends. The freedom of action and expression gave a boost to the creation of new publications.

The new era was marked by the formation of multiparty political system with their official papers. Using the example of three such papers I will try to reflect the general scenery of birth, development and the future destiny of democratic press of the time. These are papers Hayk, Yerkir and Azg.

Hayk was born on the surge of the Pan Armenian National Movement and was created by a group of young, gifted people able to feel the pulse of the time. People were waiting for each issue of this paper that published the most actual materials and articles which were to become the working program for the PANM. With the transformation of PANM from a public movement into a ruling party, Hayk acquired a respective trend and as a result lost general recognition and affection.

In its turn Azg, the organ of Liberal Democratic (Ramkavar) party, from the very first day of its activities chose to be a professional paper pub-

lishing balanced articles on events and serious analytical materials. The paper nurtured a generation of young journalists and became a phenomenon in Armenian journalism owing to its form and contents. During all these years the paper has been in the midst of events but owing to its stable and balanced policy managed to stay afloat and avoid “temptations” of a kind.

The first issue of Yerkir, the organ of Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutjun appeared in 1991. This paper had an opposition trend and published bold and pressing articles and sensational disclosures. Rather quickly it won the confidence of readers and even during the severe winter days people lined up at newsstands waiting for the fresh issue of the paper. Its further destiny- the closure-is rather symbolic.

The third period 1994-95.

On December 28, 1994 the President issued a decree suspending the activities of Dashnaktsutyun party. At the a night of the same day editorial offices of Yerkir and other party affiliated media were searched, looted and sealed. Dozens of journalists became jobless overnight.

If the second period can be called a “golden era” of the emergence of Armenian democracy, the third regrettably marked the beginning of the end. Authorities resorted to force, this time against the freedom of speech. For the moment they won but the real power was yet there to come.

1995-96 - time of two important elections 1995-Parliamentary and 1996- Presidential elections and big disappointments. Pages of all the independent and opposition press publications of that period were full of investigative articles summarizing the obvious: serious fraud, forgery and other violations occurred during both of the elections. But the voice of crying journalists was not heard marking the beginning of a new democracy in our country - say or write whatever you want-no one will pay any attention to it anyway.

Current period 1997- the press concentrates on the issue of solution of Karabagh conflict, social

problems, inter-clan struggle, coverage of political trials etc.

A great number of papers are published, but it is difficult to identify their exact number as some are published irregularly. Papers cover the whole range of the profession from official to yellow.

As to the current situation of the Armenian press, I would try to answer to following questions:

- * To what extent the press covers events impartially?
- * What are the spheres of influence of the press?
- * Can the press shape public opinion?
- * Does the reader trust the written word ?

Today the tonality of publications of the official press is largely optimistic as opposed to the oppositions press with its dark tonality. Majority of so-called independent press just implements orders of certain circles, studies the possible reactions and prepares the ground.

As to the spheres of influence and shaping of public opinion it is enough to cite that the total daily circulation of all papers published in Armenia is 40 -50 thousand copies. This is not enough for a population of 3 million people, and considering that not all the papers reach the regional centers (it is not even worth mentioning the remote villages) and the majority of population cannot afford to pay for them, it becomes clear that the contemporary Armenian press fails to accomplish one of its main objective- shaping the public opinion.

Readers would trust a press if at least one article would cause a reaction of authorities or law enforcement agencies. But the situation is an absurd given that often and even in the official press, one comes across articles and stories which in civilized countries would have definitely formed a basis for launching a criminal investigation. What happens in Armenia? Absolute silence! How can we speak about the trust of readers then?

The press is the reflection of the society and if the press is sometimes and somehow a little bit better than the society then this is a serious food for thought. •

NEWS FROM ARMENIA

«YERKIR» NEWSPAPER RESUMES IN ARMENIA

YEREVAN, April 16 (*Noyan Tapan*).

“Although the “Yerkir” newspaper is not supposed to become an example or criteria for other publications, it must be the newspaper which respect the freedom of speech, freedom of press and the Armenian language,” said Mushegh Mikaelian, Editor-in-Chief of the “Yerkir” newspaper (an official publication of ARF-Dashnaktsutium) which has recently resumed in Armenia, after the ban on the Armenian Revolutionary Federation had been lifted by Robert Kocharian.

Mikaelian said that the major goal of the publication is “to serve our country as an official publication of the Supreme Council of ARF-Dashnaktsutium, to serve as a free and true press and participate in the resolution of problems, Armenia is facing.” Until recently the standpoint and views of the Supreme Council of ARFD have been reflected in the “Hayots Ashkhar” newspaper, which will now become an independent publication as “Yerkir” has been resumed.

Mikaelian said that all real estate as well as part of equipment belonging to the newspaper and confiscated following the Levon Ter-Petrossian’s 1994 decree have been returned. •

MASS MEDIA TRADE UNION TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS’ RIGHTS

YEREVAN, May 20 (*Noyan Tapan*).

“Proceeding from our professional duties, we, journalists, often protect the rights of workers engaged in different spheres, but nobody protects the rights of journalists,” the Chairman of

Mass Media Trade Union Levon Azroyan told Noyan Tapan.

He said that the Trade Union, which was established a year ago with the assistance of 22 mass media representatives, was officially registered with the Ministry of Justice only last month. Together with journalistic creative teams working in Armenia, the Trade Union sets itself a task of solving numerous problems among which are: news-print monopoly, relations with “Haymamul”, the issue of exempting the journalistic system from added-value tax etc.. There are programs of arranging holidays and treatment for journalists and their children. •

THE JOINT STATEMENT OF THE ARMENIAN MASS MEDIA

The Armenian authorities, demonstrating an understanding of the problems of the press, have time by time and on different levels promised to solve them but the concrete steps did not follow. The higher electricity, transport and communications tariffs, increase in prices of paper and its delivery, and cost of publishing and distribution of printed matter, have increased the self cost of publications. This increase has been in a direct proportion to the decrease of the purchasing power of population. The following deterioration of the situation has catastrophically reduced the circulation of papers and magazines. Ignoring the problems of the Armenian mass media has become a stable tradition of all of the changing cabinets of the Government. Heads of state enterprises connected to the monopoly on the production and distribution of the mass media are forcing cooperation agreements containing unacceptably exploit-

NEWS FROM ARMENIA (*CONTINUED*)

ing obligations for the media. Several news paper stands in different parts of Yerevan have been taken away with promises to replace them in the future. No one even thought that a couple of thousands of unsold papers represent an unrecoverable damage to the publishers and the reader. The delivery of papers is done out of time and demand.

Aiming at securing the constitutional right of citizens to information and the freedom of speech, as well as the guarantees of the independence of the mass media, the journalists of Armenia demand that the authorities adopt measures for the state support of mass media, including:

1. Improvement of the policy and activities of the Haymamul state distribution agency, payment of sums generated from the subscription and sales and the payment of all debts.
2. Exemption from taxes, including the VAT, the profit tax, custom duties and tariffs, of all the complex of goods, services and turnovers of enterprises involved in production, distribution and sale of the mass media.
3. Discounts for the services of transport and communication for the mass media.
4. Free leasing of locations of the buildings used by the mass media for their activities.

We demand an urgent consideration and a parliamentary approval of our proposals on the state support of the mass media. Protesting the ignoring of our interests we suspend the publication of our papers for one day. We reserve the right to protect our interests through other actions. •

STATEMENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MASS MEDIA ASSOCIATIONS OF ARMENIA

(Noyan Tapan)

On December 8, the Council of Associations of Mass Media of Armenia has issued a statement. The text of the statement follows:

On December 4, 1997 the mass media of Armenia has declared a one day strike addressing problems and proposing concrete economic changes. After the strike the Prime Minister of Armenia Robert Kocharian met with the members of the Council and heads of several mass media. The Prime Minister expressed his views on the problems promising to discuss the possibility of solution of some of them.

Mr. Kocharian discussed the problem of payments for the rent of surfaces by the mass media. During the last 4 months the Department of Information and Book Publishing has already made certain steps forward towards that direction. We were hoping to quickly find a solution acceptable for all.

We are worried that the resignation of the head of the Department will drive the negotiating process back to the beginning as the new head will again start discussions which will postpone the solution of our problems for several months.

Our protest is not aimed against someone personally or against an organization.

We did not think that firing the head of the Department Garegin Chukaszyan as well as continuing personnel and structural changes (the speedy creation of a ministry, then its abolition followed by the creation of the public council on press at the Prime Ministers Office, then the creation of the Department etc.) did actually mean to be concrete steps on the way of resolution of problems of mass media. Our proposals still remain in force. •

WILL THERE BE A DAY OF MEDIA

(Noyan Tapan)

The 4th Assembly of the Union of Journalists of Armenia attended by 105 delegates from different regions commenced its work in Yerevan on November 20. The Assembly re-elected the Chairwoman of the Assembly Astkhik Gevorgyan. The new board of the Union will consist of 9 members. It was decided to propose to the National Assembly to declare October 15 as the Day of the Press including it into the list of State Holidays of Armenia. On October 15, 1794 the first Armenian newspaper called Azdarar was published in the Indian city of Madras.

The new Code of Professional Ethic will be presented to the Board with the main emphasis put on the responsibility of journalist for the accuracy of the published material. •

TSVETANA IS MY FRIEND BUT THE FREEDOM OF MASS MEDIA IS DEARER

(Respublika Armenii, December 12, 1997)

Even though the weather on the International Day of Human Rights was not really good for demonstrations but journalists and journalism students of the Yerevan State University gathered in front of the residence of the President to support Tsvetana Paskaleva. The slogans were reflecting the demands of demonstrators who as it was written were suffering from a «Tsvetanadeficiency» and were demanding to bring the color, lost with the removal of Tsvetana, back to the black and white Armenian TV. The statement passed to the office of the President was stating, that the reasons based on which the program of Paskaleva was removed from the air are groundless and unconvincing. The demonstrators expressed a hope that the President will interfere and the program of Tsvetana will return to the screens. Besides that, all the future attempts to threaten the freedom of speech will be stopped.

Unexpectedly the Presidential press spokesman Levon Zurabyan appeared in front of the dem-

onstrators reading them a lecture on the freedom of speech and expressing his surprise that the action takes place in front of the Presidential palace and not the TV or the Procurator's Office. The demonstrators themselves accepted that in the case with Paskaleva not a single article of the law has been violated, and the interference of the President according to Levon Zurabyan would violate the freedom of speech. «And now you are protesting against the right of the mass media to carry on its own policy, hence you are protesting against the freedom of speech» noted he. He also stated that both, Tsvetana Paskaleva and the Director of State TV Hamlet Gasparyan, are his friends and his own opinion on this matter will be a subjective one. •

IS THERE NO OTHER TV BUT THE STATE TELEVISION?

(Respublika Armenii)

Given the notorious developments with Tsvetana Paskaleva, the meeting of this TV journalist with the mass media representatives of Armenia took place a little bit late but a bit symbolic given the fact that it took place on the international day of TV.

«I remain a TV journalist and do not want to start writing» told Paskaleva stressing her intention to struggle for her right to the air time on the national TV and rejecting the proposals to work with AR and A1+ TV stations owing to the limited area of broadcast of these stations. This incident was quite painful for the journalistic brethren who cannot but accept the reality of the existence of the freedom of speech and press in Armenia.

In this case it is more appropriate to view the situation in the context of inter-corporate relations. Being far from diminishing the qualities of Paskaleva, we nevertheless agree that the Armenian TV has the right to decide whom to work with and her right to the freedom of speech is protected by offers from other TV companies which she rejects.

Meanwhile some papers, and particularly Urartu weekly are openly exploiting her in the interests of their own image. •

THE NEW JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTIC EDUCATION

BY KAMAL ALI, ZERKALO WEEKLY, AZERBAIJAN

Restoration of independence of Azerbaijan has put journalists of my country in a new situation - to write the truth and to write what is interesting for the reader. And it is not surprising that under the new conditions some celebrity journalist who were famous for writing glorifying communist-kolkhoz stories, became jobless. Papers that failed to re-organize rapidly enough, lost their readers in competition with the free press. At present not a single governmental or pro-governmental paper in Azerbaijan can survive without a state financial support.

A new press in Azerbaijan was formed rather quickly and quite often the managers of these papers were the very orators at rallies and demonstrations. These people successfully compensated the lack of journalistic education with innate organizational skills and speaker talents. One of the most radical nationalistic papers «Yeni Musavat» is headed by Rauf Arifoghly, a graduate of Gyandja Agricultural Institute and one of the initiators of the return of Musavat party from emigration. Another leader of demonstrations, Siruz Tebrizli is today the Minister of Press and Information. New talents, whose educational background has nothing to do with the journalism, are currently entering the field. Hardly anyone knows that Roman Molchanov, who is the best journalists covering economic issues, graduated from a pedagogical institute and an award winning foreign policy analyst Tofigakhanum Kasymova (Nurani) has graduated as a pathology-physiologist. It appears that much of the same happens in the neighboring Transcaucasian countries. The last bulletin of Yerevan Press Club features interviews with editors of leading newspapers of Armenia stating that journalistic education does not guarantees a development of professionalism.

Apparently the reason of this situation lies in the ideological approach to humanities in the Soviet universities. According to Ahmed

Gashamoghly, the former head of analytical department of Azerbaijanian Parliament, humanities students in Azerbaijan were taught not to develop independent and creative thinking but rather plain quoting of the speeches of communist leaders. Whereas departments of technical and natural sciences were not much different from similar Western department and students were encouraged to experiment and learn the latest achievements of science and technology. Hence it is not surprising that graduates of these departments dominate the Azerbaijanian journalism today.

The state tries to improve the situation. The staff of universities are continuously in the process of search and application of new methods and writing of new textbooks which are in extremely high demand. Some teachers prepare their lectures from information published in the newspapers. Numerous private universities which are not restricted by a harsh tutelage of the ministry of education make an important contribution in development of journalistic education.

Certainly the enlargement of network of private universities also brings some problems. Lots of private universities become a sort of lucrative business running into an extreme by offering all of today's «dream professions» in the same university. Judging from the announcements decorating street poles of Baku a student can learn the profession of a customs officer, journalist, accountant, gynecologist and a dentist all in the same university. The attractiveness of private education business is also in the opportunity to avoid the military service. Most of the students expect to pay 2-4 thousand USD as a tuition fee to get a diploma and an exemption from military service. However the state is well-aware of these tricks .

Teymour Buniadov, head of the Standing Commission on Education and Science has stated that only 13 out of 28 private educational institu-

tions are registered by the Supreme Qualification Board. Highly praising some private universities Mr. Buniadov nevertheless stated that discontent on increasing number of the private universities is widespread.

In their turn, the rectors of private universities complained on ignorance of the state agencies which often do not even consider the submitted documents for registration. According to Ramiza Abdulaeva, head of Logman medical college, their papers are lying in the Qualification Board for a year. «We are not invited to the meetings and conferences of the Ministry of Education, although in our college some subjects are taught much better than in the State Medical University».

According to Eyoub Eyubov, the provost of the Azerbaijanian Branch of the University of San-Marino(!), the new law developed by the government, does not even mention private education. Representatives of private educational institutions also complain against the allocation of the same dates to all the universities, for a 10-day entry examination period, thus depriving the private institutions of the possibility to «shelter» the failed students of state universities.

Leaders of a private institutions come out in favor for the development of the «Law on Private Education Institutions». Intents of managers of registered private institutions coming out in favor of this law can be accounted by an objective necessity for legal regulation of private education institutions. They suggested to determine clearly rights and obligations of education institutions, Supreme Examination Board, Ministry of Public Education as well as regulations for getting licenses and certificates by newly established institutions. In the meantime leaders of registered institutions supported policy conducted by the Supreme Examination Board denying registration of would-be competitors. According to managers of some institutions, those institutions of higher education are beating down prices by setting tuition fee of some 200 USD per year, whereas tuition fee in prestigious private institutions costs some three thousand dollars.

Fortunately, the economic situation in Azerbaijan forces the youth to combine the education and work, especially if it is not so difficult to find a

job in one of numerous papers. Our student-journalists have a possibility to practice their profession and some have already gained popularity without having a diploma in journalism. Unfortunately the practice is not always positive and the students get to know the absolute power of advertising under the capitalistic system. For many of them the developments with tobacco ads in Azerbaijan served a lesson. After long discussions the Milli Medjlis (Parliament) of Azerbaijan finally adopted the Law on Advertising largely restricting the advertising of tobacco and alcohol.

Many journalists express their solidarity with the Law «sharpening quills» against the all-mighty tobacco companies. However, none of these articles was published - the newspapers did not want to spoil relations with wealthy advertisers.

The journalistic ethics is one of the topics the students learn on practice. Do not lie, do not steal (avoid plagiarism) and other rules of our profession are strictly followed by Azerbaijanian journalists. However, the contemporary bloody history of Transcaucasus makes the journalists to adopt new professional principles. The «Do not harm» principle applied to interethnic problems has become highly relevant in the Caucasus. It is imperative for journalists to think about consequences of articles on ethnic or territorial disputes. We in Azerbaijan, are convinced that Armenian writers and journalists Zori Balaian, Silva Kaputikian and others have contributed to the development of tragic events in our region. Certainly our Armenian colleagues can justly blame Azerbaijanian journalists in the same.

I am convinced that a journalist covering ethnic issues, should reckon the power of the word and foresee its consequences, just as a politician does. In this regards I would like to quote the president of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosian talking to Armenian journalists at his last press-conference. He said «Can you foresee where we will find ourselves, if lets say, the current situation remains unchanged for the next five or ten years. It is not difficult to see. We have already made such estimations. Armenia will not become a normal state, we will not live well until the problem of Karabakh is resolved and blockades are lifted.» •

THE NEW JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTIC EDUCATION

BY MAMED SULEYMANOV, NEWSPAPER 7 GJUN

What is a new journalism? First of all it is a new generation which brings in a new word and lives a new destiny. In a notion of new journalism I put a notion of the struggle of generations. Naturally, the new journalism started from the change of a generation. The new generation is associated with an image of novelty and innovations and this explains why these new forces find themselves in the opposition camp or even in the independent media. The old generation of journalists works mainly for the pro-governmental media and their voices can hardly be heard. This is a fading era. The post-Soviet era which we have not yet completely entered, demands a new word, a new style and a new rebellious spirit.

A new journalism in Azerbaijan rests mainly on the shoulders of journalists with no journalistic education. They did not graduate from the Department of Journalism and four or five years ago did not even suspect that they will become journalists. A Chief Editor of a popular paper once even noted that «...the Department of Journalism can damage the talent of any would be journalist.»

These words are not surprising. Any institution of higher education to some extent is a cage imposing a limit, while the talent does not recognize restrictions or limitations, otherwise a creator will turn into philistine and mass produce mediocre materials.

All our leading journalists are amateurs and have graduated from their «own universities.» Those who were recognized as the best journalists of the year of 1996 are not an

exception. One of them is a political scientist, another one graduated with a major in medicine and the third one is an hydrology engineer. I recall the times when a «hidden and silent war» was under way between 20 something journalists without a diploma and the older generation. As a result of this we lost some talents but won in a broader sense. Myself being a medical student (graduated as a surgeon) and a supporter of socialist ideas, I was cooperating with the social-democratic Istiglal paper.

After a year-and-half practice as a military surgeon I returned to journalism forever.

Most likely my chosen path is a rule rather than exception for the current stage of formation of a new journalism.

The new journalism is not only a collection of dry facts but is followed by analogies, analysis, generalizations, associations and forecast. Any information is not only interesting as a such. What is more important is why this happened, what will it be followed by and the respective consequences.

We do not accept cliché-ridden work and from one day to another our word gains more weight. For example a year ago, when political trials of «Mr. 57s» (Article 57 of Criminal Code is High Treason) where in full swing, there were only few reports and analytic materials on those events. A wave of trials hit the country ranging from trials of the supporters of ex-president Mutalibov or ex-Prime Minister Surat Huseynov to the members of National Front, OMON (special police), war veterans, generals and Is-

lamic radicals. This was a witch hunt, a manic obsession syndrome. The public opinion was silent. During the interrogations the defendants were being tortured in a most brutal way.

As soon as the independent press started to write about all these we scored some small victories. The professional butchers, who actually enjoyed torturing defendants as nothing else, were put behind the bars themselves.

Nevertheless we still face a great deal of problems and obstacles in our activities. Financial situation of the majority of papers is far from the desired. Censorship seems to be legally abolished but de-facto it still functions in its full capacity. Freedom of speech is restricted. Analytical materials of talented journalists do not touch the «lower classes» who crave only «bread and entertainment.» These problems are not specific only for Azerbaijan, but from this assumption they do not cease to be a real ones.

Another problem of the new generation is the ideology. Currently, the political orientations are taking their final shapes giving birth to a variety of leftist, rightist and centrist publications. Obviously a liberal cannot expect to be published in a communist paper and vice-versa. And, if for instance, a socialist paper is closed owing to financial difficulties, it is a task of non-human proportions for a journalists-socialist to find a job as for the other papers he is an alien.

The yellow press springs like mushrooms after the rain. It is quite profitable but kills the talent in retaliation and this is also a reality which we have to encounter.

For the sake of self-realization gifted journalists become a workforce of the sponsor and editor. Media has become a lucrative business and it takes a sacrifice of our beliefs and originality in sake of financial profit.

All this does not really awaken optimistic sentiments. Media tycoons and monopolies are already appearing on the market and a reporter with a bias from a standard thinking finds it hard to survive. He who pays the piper, calls the tune.

What is the way out of this situation? I am afraid there isn't one. The newly born «new journalism» is doomed to extinction and is already replaced with the «newest journalism», a «monster journalism». The main aim of this journalism is not the truth but the profit, impression and advertising.

The journalism of mind is being substituted with a show-journalism, a sensational journalism. The priorities of this journalism are not the economic, social and political analyses but sensational lurid headlines such as «the son raped his mother» or «the father killed his daughter» etc. And this is «natural.» A new era and a new generation have already emerged. For them the notions like economy, human rights and geopolitics are sort of a nonsense. But we 'the people of eighties» can only prolong our agony. Time works against us. The journalism that we today still call a «new journalism» will soon become an archaic exuberance. •

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICTS

BY SHAHIN RZAEV, MANAGER OF GAYA PRESS DISTRIBUTION AGENCY

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRESS IN THE COURSE OF CONFLICT

In the process of coverage of the Karabakh conflict the Azerbaijanian press went through several stages of development. From the very beginning of this conflict in 1988 up to the beginning of intense military activities in 1991, our press was mainly trying to conceal the real scales of conflict from the public. On this stage the independent press was just coming into being facing a strong opposition of the authorities but nonetheless it was the newspapers Azerbaijan and Azadlyg which made everything possible to keep readers aware of the true scale of the threat hanging over our country. In these years Azerbaijan was governed by bureaucrats appointed by Moscow and was conducting a policy aimed at concealing the real scale of the conflict from our people and the international community. Eventually that policy led to a total defeat of Azerbaijan in the field of information on this stage of the conflict.

The authorities «regained consciousness» only after losing Moscow's support as a result of a failed coup attempt there in 1991. The period between 1991 and 1992 can be considered as a second stage in the coverage of the conflict in the press. With the significant strengthening of the opposition and independent press the authorities failed to carry out the policy of covering up the events. However they made a fatal error when after the occupation of Khodjalu for three days trying to conceal the true scale of the tragedy and the fact of participation of the Russian Army in those events. The footage of the late reporter Chingiz Mustafaev whom the opposition was blaming in sympathy to authorities revealed the shocking truth and played an important role in forcing President Mutalibov out of the office.

The third phase of evolution of the approach of the press to the coverage of the conflict started

after the takeover of the power by the National Front and can be called the period of «hooray patriotism.» The television started to air daily «patriotic» coverages of military advancements where the inexperienced «analysts» were unwillingly providing a very valuable and sensitive information about the quantity and location of military regiments.

In the meantime the Russian army withdrew handing over part of its arms and ammunition to Azerbaijan. Taking advantage of this chance the National Front started an offensive on the Northern part of Karabakh. Almost all the papers started to shout about a swift victory with the most radical ones suggesting to continue the victorious march and «liberate» Geicha and Zangezur regions. Only the lonely voice of the social-democratic paper Istiglal warned about the temporary nature of the achieved military success publishing a front page editorial under the title «It Is Time to Stop.» Soon the inevitable happened. This stage can be regarded completed with the losing of six adjacent to Karabakh regions and coming to power of Heidar Aliev in summer 1993.

After the negotiated cease-fire agreement the conflict moved from a military sphere into the political one. Pro-governmental media started to write about significant achievements of our authorities in the political settlement of the conflict and they really deserve a credit - they succeeded in that. The evaluation of results of OSCE Lisbon Summit is a vivid example of that. At present the pro-governmental media and first of all the State TV lead a campaign to prepare the public opinion for significant concessions that, judging from the developments, the Azerbaijanian authorities are going to make. We can be sure that any result will be presented as a huge success of Azerbaijanian diplomacy. The question is how enduring will be the peace achieved by such efforts. •

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICTS

By MAMED SULEYMANOV, PAPER 7 GYUN

THE WAR AND THE PRESS

Albert Camus once wrote: «In a war one either dies or lives with it.» Our war time press went off under the star of death. And it is nobody's fault that our press of that time was full of articles ranging from the «hooray patriotic» to the extreme necrophilic and tanatophilic category. We should not forget what atmosphere shaped our generation. Our generation did not have an experience of freedom nor it had the experience of war. Things which are not experienced personally are perceived as unreal or incomprehensible. Suddenly we found ourselves free without knowing what to do with this unlimited and dangerous freedom and the war came to fill this freedom and to become a routine.

Our generation, lost but still with a thirst for self-realization indulged into a real game named the war. The politicians and their speakers had just to add some emotions and a trustworthy face. We were not used to a choice-we did not even know about the very existence of the notion of «alternative.» It was too late until we learned that it is the politicians who start the war leaving the people to kill each other until the same politicians decide to stop the war.

Thus hooray patriotic, misanthropic articles disseminating non-conformist sentiments and biological instincts are quite natural during the war. The war itself is intrinsically illogical it bears a paradoxical logic. As the prominent Soviet film producer Romm once noted: «There was another Germany.» I would like to say few words about this parallel world.

In a full swing of war in 1993, I published an article entitled an «Abstention Syndrome.» We did not have a censorship then. In that article I speculated about what will happen with twenty-years-old guys like me when the war is over. Those guys who know nothing but to kill and loot, for the sake of ambitions of politicians. I was shocked - I was labeled a pacifist even if I always considered myself to be a representative of the «party of war.» I believed that the war should be waged with a well-prepared professional army and not with gangs and patriotic vol-

unteers who are awarded a National Hero decorations today only to be arrested tomorrow for high treason and wake up in a jail cell.

I concluded in that article that Azerbaijanis nor Armenians are not able to move to planet Mars and hence are doomed to find ways for coexistence. This idea today sounds banal but it was not so then. In another article which we printed in a youth paper «Tekamyul» we reprinted an extract from the article of the famous French musician and writer Boris Vianne under the title «A Letter to Veteran.» This was an authentic hymn for pacifism but I want to reiterate that I am not a pacifist, I am just for doing things properly, whether its love or war. In other words the war must be fought properly using adequate ways and means. Thanks to Allah the armistice is still holding today and quite probably we wont take arms and shoot each other anymore. War is always a pain. But if a war is a destiny then it is impossible to avoid it. Simply impossible. The press then has to cease writing a necrophilic rubbish and start writing on how to fight with dignity and properly. This must be the goal and the program of the war-time press.

As to the post-war time, the main goal is to avoid a new bloodshed through prophylactics. Last year paper 7Gjun ran an interview with the Armenian journalists Alexey Manvelian. Only a narrow circle of pseudo-patriots who in reality are less Azerbaijanian than Alexey himself, labeled him an agent, an enemy etc. The majority approached to him with a proper comprehension. The interview with him was even printed under the title «Our man in Yerevan.» I am not aware whether Alesha had any problems upon his return to Yerevan, but articles like that play a crucial role in diluting the image of the enemy in the post war period.

The most important conclusion is that the war is a game of superpowers. The press is not in a capacity to neither avert nor extinguish it. It remains only to attempt to remain human under the inhuman conditions of war and multiply this humanity. This is our credo and this is the only thing we can do. •

NEWS FROM AZERBAIJAN

POLICE SEARCH AZERI OPPOSITION NEWSPAPER

BAKU, June 15 (Reuters)

An Azeri opposition newspaper accused President Haydar Aliyev's government of intimidation on Thursday after its offices were searched, equipment confiscated and several journalists briefly detained.

Police officials on Wednesday searched the offices of the Chag daily newspaper, which is considered close to the opposition Popular Front party of ex-president Abulfaz Elchibey.

Editor Bakhaddin Khaziyev said police told him they had come to search for weapons. They left without finding any, he said, but confiscated documents and computer equipment, and detained him and two colleagues for several hours.

The Interior Ministry said the police had found no arms but discovered "documents of a criminal nature having special importance for the security of Azerbaijan and its citizens." Khaziyev said the papers were ordinary analytical documents prepared by the Popular Front. "It would be stupid to store weapons at a newspaper office. This is just the latest pretext for alleging the press and opposition are preparing a plot," he said.

Aliyev has a tight grip on power in Azerbaijan, and his government has alleged that several coups have been plotted against him since he returned to power in 1993. He also ran the country as its Communist chief in the 1970s and 1980s. The police search followed the detention of two high-ranking Popular Front officials on Monday.

Front officials say the authorities want to stifle dissent in the former Soviet republic of eight million which is starting to develop its big reserves of Caspian Sea oil with the help of

foreign firms which have pledged to invest billions of dollars.

Interior Ministry sources said Gabil Mamedov, a former deputy interior minister under Elchibey, had been detained and charged with illegal possession of firearms after he was found carrying a pistol and with a grenade in his car. The source said Mamedov, an aide to Elchibey, was taken into custody together with Ulvi Khakimov, another Elchibey aide who was given a 10-day jail sentence. Elchibey and all other leading opposition candidates say they will boycott a presidential election planned in September or October. •

RADIO FREE EUROPE BACK TO BAKU

BAKU, May 4 (AFP)

The Azerbaijani government Monday lifted a two-week-old broadcasting ban on the US-funded radio station Radio Liberty, reporters at the station said.

After talks with US ambassador Stanley Escudero, Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev issued an order to lift the ban and Radio Liberty resumed broadcasting at its regular timeslot Monday, they said.

The Azerbaijani government took Radio Liberty off air two weeks ago, claiming that it had failed to obtain the necessary license. The Turan news agency reported that Aliyev Monday interceded with the press and information ministry and had the ban lifted. Azerbaijani opposition and human rights groups had criticised the broadcasting ban of the station, accusing officials of acting because of the station's criticism of the government. Four opposition youth activists over the weekend announced that they had begun a hunger strike to protest the station's closure.

WILL AZERBAIJAN HAVE A JIRINOVSKI OF ITS OWN?

Baku, November 12

(Panorama, Turan Information Agency)

On the session of Milli Medjlis (parliament) of Azerbaijan on November 11, its deputy Mikael Mirza offended the journalist of Panorama paper Faik Novruzov and called him and other journalists present at the parliament «dirty street dogs.» The correspondent of Hurriet paper Lyaman Aliashraf was heart most of all. The deputy called her a «street girl.» Even more, he tried to hit her but Lyaman's colleagues did not let him to do so. The raging deputy made a surprising confession stating: «..I am Jirinovski of Azerbaijan !»

The union of the parliamentary correspondents has adopted an appeal to the leaders of the parliament demanding to condemn the incident.

The appeal of journalists was presented by the deputy of Milli Medjlis Gulamgusein Aliev.

The speaker of the parliament said: «If a journalist is insulted then he or she must appeal to the court.»

Baku, November 15 (Zerkalo)

During the break between the sessions of Milli Medjlis, the journalists approached the deputies demanding to comment on the incident and evaluate the actions of their colleague.

But the speaker of the parliament Murtuz Aleskerov declared that the parliament is not going to consider this incident. Urging the journalists to «write right», he added that those unsatisfied can file a lawsuit. Obviously sure in his impunity, Mirza requested a right to reply and called all the present journalists «senselessly barking village dogs.»

As far as we know, L. Aliashraf gizi and other parliamentary correspondents are planning to file lawsuits against Mikael Mirza on the grounds of insult of dignity and honor. We did not even try to get comments from Mirza himself as he will have a possibility to make respective comments directly in the court.

THE JOURNALISTIC ORGANIZATIONS OF AZERBAIJAN CONDEMN THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE DEPUTY OF MILLI MEDJLIS MIKAEL MIRZA

Baku, November 13, Turan Information Agency.

The Organizational Committee of the Unions of Mass Media has issued a statement on the illegal acts of the Milli Medjlis deputy Mikael Mirza on November 11.

The statement condemns the behavior of the deputy who has insulted the journalists with swear words in the building of the parliament. The statement contains a demand of respective actions against the deputy by the parliament leaders.

The Organizational Committee also condemned the arrest of four journalist in front of the Iranian Embassy in Baku on November 12. The Organizational Committee has demanded from the leadership of the country to create normal conditions for the fulfillment of their duties by journalists.

The union of journalists «Yeni Nesil» has appealed to the speaker of Milli Medjlis Murtuz Aleskerov and other deputies in regard to the behavior of Mikael Mirza. This is already the third appeal of «Yeni Nesil» to the parliament leaders. Unfortunately all three appeals are connected with the facts of violation of the freedom of speech and the rights of journalists within the building of the parliament. •

THE AZERBAIJANIAN TV IS NOT RECEIVED IN IMISHLI

Baku, November 7 (Azadlig)

The population of Imishli region of Azerbaijan cannot watch the programs of the Azerbaijanian state television. The reason, as claimed by the press-service of Musavat party is the wrong construction of the re-translator. Instead the population is able to watch programs from Iran, Russia and even Khankendi (Stepanakert). •

NEWS FROM AZERBAIJAN (CONTINUED)

THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE HAS RESOLVED TO CLOSE THE PAPER ISTINTAG

Baku, November 8, Khalg Gazeti

The Ministry of Justice has discussed the activities of the independent juridical paper Istintag (Investigation). It was reported that the paper constantly publishes blackmailing articles on different citizens which has caused justified complaints. The Chief editor of the paper Savalan Kerim oglu Mamedov and correspondent Israfil Alish oglu Agaev were charged with publishing blackmailing materials and were subject to criminal proceedings in 1995. Despite this, the paper «..did not make proper conclusions from the decision of the court and continued to publish similar materials» violating the article 4 of the Law on the Mass Media. Considering all this it is decided to discuss the closing of the paper. •

ARMENIA AS WITNESSED BY ME

By Shahin Rzaev, coordinator of the project in Azerbaijan

Probably all the nations have the same proverb which says « It is better to see once than to hear 100 times.» That is why when we got the possibility to go to Armenia, we grabbed it immediately. Frankly there were certain doubts at the beginning and I was not sure in the success of such an enterprise. Fortunately all went very well.

I will refrain from making analysis or forcing my judgments and will simply state what I liked and what I disliked during these five days between October 15 and 20, 1997.

What did I like?

First of all I liked the Prime Minister Robert Kocharian. We knew before that he is a clever politician, but at a personal meeting he left an impression of a frank and honest person. These qualities are quite rare for a politician of such a scale.

I will remember forever the beautiful mountain views which I saw from a chairlift taking

us to Tsakhkadzor. I liked the food at 2x2 Café in Yerevan. Just curious how the management of this café would react to such an advertising by an Azerbaijani?

What I did not like?

I was really sorry for the Armenian journalists as they deserve better working conditions, especially the Information Agencies.

I did not like numerous smoking young girls in the streets. I accept my conservatism but still consider that kissing a smoking girl is like licking an ashtray (of course the same is true about the smoking man kissed by a non-smoker woman).

And finally I did not like the Armenian dovga, which has nothing in common with the real dovga (Armenians who had lived in Azerbaijan agreed with me).

What made me happy?

The kind attitude of people in the streets towards the Azerbaijanians. I do not have illusions and know that the politicians can start the fire of hatred in the souls of people any moment, and they will need journalists to do so. Can we resist or money decides for us?

I was happy with the constructive thoughts of the Armenian president which give a hope for a breakthrough in the negotiating process.

What did upset me?

The only thing which upset me was the nationalistic moods of some young, gifted Armenian journalists. To all the other unpleasant moments (maps of Armenia including Karabakh, Azerbaijani rugs presented as Armenian etc.) I was reacting calmly and with understanding.

What did surprise me?

The low level of life. We were expecting the level of life in Armenia to be lower than in Azerbaijan or Georgia, but what we saw was a way below our expectations.

I will be grateful to my Armenian colleagues for any comments. •

THE COVERAGE OF THE ABKHAZIAN ISSUE IN THE GEORGIAN MEDIA

BY TENGIS PACHKORIA, HEAD OF THE SUKHUMI BUREAU OF THE GEORGIAN INFORMATION AGENCY SAKINFORMI, SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF ITAR-TASS AGENCY IN GEORGIA

Generally I agree with the message conveyed at this conference indicating that the media of warring parties cannot be completely objective during the war and military operations. There are a great deal of reasons for explaining the biased coverage and the ethnicity of journalists plays far a less role in this than it might seem. Very often the reasons are purely technical and as a result there is a lack of a complete and comprehensive information about the events and processes going on in the zone of the conflict.

The Abkhazian theme is widely covered in the Georgian media since the autumn of 1988 after the surfacing of the first signs of friction and tensions in the Abkhazian-Georgian relations. Abkhazian theme was comprehensively covered by the Georgian papers, magazines, TV and radio companies as well as by the Georgian media operating in Abkhazia itself.

Before the war broke up in Abkhazia in August 14, 1992, there were several Georgian papers there, including the Abkhazetis Khma daily (The Voice of Abkhazia), some regional and community papers and also several papers of different Georgian political parties and NGOs. Almost all the major Georgian press agencies, papers and TV-radio companies had their bureaus in Sukhumi and were regularly covering various, often dramatic developments before and after the break up of the war through their contributors.

The Georgian service of Abkhazian radio also functioned in Sukhumi but unfortunately, owing to certain circumstances caused by the unresolved political problems, we failed to establish a local TV broadcasting in Georgian (though Georgian State Television programs were broadcast from Tbilisi and were viewed in Abkhazian Autonomous Region). Since 1979 there was an Abkhazian Television ran by Abkhazian journalists and broadcasting in Abkhazian, and since

the end of eighties in Abkhazian and Russian languages.

The local, Georgian television began operating in Sukhumi only since August 19, 1992, couple of days after the start of the armed conflict in Abkhazia.

Abkhazian journalists present here have already told that as a result of this development the Abkhazian Television moved to Gudauta, followed by the Abkhazian part of the Parliament and Government of the autonomous republic.

Before the end of military operations the Georgian television of Abkhazia officially called Television of Abkhazia, was broadcasting in Georgian and Russian and occasionally in Abkhazian. At the end of September 1993, after the known events, the Georgian journalists and the majority of Georgian population were forced to leave Abkhazia. Since then the majority of Georgian journalists-refugees from Abkhazia work and live in Tbilisi including me and a colleague present here Manana Darjania.

It is already four years, that the Television of Abkhazia, or so-called "Television of refugees", which is staffed by journalists-refugees, broadcasts in Tbilisi once a week for 30-40 minutes in Russian and Georgian. Radio of Abkhazia also functions in Tbilisi airing its 30-minute programs four times a week in Georgian and Russian. Abkhazetis Khma and other pre-war Georgian press of Abkhazia are resuming their publication today in Tbilisi.

Since the end of eighties, Abkhazian problem was one of the main themes of the Georgian media. Before the war it was reflected in various newspapers including the Molodej Gruzii, Sakartvelos Respublica, Svobodnaya Gruzia, Literaturuli Sakartvelo, 7 Dghe and others featuring opinions of Georgian officials, scholars and political commentators of both Georgian and Abkhazian parties and running interviews

with Sergey Shamba in Molodej Gruzii, Vladimir Ardzinba in 7 Dghe, Zurab Achba, Yuri Voronov etc.

Of course during the war (August 14, 1992 - September 30, 1993) virtually all the Georgian media was covering the military operations as well as various social, economic and political processes taking place in Abkhazia, tragedies of thousands of families and horror of the war-time. It is natural that military topics were effecting the publications and programs of that time with a great number of publications of patriotic and propagandistic slant, although even during the war there were some articles and reports on mutual help of civilian Georgians and Abkhazians in different situations.

After the war and particularly in the last two years, the Georgian media systematically covers social, economic and political status of refugees with around 60 thousand of them in Tbilisi alone. According to the Georgian official statistics there are more than 300 thousand refugees of different nationalities residing today in Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Tskhaltubo, Senaki, Batumi, other cities of Georgia, Russia, CIS countries and the West. Before the war 520 thousand people lived in Abkhazia out of which 47per cent were Georgians.

Information agencies Prime News, BS-Press, Iprinda, Iberia and Gea and newspapers Alia, Rezonansi, Akhali Taoba, Svobodnaya Gruzia and others are widely covering events in the conflict zone and in regions adjacent to Abkhazia. Almost all of the above mentioned media and the national and independent TV companies based in Tbilisi, have a network of correspondents operating in the bordering towns of Zugdidid and Poti, where they are able to receive programs of Abkhazian radio and television from Sukhumi. The Georgian media regularly published analytic materials based on programs and articles of Abkhazian media. In the meantime, the programs of Georgian National Television can be received in Ochamchira and Gala regions and Abkhazian journalists for their part can study materials of Georgian media. I guess that not only journalists but also representatives of other professions scrutinize materials of warring factions.

Georgian media also widely covers the negotiations and the role of Russia and International Organizations in the settlement of the Abkhazian conflict with the majority of media considering the role of Russia in rather critically, assuming that Russia cannot stand as an impartial mediator, and therefore is reluctant to restore the territorial integrity of Georgia. While few years ago majority of Georgian media was critical of the stand of Abkhazian side and the role of Russia in the conflict; today , especially the independent Alia, Akhali Taoba, Droni, Rezonansi, 7Dge and TV-companies Rustavi-2 and Kavkasia are criticizing the Georgian Parliament, the government and the president for being ineffective and inconsistent in resolving the Abkhazian conflict. Our media widely covers activities of political parties and organizations dealing with this problem and quite often presents the full texts of views and statements of Abkhazian political figures. We can assume that over the last two years the professional level of Georgia journalists has drastically increased in terms of coverage and analysis of events in Abkhazia, its influence on public opinion and the ongoing processes.

Certainly the media and particularly the independent press, often carries radical opinions and sentiments, but if there are radical politicians why cant there be radical journalists? I believe that the period of Soviet style labeling will soon fade away, otherwise neither politicians nor journalists or the society would be able to move forward.

Georgian media pays much attention to the form and principles of state structure of the unified Georgia and political status of Abkhazia. As far back as in 1990-1991, a number of Georgian and Abkhazian politicians have started to discuss this problem and considered some aspects of delimitation of authority between Tbilisi and Sukhumi and of federal structure of Georgia. There were a great deal of backstage meetings and negotiations on various levels, but owing to a lot of reasons we failed to resolve this problem before the war.

For the last two years, the issue of the political status of Abkhazia within the Georgian state after the war has become a highly relevant issue.

The vast majority of Georgian politicians and journalists consider the principle of confederate structure i.e. of two equal subjects proposed by Abkhazia as absolutely unacceptable for Georgia and will lead to the destruction of the Georgian statehood.

Assets and drawbacks of other alternatives of the status of Abkhazia and further coexistence of Georgians and Abkhazians is widely analyzed in the media. Several papers have published opinions of some politicians proposing to divide Abkhazia into two parts, inhabiting one part by Georgians and another part by Abkhazians, and giving Sukhumi a neutral status under the aegis of international organizations. But these projects which were partly reflected in certain foreign publications are rejected by Georgian politicians and media as unrealistic and improper for Georgian interests.

There is a widespread opinion that protracted discussions over the status of Abkhazia within the Georgian state and wasting precious time would lead to a long-term conservation of the conflict and eventually separate Abkhazia from Georgia.

Within the negotiating process and the dialog concerning the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, the direct contacts between journalists have gained a great importance. Since the October 1993, Inguri river became a watershed dividing warring parties. Naturally, during the four years of conflict, contacts of journalists of confronting sides have had a rather sporadic character with journalists meeting each other during negotiations taking place in cities of Russia (Sochi, Moscow) as well as in Gudauta, Sukhumi, Gali, Tbilisi and abroad.

Within 1994 and 1996 with an official Abkhazian consent and with the assistance of Russian peace-keeping forces, Georgian journalists visited Gali and Sukhumi and published their witness accounts in Georgian media. In March 1997, a two day meeting initiated by the Sakharov Fund took place in Moscow and in May OSCE organized a meeting of Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian journalists in Warsaw.

In August 1998, according to preliminary agreement with the Abkhazian side, editor-in-chief of paper Kavkasioni and correspondent of the State television of Georgia visited Sukhumi and interviewed the president of Abkhazia Vladislav Ardzinba. The interview was published in Kavkasioni and aired by the National Television of Georgia. This fact as well as the content of the interview and opinions conveyed by Vladislav Ardzinba caused a controversial reaction in the Georgian political and public circles....

Recently there is much talk about the necessity of establishing a direct information-exchange channel between Tbilisi and Sukhumi. This has also been suggested by participants of this conference. At present this project is difficult to accomplish. Abkhazian journalists present here told us that for the last half a year Abkhazia did not have a telephone connection with the rest of the world and there is an information blockade of Abkhazia. I would like to make some clarifications. According to international regulations all sorts of communications should be carried out via the central communication station of the given country. In our case all sorts of communications in regions of Georgia including Sukhumi, should be implemented through the Central Communication Station in Tbilisi. According to inter-governmental agreement concluded on April 15 between Russia and Georgia, all communications of Abkhazia should be carried out via Tbilisi. However the Abkhazian side refused to switch to Tbilisi quoting numerous economic and political reasons.

Later, during bilateral negotiations the Abkhazian side agreed to switch two channels of special communication to Tbilisi, including the high-frequency governmental line giving the Abkhazian and Georgian officials a possibility to keep in touch via phone lines. I hope that in the future more communication lines from Abkhazia will be switched to Tbilisi and journalists also will be able to keep in touch with each other. •

THE ROLE OF JOURNALISTS IN CONFLICT ZONES: WAR PROPAGANDA OR CONFLICT SETTLEMENTS

BY MIRIAN LEBANIDZE, NEWSPAPER "REZONANSI", GEORGIA.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union conflicts and wars which broke out in the Caucasus lead to the death of tens of thousands of innocent people. Unfortunately our politicians were unable to undertake substantial measures to avoid bloodshed and fell for the bait of reactionary political circles in Russia, which were striving to retain influence in our region by instigating conflicts and wars.

Hardly any sensible human being seeks war and bloodshed be it Georgians, Abkhazians, Ossetians, Azerbaijanis or Armenians. Ordinary people failed to convince the politicians to resolve disputed problems peacefully around the negotiating table. I won't be mistaken to state that journalists bear their share of responsibility for this situation. We failed to approve that journalism is a "vox populi." This does not mean that we advocated war through propaganda but by all means we failed to carry out our duty up to the end. Perhaps journalists' appeals for peace did not achieve the desired results but nonetheless, we managed to awaken a common sense of a certain part of our society.

During the war in Abkhazia Georgian media regularly covered military operations, but today it is believed that we lost the information war. The post-war press was mainly searching for reasons of defeat of the Georgian army in Abkhazia. Journalists were accusing the reactionary circles of Russia and certain Georgian military officers and politicians. Some journalists believed that the territorial integrity of Georgia is possible to restore only militarily. But the years passed and the opinion started to favor the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Unfortunately we began negotiations only after the war. Relations between Tbilisi, Sukhumi and Tskhinvali changed. President of Georgia Shevardnadze met with the leaders of self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Nevertheless, the situation there remains rather tense. The war between Armenians and Azerbaijanians is also over but despite all of these developments the peace in the Caucasus is still hanging by a hair and that is why Caucasian reporters have to ask themselves: what is beneficial and humane for our peoples? Resolving problems in peaceful manner or resorting to brutal force?

That is why we have to comprehend the role and duties of journalists in this situation and we have neither moral nor legal right to disseminate ethnic hatred and provoke bloodshed.

In the meantime, it is necessary to note that the international community plainly views the forcible alteration of state borders and persecution of peaceful population as a very negative fact. I think the resolution of a disputes by means of force pushes the settlement further to the faraway future. Considering the geopolitical situation in the Caucasus, resumption of military operations is also not in the interests of the international community. The "hot zones" of the Caucasus will once more hurt our interests. They were and remain an obstacle on the way of integration of the Caucasian countries to the Western economic and political infrastructures and pose a threat to implementation of large projects.

A violence causes more violence but the outcome is all the same: the negotiating table. We are doomed to live side by side. While we, journalists, advocate for a peaceful

settlement of the conflict, we have to create an atmosphere and public opinion favoring a complete protection of rights of all nationalities be them Abkhazians, Ossetians or Georgians.

Fortunately the number of politicians supporting the so-called “party of war” in Georgia is dwindling significantly. Impact of these politicians is insignificant. I think that Georgian journalists have modestly contributed to that fact. The settlements of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian conflict are seen differently by journalists but one thing is common - it is intolerable to resolve these problems by means of war.

The recent poll conducted by the Georgian information-analytic agency “Gea” among one hundred Georgian citizens of various age and ethnic provenance regularly watch-

ing TV and reading the press, revealed that only 9 persons out of a hundred considered that the territorial integrity of Georgia should be restored by means of war. The result speaks for itself revealing an absence of vengeance sentiments among our people. Mass media have had a significant influence on the public opinion with its propaganda of only a peaceful settlement of these conflicts. Hope that Abkhazian and Ossetian journalists are moving in the same direction and we will find a common ground for a cooperation to restore the friendly relations among our people, to restore what we ruined with our own hands. •

NEWS FROM GEORGIA

DEMANDS TO INVESTIGATE CHQONIA'S DEATH

TBILISI, June 3, (Resonansi).

The NGO Foundation for Glasnost (Moscow) appeals to the leadership of Georgia and Abkhazia for comprehensive and impartial investigation of the death of George Chqonia, a reporter of the Georgian newspaper “Resonance” who was killed during the last clashes in the Gali district of Abkhazia. According to the Foundation, his relatives have identified Chqonia on the photos of killed Georgians, which were passed by Abkhazian authorities. •

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS

BY VAHRAM AGHAJANYAN; CORRESPONDENT OF AZG DAILY IN KARABAGH.

In a negative sense it is difficult to underestimate the role of the press and other media under the conditions of ethnic conflicts breaking on and off in the Caucasus region. Considering peculiarities of Karabagh conflict, it is absolutely safe to state that the media from both sides did everything possible to escalate the Karabaghi-Azerbaijani relations and to convert a local regional conflict into the international crisis. We deeply regret the fact that some media representatives of hostile parties, together with politicians and the military, bear equal responsibility on inciting enmity and ethnic hatred that eventually lead to an indescribable tragic consequences. Many journalists, as well as intelligentsia, public and political figures, often use the media for dissemination of shady ideas and beliefs dominated by emotional rhetoric bearing medieval intolerance towards the opponent and patriotic nihilism, rather than an unbiased approach in examination of the problem within the international legal norms. Even with the appalling misery and deaths of thousands of people, destruction of dozens of cities and villages, a group of politicized journalists and journalist turned politicians are trying to sniff out things that separate rather than create a common ground for the conflicting parties. Even in the most desperate situation it is possible to find a common ground and it is only necessary to have a professional honesty, elementary human decency and a sincere desire to see that ground. Unfortunately the cost of the failure to see this is too high and includes thousands of perished people, broken dreams, ruins and ashes.

Avoiding overestimating the role of media in deterioration of inter-ethnic relations, we

should not underestimate its propagandistic power to improve these ties. The main players in deteriorating the those relations are politicians who resort to media only on narrow selfish occasions. It is my deep conviction that this situation is not only a result of purely nationalistic nature of some media but also the lack of entrenched democratic traditions in coverage of ethnic conflicts and the artificial politicization of weak attempts of confidence building measures. As soon as President of Azerbaijan Heidar Aliev hold a confidential meeting with the former president of Karabagh Robert Kocharian, the Azerbaijanian media backed by the opposition, initiated a noisy public repercussion and accused Aliev in betrayal of national interests. In a similar development, as soon as President Ter-Petrossian talked about the necessity of mutual concessions, the radical circles of Armenia started a furious campaign against the betrayal of interests of ancient Armenian Karabakh.

The poorly staged maximalism is not as distressing as the blind readiness of some mass media to disseminate destructive positions and ideas, which at least do not favor the normalization of interethnic relations. The uncompromising stands of politicians is passed to media. But even in an inter-personal conflict one cannot get everything without giving up something in return. Risking not to appear objective, I cannot refrain from expressing dismay with the tough and uncompromising stand of Azerbaijanian authorities towards the establishment of simple human relations, particularly in connection with the failed visit of Armenian journalists to Baku. The Azerbaijanian authorities allowed themselves

to keep the arrived Armenian journalists a whole day on board of the plane in Bina airport in Baku and then in rather obnoxiously send them back to Yerevan on the basis of impossibility to provide safety guarantees for five Armenians journalists.

President Aliev declares through the Western media that he will grant a wide autonomy to Nagorno Karabagh within Azerbaijan, but how is he going to protect 150,000 Karabakhi Armenians if he is unable to do so for 5 Armenian journalists who tried to melt the ice of mistrust between our nations? Without mutual understanding and contacts at least on the level of journalists, the settlement of the crisis will face serious difficulties.

Official circles in Baku should follow the example of Georgian authorities which estab-

lished firm ties with Abkhazia and try to resolve their problems without mediators. Journalists should promote the formation of the atmosphere of trust if statesmen do not dare to do it.

Following this pattern, representatives of Karabagh and Azerbaijan participating in the Tsakhkadzor conference came forward with a joint initiative on establishing Karabaghi-Azerbaijani information center « Trust.» This idea was supported by the officials of OSCE attending this seminar. Mr. Petr Ivashkevich from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland who is the member of OSCE mission in Georgia, promised to inform the OSCE leaders about the journalist's initiative. Lets hope that this idea will find a support of mediators and leaders of the conflicting sides. •

NEWS FROM THE CIS

WAS JOURNALIST'S MURDER POLITICALLY MOTIVATED?

RFE/RL, June 11.

Leading media outlets, human rights organizations, and some politicians are alleging that the murder of Larisa Yudina in the southern republic of Kalmykia, was politically motivated. The Kalmykian authorities, however, deny that was the case. Yudina was co-chairwoman of the local branch of the pro-reform Yabloko movement and an editor of "Sovetskaya Kalmykia Segodnya," the republic's only non-government newspaper. That newspaper frequently published articles critical of Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, Kalmykia's president and a wealthy businessman. Following harassment by the local authorities, it was forced to print outside Kalmykia. NTV reported that demonstrators took to the streets of Elista, Kalmykia's capital, on 9 June carrying banners that read "Ilyumzhinov— who killed Yudina?" •

RUSSIAN RADIO BECOMES VICTIM OF UZBEK CENSOR.

RFE/RL, April 20.

State censors in Uzbekistan are prohibiting the dissemination of information about the launching of the radio station Evropa Plus Tashkent, "Kommersant-Daily" reported on 17 April. The station is an affiliate of Moscow's Evropa Plus, and its broadcasts are in the Russian language. "Kommersant-Daily" noted that the radio station is not the first Russian organization to have problems with the Uzbek censor. Articles about Uzbekistan in the Russian newspapers "Argumenty i Fakti" and "Trud" (which are also printed in Uzbekistan) are regularly cut by local censors and replaced with "Uzbek advertising blocks." •

SOUTH OSSETIAN JOURNALISTS ON THE CONFLICTS AND THE MASS MEDIA

The members of the South Ossetian delegation to the conference in Tsakhkadzor included the Editor in Chief of the South Ossetian TV Givi Khuriev, director of RES Information Agency Batradz Kharyabov, Editor of Molodej Ossetii newspaper Andrey Kochiev, reporter of Molodej Ossetii Inal Pliev and the producer of RYUO State Television and Radio company Izolda Believa.

There are three main newspapers in the South Ossetia: Yujnaya Ossetia, Khurzari and Molodej Ossetii. There are also three regional-community papers which are published more or less regularly: Velikoe Sobranie, Shtirnikhas and Zerkalo.

In his interview with Hakob Asatryan, the Editor-in Chief of Molodej Ossetii paper Andrey Kochiev said:

-Our main problem is the weakness of the publishing base. We don't even use computers and are forced to work on the old publishing equipment. There are 9 papers in the Republic with the two of them being published in both the South and the North Ossetia. These papers are printed in the North Ossetia where the publishing equipment is more sophisticated, but the materials are prepared in the South Ossetia.

There is a censorship but it concerns only two central papers. Molodej Ossetii is also a state paper but we do not encounter any censorship, moreover, the Molodej Ossetii is the only paper which criticizes the authorities. We are still much in the communist atmosphere with a communist majority in the parliament.

Q: And how is the political situation reflected in the press?

A: Naturally the negotiation process with Georgia covers a big space. These negotiations are more successful compared to those between

Abkhazia and Georgia. This is used by Georgia to show the world community that on this direction everything is settled. But it is not so. The conflict is just frozen but it is not less complicated than the Georgian-Abkhazian one. Of course the signed memorandums and meetings of Presidents Chebirov and Shevardnadze have a positive impact on our relations, but the South Ossetia is not going to give up its idea of independence. The question of integration processes within Ossetia discussed during this conference has never been and will never be taken off the agenda. First is the recognition of our republic, second is the unification with the North Ossetia. I don't see why the first goal will anyhow harm the second.

Inal Pliev, reporter of Molodej Ossetii:

Q: How does the South Ossetian press cover the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and what can be done by the journalists working in the conflict zones to find a common ground to work on?

A: Generally these conflicts are very similar. The general opinion in Ossetia is that Karabakh is a part of Armenia as well as South Ossetia is part of Ossetia. Georgia, Azerbaijan, as well as the world community have to recognize the right of these nations to self determination. Of course there are no daily reports about your republics in our press, and the Russian TV remains the only source of information, but we consider it not giving a complete picture of events. I think we should see each other more often. Even during these 3 days in Tsakhkadzor our approaches grew closer and we found a common ground in lots of questions. The unrecognized states have to cooperate and it is too bad that it hasn't happen until now. A positive solution of one of these conflicts will stimulate the positive outcome in other conflicts. •