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The Media in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan

an analysis conducted by Internews for USAID

April 1994

by Eric Johnson
with Martha Olcott and Robert Horvitz



INTERNEWS

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Executive Summary

Independent media in much of Central Asia do not yet enable diverse sectors of society to articulate their problems and seek solutions through public interaction, as they do in the West. For the most part, media in the three countries examined in this study, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, still provide only governmental information and entertainment.

Independent television stations and newspapers have acquired some freedom, at least in the capitals, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. With local variations, television tends to reach a wider audience than the press. President Akaev's government in Kyrgyzstan has most vocally supported media freedom, but financial factors preclude the media from expressing this freedom much beyond Bishkek. In Uzbekistan, on the other hand, a clear policy against airing dissenting opinions has effectively prevented the development of non-governmental sources of information.

The economic condition of the new media is precarious in all three countries. Central Asia has no paper plants, and the imported price of newsprint is so high that most people cannot afford newspaper subscriptions. Presses, broadcast frequencies, and radio and television transmitters remain almost exclusively under government control, so the government effectively retains the last word over use of the media for expressing opposition to or criticism of official policy.

In both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, democracy-building requires working with and supporting the emerging independent media, and there are many opportunities to do so. International charitable foundations should act quickly and work closely with promising journalists on implementing the recommendations in this report, and technical assistance programs should be expanded to include a media development component. The opportunities in Uzbekistan are more limited and the environment a more difficult one in which to work, but the degree of need is no less great. In all three countries, particular attention should be paid to supporting the independent media in building a strong commercial basis to ensure economic survival within local circumstances.

Introduction

The media in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan face differing political circumstances, but they share many of the same difficulties. Evaluating their independence is a formidable task, since the media's role as shaped during the Soviet era (in the eyes of both the government and the populace) is different from that experienced in the West. While Westerners are looking for independent information as well as entertainment, the Soviet-era media was primarily an instrument of governmental advocacy. Although the media have found new independence, old expectations retain powerful sway over how they present the news. News presentation walks a fine line everywhere in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, since open questioning and editorializing can still result in threats to continued existence from both the government and commercial structures. For these reasons, emerging media often define themselves primarily as entertainment.

While political obstacles remain in all three republics, most conspicuously in Uzbekistan, the chief obstacle to media development is economic. The cost of paper, printing facilities and television equipment, all of which must be imported, is so prohibitive that even independent media find that their costs are at least indirectly subsidized by the government, with the attendant threat of censorship and control. The Soviet-era concept of media as organs of exhortation—then by the government, now by little-understood newer forces, including parties, clans and the widely distrusted business "Mafia"—will take time to overcome.

As its development proceeds along with changes in the way the people of Central Asia interact with each other, with commercial structures, and with the government, the media's role will change only gradually. Time and patience are required to develop the type of free press needed to build democracy in the region. Expectations must be realistic.

Short-term projects will help, but they can lead to complications that overshadow the desired effect, as similar efforts in Eastern Europe have shown. The emphasis when working with the media in these countries should be on the long-term objectives of creating a sound economic basis for independent information sources, changing the way media fulfill their role in society, and changing the way society interacts with media.

CONSTRAINTS

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the media's main constraint is a lack of financial resources. In the West, television, radio, and newspapers for the most part survive on advertising revenue. The economic base for advertising is not yet developed enough in Central Asia to support the costs of media. Moreover, the potential audience does not want to pay for independent news. As a result, independent media exist only because they cater to the entertainment requirements of their audience (for which people are willing to pay), while the subsidized government media remain the main source of news.

In Uzbekistan, the government explicitly hinders the appearance of indigenous independent media, justified by the need to promote stability in the country but aimed at preserving the present political and social leaders. Even if this political barrier were removed, the economic problems would still be formidable. In Uzbekistan, the cultural hindrances to widespread acceptance of independent media are more prevalent than in Kazakhstan, since the population is less urban and more socially traditional.

The journalistic profession in all three countries suffers from a number of problems. Media work used to be a prestigious and well-paid occupation. In part because of the excesses of the glasnost period, it has now lost much of its popularity, and with it the glamour. Because it is not financially rewarding, the best and brightest are leaving to pursue commercial ventures, and the most talented young people choose not to enter the field. The better journalism schools in the newly independent states (NIS) are now out of

reach—geographically as well as financially—of most locals. Moreover, the single university in each country with a journalism department is woefully unable to prepare the quantity and quality of journalists needed in a society where the latter are expected to find and analyze information instead of just reproduce it.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Non-governmental media have appeared in Kazakhstan to some degree, in Kyrgyzstan to a lesser degree, and in Uzbekistan almost not at all. For the most part, they are everywhere limited to the larger urban areas, although smaller cities often have promising independent media organizations, perhaps because it is easier to find allies and the politics are easier to navigate. Generally, Russians are proportionately over-represented in such organizations because they are for the most part correspondingly better educated.

Many of those working in independent media are not professional journalists; they come from other sectors of society, and their lack of involvement with the old system allows them more freedom to succeed under the new one. Younger people predominate among the new newspapers and TV stations, and their intended audience is as a rule the younger half of the population. Women represent about a fourth of the working journalists, but they face the same difficulties as they do in other fields. As Oleg Katsiev, News Director for KTK, one of Almaty's main independent TV stations, put it,

"The hardest thing is to find clever, energetic men. I have been looking all year and have only found two. I need four more. They must be men, because they must work all day, from nine to six. They must shoot four or five stories. Women cannot work all day, because of shopping and other family responsibilities."

The independent media's development is widely variable. Bishkek, Almaty, Shymkent and Aktiubinsk have relatively lively media scenes. Karaganda and Pavlodar are much quieter. Occasionally there is a strong non-governmental TV station, sometimes a newspaper. Without a doubt, Almaty is the Central Asia's independent media leader, with six non-governmental TV companies, nearly as many radio stations, and a dozen or so newspapers, central among them the most widely-read paper in Central Asia, *Karavan*. In Samarkand, Uzbekistan there is one known operating independent TV station and several provincial but barely independent newspapers.

Whether independent media have appeared in a given city is in part dependent on the attitude toward them of local commercial structures, the TV transmitting center, and other powers-that-be. But it is equally dependent on the appearance of a dynamic group of young people who can work together and who have one or two middle-aged patrons in the government or business who can help them get off the ground. Since Western organizations are unlikely to affect the local powers-that-be, assistance to independent media should focus on identifying such local groups which have already sprung up and begun to work in the media sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of steps which will aid emerging independent media in developing into a more mature "fourth estate". One such step is to help the national governments develop and implement legislation which will guarantee a relatively unconstrained press. But this should not be the only route, given the much more pressing needs of averting imminent economic collapse, ethnic discord and the resultant widespread social unrest. Unless reigning elites can be coopted or convinced that it is in their own short-term best interest to do so, they are not much interested in strengthening the free press.

Economic aid should be directed toward independent media. Direct financial assistance to the media from any quarter, domestic or foreign, will always result in influence over content and accusations of meddling in local affairs, but creative solutions can be found. The provision of paper, small printing presses, cheap video equipment, and, on as wide a scale as possible, computers, can be undertaken by

Western companies on a commercial basis (joint ventures, guaranteed credits to Western investors, etc.), as can the distribution of TV program rights; these can all be encouraged with credits or investment guarantees, if not outright subsidies.

Strong emphasis should be placed on offering business skills to emerging media, both governmental and independent, not only to impart management techniques but also to help instill the idea of media as a business rather than as a privileged sector with a right to exist in and of itself. A training program should be equally aimed at enhancing networking among journalists from different regions, as well as helping to impart different work techniques. It is important to train a critical mass of people from each organization; three people can have much more impact on a publication than one person. Including people from governmental media promotes inclusiveness in development work and reduces opposition from governmental bodies.

Other steps which could dramatically aid the development of independent media include assistance in the creation of alternative domestic wire services, organization of press clubs in the capitals, assistance in the creation of trade associations, and translation of Western information sources. These activities will be discussed further below.

Because the problems faced by media in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are similar, the recommendations for those two countries are the same; likewise, the reader of one country's section in this document has much to gain from reading the other country's section. Recommendations for action in Uzbekistan are separate.

SCOPE OF THE ANALYSIS

This paper is the result of an eight-week survey of media in Central Asia conducted for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) by Internews. Program Director Eric Johnson conducted over 150 interviews in December 1993 and January and February 1994 with a wide range of people including representatives of state-run and non-governmental media, agencies responsible for media oversight, businesspeople, and academics in Almaty, Karaganda, Temirtau, Pavlodar and Shymkent in Kazakhstan; Bishkek, Tokmok and Kara-Balta in Kyrgyzstan; and Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Urgench in Uzbekistan.

Robert Horvitz of the Soros Foundation and Colgate University Professor Martha Olcott each spent a week in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan advising on this project in their respective fields. Indiana University Professor William Fierman and Mr. Horvitz were also scheduled to take part in the Uzbekistan visit, but because of Uzbekistan governmental policy, Professor Fierman was detained at the Tashkent airport for two days and then turned away, and Mr. Horvitz was also denied a visa.

Detailed contact lists are available on request but are not intended for general circulation due to the danger it might impose on certain individuals in those countries, particularly Uzbekistan, where communication and cooperation with foreigners are perceived as a threat to the stability of the state. American Embassies in each country also have complete information about all the media in the capital city, including circulation figures. Interested parties are encouraged to contact Mr. Johnson if media projects in the region are contemplated, at e-mail <71064.2533@compuserve.com> or telephone +1 202 244-2015.

Throughout, the Library of Congress system of transliteration from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabets is used.

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SUMMARY

Kazakhstan is following a middle road between the relative free-for-all in the Russian media and the almost total absence of independent media in Uzbekistan. Some independent newspapers are being published but, with notable exceptions, most find that their existence is not commercially viable unless subsidized from other income sources. The single most important constraint on the development of a non-governmental press in Kazakhstan is the expense of importing paper. Non-governmental TV and radio stations have appeared by the dozen, particularly in Almaty but in many other cities as well. Their lot as pioneers is not easy, and the economic situation makes life even more difficult, but for the most part they are relatively free to carry on within limits.

Those limits are different in various cities, but for the most part independent media are not yet allowed to advocate political goals of their own or to pursue leading-edge investigative journalism. Those in independent media, however, do have significant latitude in gathering information and reaching an audience. If they overstep a boundary, they are likely to see administrative measures applied to their media outlet.

The new media organizations transmit accepted information but do it better than governmental media, and they provide entertainment as well. As in most of the NIS, however, the key tools of their trade (transmitters and printing presses) remain almost entirely in government hands, and unlike Russia, there is little or no legislation governing the conditions under which they should be provided to independent media.

Because of the liveliness of the independent media scene in Kazakhstan and the willingness, albeit limited, of the government to embark upon an opening of the society, there are very promising opportunities in those countries for work with independent media. Television is the most important media sector for the majority of the population and the most economically viable; until local sources of newsprint are found and private printing presses appear, the independent press is unlikely to develop as effectively as television.

KAZAKHSTAN IN GENERAL

Kazakhstan's nineteen administrative regions (oblasts) can generally be divided into two halves, the predominantly Russian north and the more-Kazakh south, which includes the capital, Almaty, with about 1.5 million people. Each oblast is further divided into raions, or counties. The country's population of eighteen million is about 43 percent Kazakh and 36 percent Russian, although the Russian segment is decreasing, partly due to emigration and partly because the birth rate among Russians is lower. There are also small percentages of Ukrainians, Germans, and Uighurs (less than five percent each). More so than in Uzbekistan, the dominant language is Russian, with a majority of Kazakhs more comfortable speaking Russian than Kazakh. As a result, almost all mass media conduct their business in Russian.

All questions about the republic are permeated by ethnic considerations. The Russians are watching keenly for evidence of government attempts to drive them from the republic or otherwise worsen their position, while the Kazakhs, who nurse a long list of genuine grievances against the Russians for the injustices and cruelties of the imperial and Soviet periods, watch equally carefully for any hint of Russian ascendancy or, even more so, any attempt to shift the present boundaries of the state. All media projects should be undertaken with careful consideration of these ethnic issues.

The introduction of a Kazakhstani currency, the tenge, in late 1993 caused serious problems in the ability of many media to continue operation. All paper is imported from Russia and therefore is now prohibitively expensive, and it is extremely difficult to purchase TV transmitters. If newspapers on the border with Siberia could previously have their papers printed in Russia to avoid problems with locally restrictive governments, they no longer can, since citizens of Russia have little use for the tenge. The persistence of an antiquated banking structure inhibits the use of revenue generation as a debt payment means and encourages reversion to barter as a medium of value exchange.

Finally, the glacial pace of privatization inhibits the appearance of an advertising base needed to support independent media. Corruption and lack of transparency in the privatization process encourage scandal-oriented journalism, against which the government feels obliged to defend itself.

THE MEDIA SITUATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

Electronic Media

In Almaty, the State TV & Radio Company produces a TV channel predominantly in Kazakh. The Ministry of Communications' Zharyk system beams the national channel to the entire country on a satellite transponder, where small terrestrial transmitters rebroadcast it. Also, in Almaty one can watch Bishkek TV or Turkish TV at different times of day. Almaty has at least three independent channels offering programming from six non-governmental TV companies, as well as four independent radio stations operating in the Soviet FM band and soon on the Western FM band as well.

Russian TV and Ostankino are still broadcast throughout the country. However, replacement programs, in particular "Almaty TV", the government's part-time second channel, or local governmental stations, reduce their air time in some areas. In January 1994 the government announced a cutback in Russian TV transmission in Kazakhstan, ostensibly because of a lack of funds, a move which would be extremely provocative toward the Russian population.

Each oblast center has a subdivision of the State TV company, which broadcasts one or two hours per day. In most cases an emerging non-governmental TV channel springs from the local State TV, often operating at first as a "commercial" subsection of the channel. Most major cities in the country now have some sort of non-governmental TV program but with widely varying degrees of professionalism and independence.

State TV produces several hours of programs per month in languages other than Kazakh and Russian, and in those areas where other nationalities are concentrated, both the independent and state-run media show a tendency to produce some programs in, for instance, German or Polish.

The most powerful independent TV companies in the country are KTK and TAN in Almaty, RIKa in Aktiubinsk, and Alfa in Shymkent. However, information about TV in the provinces is still sketchy and changes quickly. KTK is the central station in an emerging all-Kazakhstan alternative TV network with twelve station-members, an enterprise which has the potential for dramatically increasing the power of independent media if successful.

Supporting independent TV stations is the single most effective means, quickly and in a widespread way, to increase public access to information. Most stations subsist on broadcasts of bootlegged Western films and music videos, as well as amateurish local news, but they are extremely popular nonetheless. Encouraging the production of locally-oriented programs, particularly news, and supporting it with widespread trainings and in some cases equipment assistance, can have a dramatic effect on the character of the local scene and would promote decentralization. Money will in all cases be better spent if concentrated on existing organizations instead of trying to help create new ones, particularly as structures already exist in many places.

Radio stations have the potential to reach many people, particularly in rural areas. Traditionally every home and office was wired for cable radio (usually three channels), but this system is breaking down for several reasons: the Russian-language channels are being replaced by less-popular Kazakh-language programs and therefore subscribers cease paying their dues, and the equipment which operates the cable systems is also breaking with little prospect of being repaired or replaced since it was all made outside of Kazakhstan.

As of yet the only non-governmental radio stations in Kazakhstan, as far as is known, are in Almaty. Radio Max was the first non-governmental station in the country, and has been followed by other stations such as Radio Rik, 16-Bit Radio, and Radio Totem, most working on the low FM band but soon to switch to the high FM. The Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Liberty (RL) are also locally rebroadcast in the medium-wave band. Most of the local commercial stations focus on music, but Max also provides regular news broadcasts. All of these stations use government-owned transmitters, although when the Almaty city government removed Radio Max from the air in early 1994 over alleged violations of the election law, it reportedly continued to broadcast from a pirate transmitter.

The Press

Several national governmental newspapers serve the country, but all face economic difficulties and have had to cut back on circulation, size, or staff, and on occasion they simply fail to come out for several issues because of a lack of paper. The main government press includes *Kazakhstanskaiia pravda* and its Kazakh-language sister *Egemende Kazakhstana*, as well as Russian and Kazakh parliamentary newspapers. The largest-distribution daily newspaper in the country is Almaty's city paper, *Vechnyi Almaty*. Each oblast also has a newspaper in Russian and often in Kazakh as well; these vary in quality, with some a parody of the sycophantic Soviet-era press and others presenting an adequate snapshot of local life, if still limited in the opportunity to attack tough issues with other than a simplistic attitude usually supportive of the government. Also, each raion used to have a newspaper, but these have in many cases cut back severely to weekly two-page publications or ceased publication entirely due to the paper shortage or to breakdowns of antiquated printing equipment.

Several quasi-governmental publications retain some influence. Many regard *Ekspress-K*, the former youth paper, to be eminently readable. *Azitia*, the only newspaper with an explicitly pan-Central Asian focus and a stance generally supporting all the post-Soviet governments in the area, cannot be said to be widely popular. However, it is the only newspaper to be found all over Central Asia. Although ostensibly

financed by a coalition of Central Asian governments, most of its money comes from Almaty, and its financing is in jeopardy.

Most of the Moscow press, on which people used to depend for the bulk of their information, has ceased distribution in Kazakhstan due to balance-of-payments problems with Russia. These difficulties may be partially solved in the near future, but the resulting higher cost to the subscriber will render the publications too expensive for most readers. The only papers that are widely available are *Izvestiia*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, and *Argumenty i fakty*, which are published in local editions. The demise of the central press creates a vacuum which the national and local press struggle to fill. In particular, the most crucial information in a newspaper for most everyone is a television schedule, and, judging by anecdotal evidence, the majority of newspapers sold in all of Central Asia are purchased primarily for this reason. Newspapers from further abroad—from the West—are generally not available except by special (and very expensive) courier subscription. This may change as the number of foreigners in the area continues to increase.

One very powerful non-governmental organization dominates the private newspaper scene in Kazakhstan with its paper of the same name. *Karavan* is a 64-page weekly with a print run of 300,000, far larger than any other paper in the country. It is an expensive newspaper but a tremendously popular one, and it has grown progressively bolder. It focuses on entertainment and advertising, with journalism limited to superficial reports of mainly scandalous news. Because of an aggressive advertising policy and astute distribution tactics, *Karavan* makes a profit and therefore has the resources to print part of its run in Bishkek, as a signal to the Kazakhstan government of the unacceptability of political pressure from the printing press in Almaty. Many mistrust *Karavan*'s flamboyant owner, Boris Giller, but this is a result both of his newspaper's success and of the blatantly commercial and in many cases muckraking style of *Karavan*.

Other independent press in Almaty includes *Panorama*, *ABV*, and *Birlesu*. *ABV*, another *Karavan* publication, is aimed at business readers; *Panorama* is run by a consortium of powerful private business interests (trading houses and banks) with good connections in the government. The latter two are the best sources for news in the usual Western sense, although their analysis is still weak. *Birlesu* was founded as the organ of the Independent Trade Union Center, but has severed most connections with the latter; it is now truly independent, which means it has no financial backing and has ceased publication for all intents and purposes. Several newspapers serve as organs of political parties, such as *Stolitsa*, *Narodnyi kongress*, *Respublica*, *Vremia*, and *Azat*. All of these independent papers, however, have a circulation of 20,000 or less, and while important both as symbols of freedom and as sources of information for a small number of people, their impact is extremely limited.

Outside of Almaty the alternative press is much less lively and is hampered by a lack of financial resources and imagination. It is limited to small four-page weeklies which consist almost exclusively of the equivalent of classified advertisements and some entertainment, since people will buy this product.

Where an independent press or electronic media organization exists (Shymkent, Pavlodar), it is heavily dependent on small, dedicated groups of young people who acquire backing from commercial companies or the city. Though this backing may or may not continue, there is no doubt that such "sponsors" affect editorial policy, as the director of a small TV enterprise in Karaganda notes:

"To ensure the city administration stays on my side, I shoot pieces on the fire service, on the mayor's speech, etc.; I provide up to a half-hour news coverage per day in exchange for an office."

An interesting twist to the independent press's cost of printing is added by the following note from the publisher of one of Almaty's more popular papers. Similar incidents have been reported in many cities.

"We only have enough paper to officially print 14,000 copies of our weekly. But the printing press people have their own supply of paper, and we've determined they are printing an additional five to six thousand copies and then selling them on the side to make money. We understand that allowing them to do that is part of the price we pay to ensure they stay interested in printing us."

Over the last five years, at least five independent "news agencies" have appeared and then disappeared in Kazakhstan. Apparently, the only one currently operating is KazTAG, the official government wire service which split off from Moscow's TASS after independence. Most independent media report that they do not subscribe to KazTAG because its information is biased, untimely, and often does not include the facts that would interest the population at large.

REGULATION

As of January 1994, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Press and Information had registered over 1200 "means of mass information", over half of them non-governmental. This figure has almost doubled from 613 in 1989, and almost all of the increase came from the registration of independent media. Turning on the TV set or stopping by a newsstand on the street in Almaty provides a convincing picture that independent media are beginning to gain a foothold.

However, the new media's success is for the most part limited to Almaty; the high registration figure includes hundreds of media organs which do not actually function, usually for financial reasons. Even in Almaty their position is precarious, as recent actions during the pre-election campaign in early 1994 show: the mayor of Almaty refused to allow *Karavan* to be printed locally and exerted influence on the Bishkek government to likewise refuse typographical services, and he removed a radio (and its sister TV) station from the air temporarily.

Kazakhstan's 1991 Law on Media is considered a good one but does not provide specific instructions on distribution of broadcast frequencies. As a result, issuance of frequency licenses is haphazard and depends on personal contacts and even bribes. Independent TV organizations provided input for a new Law on Television, which may pass by late summer; a Law on Printing Activities will regulate the appearance of new presses. A Law on Communications, which should cover frequency distribution, is also under development, but its details are held tightly by the Ministry of Communications, a bastion of the control mentality, and in particular its State Electrocommunications Inspectorate, responsible for control over frequency use.

The media law does not provide any legal basis for censorship, and in fact specifically forbids it. Unlike Uzbekistan, there is no standing mechanism for enforcement of unspoken gag rules. The government still makes clumsy efforts to forcibly influence news coverage, such as the letter in late 1993 that unsuccessfully forbade editors of newspapers from criticizing the new national currency. However, the general feeling among independent media is that the law is not the final arbiter; the use of other subtle and not-so-subtle techniques by various governmental organs is more widespread and must be reckoned with. The clear implication is that spending time working on legislation is not necessarily the most productive method of improving the climate for the independent media.

With notable exceptions, the government does not usually use "means of mass information" registration as a tool to prevent publishing or broadcasting. More commonly, access to presses or TV transmitting centers become financial barriers to an economically strapped independent media, and other governmental economic levers such as the availability of printing capability and the cost of newsprint distribution play a part as well.

EDUCATION

Until recently, the only journalism school in the country was a department of Kazakhstan State University in Almaty. It is woefully under-equipped, and because teaching is neither prestigious nor well-paid, the caliber of its professors is not considered high. In all, the department accepts some 600 students per year, half in the Russian-language division and half in the Kazakh-language department. A little over half the students are women. Because of old-style classifications, students are pigeon-holed into such divisions as "international" or "historical" journalism. In general the journalism school in Almaty, as elsewhere else in Central Asia, needs a serious overhaul or some healthy competition.

In 1993, Karaganda State University initiated a journalism department. Working with it on a new curriculum would present a promising opportunity to help a new generation of journalists emerge in Kazakhstan.

DEGREES OF FREEDOM

Although the republic's major newspapers have enjoyed a certain latitude in the stories they choose to follow and the manner in which they present them, all the republic's media are subject to constitutional provisions forbidding "insults to the Presidency" (the injunction's meaning is ill-defined), as well as other sanctions about "threats to inter-ethnic harmony". There are also broad and inhibiting libel laws, which temper the enthusiasm with which media publish critical information about public figures.

The size of the Kazakhstan government makes it difficult to pinpoint the source of pressure on independent journalism. A good deal of it seems to emanate from Vice Premier K. Sultanov or his office. A more widely shared sentiment, articulated by Press Minister Sarsenbaev, is the belief that the republic's media still have the same "duties of enlightenment" (if with some difference in content) as media bore in the Soviet period. A number of officials spoke of the media's responsibility to teach patriotism and to build loyalty to the Kazakhstan state; this is a conviction which seems to be shared by President Nazarbaev.

The state's predisposition to equate lack of enthusiasm with criticism means that independent media in Kazakhstan will have to develop alongside a very strong state media machine. The state is likely to attempt to crush independent media, politely where possible, if the media attempt to take up issues such as government corruption or the legitimacy of the concept of a Kazakhstani state.

The state will tolerate independent media that are supportive of the state's goals and those which represent the commercial interests whose economic or political power make them impolitic to attack. A recent instance was the pre-election battle in Almaty, where the radio and TV stations of Max were shut down unceremoniously after they criticized the handling by Almaty's mayor of, among other things, the parliamentary pre-election campaign in the spring of 1994. *Karavan* also criticized the mayor but was careful to align itself with powerful organizations like KRAMDS, the national government holding company. The mayor's iron control over Almaty's printing presses is a major obstacle to a free press in the country, the more so because the silence of the Nazarbaev government in the well-publicized dispute between the media and the mayor may be construed as tacit support for the former.

Both the law and a healthy self-censorship circumscribe the access of political organizations to the popular press. During the elections, the Kazakhstani government quite strictly limited campaigning in the press to 100 lines per candidate per publication, with similar guidelines on radio and TV; as a result, candidates could not actively use media during the pre-election campaign. And most independent media decided that covering the campaign too closely would only make life more difficult. Nonetheless, it was obvious from the accounts of both the independent and government press that they disliked the rules governing the coverage of the election as well as the conduct of the election itself.

Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the lack of campaign coverage was a simple lack of local media: newspapers—independent or governmental—are not widely distributed. If every newspaper printed in the country went to a different family, only about 25 percent of the population would receive a paper one or more days per week. Moreover, the most popular TV stations remain the two Moscow channels, use of which is impractical for a local election over a territory covering only 400,000 people.

The present turbulent period for the independent media does not leave much time for professional associations. Although the official Union of Journalists remains, its membership has declined dramatically and those working in the non-state media increasingly do not pay it any heed. It will probably die a quiet death of inattention, and Western media assistance programs should work to fill the vacuum it leaves by creating new associations to take its place which should have clearly defined missions and constituencies with professional organizers at their helm.

SUMMARY

Foreign observers often cite the press in Kyrgyzstan as a shining example of Central Asian democracy, but the constraints on independent media in Kyrgyzstan are every bit as strong in Kazakhstan. The main printing press in the country, in Bishkek, remains in government hands; TV transmitters and frequencies are also entirely governmental. The economic situation is even worse, with paper prohibitively expensive and other printing materials also in short supply. The poverty of the country exacerbates the situation; Kyrgyzstan has little with which to barter in exchange for the resources needed to provide the commercial underpinnings of independent media.

The independence of the press is in large part a legacy of successful local opposition to Kyrgyzstan Communist Party chief Masaliev's presidential bid, as a result of which present President Akaev was elected. Criticism of the Party and the USSR was allowed and even encouraged during that period. The glasnost-style reformism engendered by the campaign manifested itself in, among other things, an early proliferation of "free" newspapers, meaning newspapers which attacked Moscow's local appointees.

The independent press continues in this mold, subsisting for the most part on criticism, which has replaced reporting as a benchmark for independence both domestically and in foreigners' views of the local situation. Examples of breaking free from the traditional advocacy role of Soviet journalism are few and far between. As a result of the need for patronage to avoid destruction by the subjects of the criticism, most newspapers have become identified with a political camp and usually even with the support of one or another powerful figure.

The situation outside Bishkek is more difficult to gauge, in large part because of the greater difficulties of gaining information. Anecdotal and intuitive evidence suggests that the locally-oriented smaller press organizations are even more dependent on administrative benevolence than are the central newspapers.

KYRGYZSTAN IN GENERAL

Geography presents great challenges to this small mountainous republic of four million people. Mountains split it into northern and southern halves, and though differences between them are historically based, severe transportation difficulties exacerbate the differences and prevent the development of a common information space. This regionalizes the republic's newspapers, making it almost impossible for press to circulate republic-wide. Mountainous terrain effectively does the same for television and radio.

Generally speaking, the north, centered on Bishkek and the resort zone around Issyk-kul, is the more Europeanized part of the country, oriented toward Kazakhstan and Russia, while the south is more Asian, hewing much closer to the religious and cultural practices of Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan. Northerners and southerners are traditionally suspicious of one another. The emerging economic realities of independence as well as the tendency of local politics to continue in the age-old and very strong tradition of a clan-based system of rule have increased this feeling.

Ethnic tensions play a role between the native Kyrgyz and the Russians (who represent 30 percent of the population), although not as strong as in neighboring Kazakhstan. Both cultures are drawing apart from one another as the Kyrgyz revive their language while the Russians cling to theirs in an attempt to avoid absorption into the local culture which they regard as backward. As a result some Russians, especially the more technically proficient, are emigrating to Russia, and this tide may increase if dual citizenship is not introduced and the Russian economy improves while the Kyrgyzstan one does not. Though many Kyrgyz city-dwellers are more proficient in Russian than in Kyrgyz, Kyrgyz intellectuals are generally more comfortable in their native language than Kazakh intellectuals are in theirs.

The replacement in May 1993 of the ruble with Kyrgyzstan's own currency, the som, resulted in massive economic displacement, and it remains a major stumbling block in the mass media's development as well. None of the materials needed for the mass media are produced locally. As TV transmitters in the more remote areas break down, there are no parts to repair them. While Kyrgyzstan has some gold deposits, there is little else they own that can be banked to receive desperately-needed hard currency, except their reputation for democracy. The result is that Kyrgyzstan has virtually no chance of economic stability without foreign support. (U.S. Ambassador Hurwitz indicated that the Kyrgyzstan government is aware that its commitment to human rights and freedom of the press earn it approval from foreign governments with generous aid programs; this awareness provides leverage on the part of funders.)

THE MEDIA SITUATION IN KYRGYZSTAN

Electronic Media

Kyrgyzstan does not have the financial or human resources to support much television. The part-time Kyrgyz-language national channel has little of interest to viewers, with a few exceptions such as the Monday youth programs. Almaty TV transmits in Bishkek as well. There are regional TV stations in several of the oblast centers, but again the financial and human resources are insufficient to produce much beyond local news in the conventional Soviet style.

Both Moscow channels are broadcast in the urban areas of the country, but the cost of maintaining the transmitter network makes it unlikely that all areas will continue to receive all three channels. In March 1994, Bishkek sharply cut Ostankino transmissions, with none coming after 10 pm; on the other hand, Bishkek's fourth channel now carries full-time Turkish TV broadcasts. Audience receptivity to Moscow television is also changing, as Moscow's own "slam" evolves. Many have complained of the persistence with which Ostankino presents "more bad news in Central Asia" stories. A worthwhile project for a U.S.-funded agency would be the systematic monitoring of the occurrence of these anti-Central Asian stories,

to substantiate or disprove the accusations on the part of many Central Asians that Russian television coverage of their region is disproportionately negative and inflammatory.

Several local independent TV stations have begun to operate. Piramida in Bishkek is the most prominent, but its owners have chosen to broadcast only entertainment and advertising; they consider television news unprofitable. Other TV ventures seem to have followed the same path of focusing on entertainment, though reports indicate Osh has a more interesting independent station. In general, the economic situation is so poor that the need for advertising is minimal, and the disposable incomes of people who could pay for classified ads and dedications are not large enough to support much independent TV.

Bishkek has two independent radio stations which share one FM frequency. Both are run by interesting groups of young people who love their jobs as DJs, and both are widely listened to. Neither have the will or the resources to establish a news-gathering operation large enough to attract listeners on its own; they focus on music. Radio Almaz does make more of an attempt to provide local news, translating some of the Kyrgyz-language press over the air and making weekly five-minute high-power shortwave English-language Kyrgyzstan news broadcasts, while Radio Piramida claims to retransmit some BBC news. Radio Piramida reaches a wider area in northern Kyrgyzstan by virtue of broadcasting on medium-wave as well as the shared FM channel.

In the 1970s, the phenomenon of pirate radio (known in the Soviet Union as radio hooligans) was fairly widespread throughout the USSR, and an engineer in the Ministry of Communications in Bishkek sheepishly admitted he had been caught and had his apparatus confiscated. Apparently radio pirates have sprung up now as well, but since the Ministry lacks the resources to track them, it is unknown how widespread they may be. They broadcast at night for the most part. There are also reports of pirate TV, particularly further out in the rural areas where a community might be serviced by a very weak transmitter broadcasting on an unregistered frequency. Again, in the cities no one seems to have any details about these operations and no one cares.

The Press

As in Kazakhstan, there are two major government-run national newspapers, the government's *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* and parliament's *Svobodnye gory*, and their Kyrgyz-language sister publications *Kyrgyz tynsu* and *Erkin too*. *Svobodnye gory* generally receives high marks among critics of the press for professionalism and a variety of news coverage, covering parliamentary events as well as responding to its audience's desires. However, it is on the verge of closure for financial reasons. The largest-circulation paper in the republic, and one of only two which pays for itself in the entire country, is the city paper *Vechnyi Bishkek*, profitable because of a substantial number of classified ads. The other is not a newspaper but rather a TV schedule of the only independent (and popular) local TV program, *Info Piramida*.

Also, as in Kazakhstan, the introduction of a new currency has made the distribution of Moscow-based newspapers all but impossible, and they have practically disappeared in Kyrgyzstan. As balance-of-payment problems are solved, the same four newspapers that have remained in the Kazakhstan market have reappeared in Kyrgyzstan, also in some cases with local editions. We know of no distribution of non-NIS newspapers or wire services in Kyrgyzstan, and there is little prospect of their appearance.

The only known independent papers in the country are in the capital. *Res Publica* is an acerbic weekly with little news and a great deal of critical commentary on the government, and has developed a devoted readership. *Asaba* is the former youth newspaper, better positioned than others in terms of popularity because of its upbeat style. *Kyrgyz rubkhu* is the only independent Kyrgyz-language newspaper, but its strength is also its weakness, as advertisers almost without exception have no interest in reaching only readers of Kyrgyz; like *Erkin too*, however, it will occasionally publish politically controversial articles in Russian. *Izbitny kur'er*, perhaps the most informative of the independents, is a project of the local

Russian businessman Boris Vorob'ev, and *Biznismen K* is another paper oriented toward the new business class. *Delo nomer*, another commercial newspaper, focuses on human rights and human-interest articles.

Distribution of all of the independent press is almost completely limited to the capital. Oblasts more remote from the capital seem to continue practices much like those of the Soviet past, making the more far-flung newspapers essentially propaganda organs. Most of them pursue an editorial policy of extravagant praise for the akim (local leader) and his appointees, punctuated by attacks on their critics and enemies.

Most of the prominent journalists in the republic, and especially those in the non-governmental press, are untrained amateurs who have come to journalism from a wide variety of other backgrounds. The enthusiasm and freshness of some of these amateurs are potent agents for change in the republic's media, but their lack of formal training increases the risk they will make questionable decisions and behave in an extreme or destabilizing fashion.

The journalists associated with the government newspapers have formal training, but they too have had to adapt to the demands of independence. The most persistent legacy of that training is, in a way, the opposite of the amateurs' tendency to equate muckraking with journalistic integrity: the government journalists are inclined to see their task as following instructions, rather than as an activity in which they have intellectual discretion. In times of political stress, such as the run-up to the January 1994 referendum, this pro-government tilt becomes more strident, reminiscent of Soviet antecedents.

Several important limiting factors for smaller papers include the shortage of competent journalists and the smallness of the market. Even the central papers cannot find enough writers, which puts the local papers at an even greater disadvantage. And half of the country's population is within easy reach of the capital, so it is hard for smaller papers to distinguish their areas of coverage from those of the central press. Finally, technology is not widely available; there are few computers in Kyrgyzstan and the only offset presses in the country are in Bishkek and Osh, so production of a newspaper remains physically a daunting task, not to speak of the prohibitive expense of paper.

In 1993 parliament and the presidential apparatus provided some direct subsidies to the independent media, apparently in a sincere effort to ensure its survival and most certainly with the understanding that its survival was key to demonstrating a commitment to democracy. But in the face of budget crises, the likelihood of such support in amounts large enough to make a difference is dwindling.

REGULATION

There is surprisingly little regulation of media in Kyrgyzstan; there is no Ministry of the Press or its equivalent. A division of the Ministry of Justice registers "means of mass information", but there are no recorded cases of registration being refused. Kyrgyzstan's 1992 Law on Media, one of the most permissive in the former Soviet Union and the only one in Central Asia that is not a copy of the Soviet law of the same name, provides the framework for the media's work. Like the Constitution, it provides an extensive itemization of individual rights, including the right of free expression. The government's stated liberal policy with respect to a free press seems to have been more effective than in neighboring countries in restraining over-zealous bureaucrats from using technicalities to silence critics in the media.

The Ministry of Communications retains control over the frequencies of the country insofar as no one else controls them, but their monitoring of frequency use is limited. There is no institutionalized method of issuing a frequency license, nor do there appear to be procedures governing transmitter ownership. The Ministry is aware of the need for a frequency regulation framework and is considering an offer from Japan to aid it in the creation of a national spectrum management program.

EDUCATION

Kyrgyzstan's only journalism school is in Bishkek. As in neighboring Almaty, it is generally considered by locals to be of low and declining quality. Moreover, the opportunity for infusion of fresh blood via graduates of Moscow or other respected NIS university journalism departments has been dramatically reduced with the drive for total independence. To some extent the opinion exists that local graduates were for the most part destined for the local press in smaller cities and towns, where journalistic talent was not the prime qualification for the job; this intent remains a severe limitation in the ability of the university to turn out journalists in a new mold.

DEGREES OF FREEDOM

More so than in Kazakhstan, much of the state of Kyrgyzstan's media can be explained by the exigencies of financing. In the past, media existed entirely on government subsidy, and in return did the government's bidding. During glasnost and the early stages of independence, that support continued by inertia, but is now being withdrawn. Uneven support continues, though, as funds are allocated to newspapers which strongly supported Akaev during the recent referendum. But because of the paucity of resources in the republic, the temptation is strong to turn to the government for sustenance, even though media view their job as criticizing the government.

The combination of sharply rising costs, decreasing or disappearing government subsidies, and an audience unwilling or incapable of paying market prices for their newspapers has left media in difficult straits. One obvious source of new income is the advertising appearing in both the governmental and private press. However, some newspapers refuse to run ads on moral grounds, arguing that responsibilities to advertisers and to journalistic independence are incompatible. Even those newspapers which favor ads are generally not able to charge enough for their space to cover the actual costs of production.

Thus sponsorship has become the only real alternative for the republic's newspapers. Not only is this sort of dependence on hidden sponsors bad journalism, but it also polarizes political conflict, driving positions toward extremes. The effect upon the readership is particularly destructive, for the reliance upon sensationalism has a corrosive effect on public confidence.

The danger of this legacy is not only that an editorial war might provoke a civil conflict, as readers of different truths square off against each other, but also that the newspapers would exacerbate this tendency by pandering to the interests and prejudices of the groups which they are helping to define. The tradition of serving a master was very strong in Soviet journalism and remains dominant, so it would be all too easy for newspapers to replace their standard subject of the past, the Party boss, with a self-defined "the people" of the present.

In Kyrgyzstan's politics, as in any situation where misconduct is the rule rather than an exception, the question which inevitably arises in attack journalism is: who stands to benefit if the attacks are successful? If press criticism manages to pull down a particular figure, who or what forces will fill the vacancy? In the absence of a developed political culture with well-defined distinctions between public and private behavior, there is little chance that a change of personnel will lead to a change in methods.

As elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, a fundamental question lies in whether the populace is willing or able to pay for the media. In the Soviet system, television and radio were free (indeed, at one time Soviet citizens had trouble escaping the ubiquitous radio), and newspapers were essentially free. Audience expectations of content have changed, but the amounts that they are willing to pay have not. Most consumers expect media to remain of insignificant cost, particularly since the vast majority see their lives as increasingly impoverished since independence. But the increase in expense makes this unrealistic, and the advertising base does not yet exist for ads to cover 90 percent of publication costs as in the West. As a result, media must either be subsidized or sponsored.

Even more so than in Kazakhstan, the reach of the newspapers should not be overestimated. No reliable audience statistics are available, but circulation figures would lead us to believe that, even accounting for some subscription sharing which does take place, an average of about 25 percent of the country's population read a newspaper once a week, and the figure is probably lower.

It is difficult to gauge the effect that media have upon the populace. There is no question, however, that the government believes the media affect public opinion. This was suggested in autumn 1993, when the administration unsuccessfully tried to introduce censorship in the face of concentrated opposition from the independent media, which resulted in dismissal of several government officials. It was even more vividly demonstrated in the run-up to Akaev's referendum in January 1994, when the opposition press was simply shut down, because the republic's sole (government-owned) printing plant insisted upon three-month pre-payment and also noted that a particularly severe shortage of paper and printing plates meant only the government press could come out with any regularity unless the independent papers were able to provide their own supplies. As a result, coverage of the run-up to the referendum and much of the subsequent analysis had a familiar Soviet-style baldness, complete with "spontaneous" telegrams of support from sheep-herders and tractor-drivers.

Opposition journalists have also written of increasing attempts at subtle and not so subtle intimidation coming from people on the presidential staff; editors have been told that "we will deal with you people", while others, including Sydykova of *Res Publica*, were called to the procurator's office and asked for assistance in following up scandals aired in their papers.

Problems and Recommendations for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of problems that media face in the Central Asian republics suggests projects that would encourage and reinforce media independence in the region.

1. **PROBLEM:** Lack of paper. Paper imported from Russia is prohibitively expensive, because the Russians charge a lot, Russian and Kazakhstani customs duties are high, it is difficult to convert the tenge or som to the ruble, and transportation is expensive, especially to Kyrgyzstan. Efforts are reportedly underway to construct paper production plants in Central Asia that will utilize rice, wheat, and cotton stalks or hulls, based on Chinese technology or that being developed in the Tashkent Institute of Chemical Technologies, but it will be several years before these plans are finished and, in any case, they will still be government-owned.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Increasing the supply of newsprint to Central Asia could be approached in a variety of ways. Certainly efforts to increase local production capacities should be encouraged and possibly financed. Central Asia's independent newspapers are for the most part financially unable to import directly from Russia, since the quantities are too small and the distances too great.

Worth considering is U.S. underwriting of a pooled purchasing consortium. A campaign of support among U.S. newspapers could help here, assisting in purchase of newsprint as part of their duty to support independent journalism. A parallel effort that would offer long-term support would be to establish a joint U.S.-Kazakhstan-Russia joint venture (JV) to purchase and upgrade an existing newsprint plant in Russia close to the Kazakhstani border. The mandate of such a plant would be to provide a non-governmental source of paper with guaranteed access to a wide spectrum of users. Under current Russian JV laws, if the joint venture were part Kazakhstan-owned, the paper would be exempt from Russian export quotas.

Recycling should also be studied as a path to increasing independence from pulp imports. One proposal is to organize collection of waste paper and its delivery to government cardboard plants in exchange for the purchase—by those plants, which are part of the government paper products procurement system—of an equivalent value of paper abroad. Such a system would also have positive environmental effects.

Another measure is to advocate reduction of Kazakhstani import tariffs on paper, and continue efforts to cut back on the prevalent practice of customs officials requiring private bribes to allow goods to cross the border.

2. **PROBLEM:** Lack of reliable domestic information, especially from outside the capitals. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are in desperate need of distribution of information about them abroad and domestically as well. If such a service were national in scope, it could help reduce the dramatic overemphasis on activities in the capital.

RECOMMENDATION: Support the creation of an independent wire service in each country. Journalists should be linked electronically to each other; such links will also facilitate direct communication with the outside world, bypassing the traditional information flow through Moscow. Previous such efforts have failed on financial grounds, so the wire services must be subsidized for a year or more.

Exchanges with business departments of similarly functioning news services abroad will help provide the commercial experience to reach out to clients. Government money, perhaps from several countries' embassies, could help the creation of the service by guaranteeing to purchase information for an initial period at a reasonable rate and looking at the cost not only as a subscription but also as an investment in the local information infrastructure.

3. PROBLEM: Lack of equal access to government sources of information. Presently, all questions to the government must go through the press liaison of a ministry or other official, who rarely provides substantive answers to independent media. Many correspondents of independent media complained they were often not invited to official news events at which representatives of government media were present. State media are sometimes provided special access to court proceedings from which independent media are banned.

RECOMMENDATION: Advocate the adoption of legislation guaranteeing all media, public and private, equal access rights to court proceedings, establishing the general right of public access to government-held information, and defining procedures for seeking and quickly receiving the information. Involve the public and news media in the drafting of such a law.

4. PROBLEM: Governmental units at all levels continue to suppress the publication of information that is critical of them.

RECOMMENDATION: Advocate legislation limiting and precisely defining any government agency's right to ban the publication or broadcast of controversial material. A joint committee of government and media representatives, as well as independent legal experts, including some nominated by international organizations with experience in this field, such as UNESCO, could be established for this purpose.

5. PROBLEM: Lack of access to printing presses. Government printing presses are both expensive and unreliable, and private presses are very few. Government presses have refused to print independent papers, citing lack of materials or capacity; these are largely excuses to prevent publication of undesirable information. In all cases, government newspaper printing presses were constructed for large print runs of over 50,000, which are not economically viable for smaller papers.

RECOMMENDATION: In general, if the goal of international assistance is to permit a number of competing news sources to grow and prosper, then the conditions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are such that low-cost, low-tech solutions are probably going to be more effective. With this strategy it would be better, for example, to provide a dozen low-cost desktop publishing stations, with low-end printing capacity, than it would be to fund a state-of-the-art but unique—and easily monopolized—printing press.

Fund or provide credits for the installation of a medium-sized printing press on the outskirts of Almaty and/or Bishkek, a commercial joint venture between an American commercial printing firm and a powerful Kazakhstani organization such as a privatized *Soiuzpechat* (the state-run distribution system), Karavan, or a local businessman; ensure that the local independent press has a say in its construction and management on a payment-in-kind basis, whereby they are tapped for necessary locally-available resources and in exchange receive part ownership and the right to use the facilities for a minimum payment.

Provide similar assistance for creation of smaller printing facilities in oblast centers around the country. Creative solutions, such as promising to print local (raion) government newspapers in exchange for buildings and municipal services, can ensure that local governments are not made to seem like targets of foreign opposition. Again, it is important to provide a commercial footing to the

enterprise; a grant to an American printing firm to cover costs of market entry, and then subsidies that could be phased out over a five-year period would be useful.

6. **PROBLEM:** Unfair tax treatment of state-run vs. independent media. State-run media accept advertisements but do not pay value-added tax (VAT) on the money earned; the requirement that independent media pay 20 percent taxes on such revenue puts them at a significant financial disadvantage, particularly since the services for which they must pay (rent, electricity, etc.) are often priced higher for non-state organizations. In a similar vein, state media are exempt from paying corporate income tax, another 30 percent.

RECOMMENDATION: Work with tax specialists in the Kazakhstani government to ensure understanding that the "market" can work only when true costs are realized; that is, government competitors to private industry pay at least VAT taxes, even if those taxes come from a different budget; only then will the cost of supporting state-run mass media become clear. Alternatively, the government could provide tax relief for commercial media up to the sum received tax-free by the state media, or limit the right of state-subsidized media to accept advertising free from value-added taxes.

7. **PROBLEMS:** Lack of access to TV and radio frequencies. No laws exist in Central Asia that govern the process by which frequencies are allocated to broadcasters and assure that independent broadcasters are provided a chance to acquire them. One official in Kazakhstan's State Inspectorate for Electrocommunications told us that licenses should only be given to non-state broadcasters when there is an "urgent state need" for that station to exist, and only then if the applicant is able to pay the highest fees. As part of the reform process, government officials must learn to distinguish what benefits the public from what benefits the state.

Also, the transmitter power output allowed for private broadcasters is severely limited, so stations' coverage as well as the reception quality of their signals is reduced. That in turn limits their potential income and influence. Stations are prohibited from putting their transmitters on rooftops in populated areas, which in practice forces them to rent space on the state's existing transmission towers. The official justification for these limits is to protect people from the adverse health impact of excessive exposure to radiated electromagnetic energy, but the existing standards are even more stringent than those recommended by the health-conscious Swedes.

RECOMMENDATION: Establish working contacts between Western managers of the radio-frequency (RF) spectrum, for instance the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the Ministry of Telecommunications to aid in the creation of intelligent legislation and rules on frequency management. Working with regulators in Western European countries who are in the process of making available airwaves to commercial companies for the first time might also be appropriate. Find Russian-language editions or translate into Russian documents such as foreign legislation on broadcasting, including the European Broadcasting Union's model law for reform of state broadcasting, the Czechoslovak broadcasting law, considered to be a model of simplicity and effectiveness, and perhaps the rules of the U.S. FCC, volumes 70-79 of the U.S. Administrative Code. Translations can be quickly and cheaply executed using local labor. Such translations would be equally useful to all the NIS governments creating a media regulatory system.

Introduce the engineers responsible for spectrum management to liberal management philosophies and techniques by sponsoring their participation in professional courses at the U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute. Provide government officials and broadcast license applicants with a Russian-language synopsis of the U.S. FCC's rules concerning human exposure to electromagnetic radiation, as well as a Russian translation of Donald Goellner and Terry Inge's 74-page worldwide "Review of Existing EMF Guidelines, Standards and Regulations" (U.S. National Technical Information Service, August 1993).

Establish contacts between legislators on media committees and Western regulators and legislators in parallel structures. This should be done as soon as possible after the new committees are formed in the Kazakhstani parliament. Foreign governments should be aware that foreign broadcasts can deny precious available frequencies and transmitters to indigenous independent broadcasters; for example, Radio Piramida would like to expand its program into the evening when ad revenue would be substantially greater, but it cannot do so because Radio Liberty rents the evening hours.

8. **PROBLEM:** Corruption among those who control airwaves and office space. It is more the rule than the exception that Ministry of Communications workers actually in control of transmitters find myriad ways to prevent access to transmitters unless requisite bribes or even ownership stakes in independent media bodies are forthcoming.

RECOMMENDATION: Advocate legislation that clearly states the conditions (including time limits) under which requests for access to means of communication may be denied to private media organizations or may be offered on terms different than those provided to state-run media.

Advocate enactment of short, concise legislation making it illegal for anyone in a position of government authority to solicit or accept ownership in any of the organizations regulated by the agency in which they work. Similar rules in Russia are not foolproof but go a long way to shore up public confidence in government workers in positions of authority. This principle can help reduce more blatant "regulation by competitors" as well; Kyrgyzstan's rule that an independent broadcaster must acquire approval from State TV is blatantly unfair and should be changed.

9. **PROBLEM:** Lack of means to distribute newspapers. The cost of distribution through the state-run delivery network is so high that when it is added to the newspaper's street price, few can afford subscriptions. This expense, as a proportion of a newspaper's final cost, meets or exceeds the cost of paper.

RECOMMENDATION: Assist a group of newspapers in the creation of an alternative distribution system, possibly using the facilities of the present state-run system *Soiuzpechat*. Better yet, search for imaginative solutions such as sales in stores. Hold a seminar on alternative distribution schemes, widely used in the U.S. but almost unheard-of in the NIS. Assist the state-run distribution system in its privatization efforts. Many of the city-based distribution units in Kazakhstan have already been privatized.

10. **PROBLEM:** Lack of skills. Journalists tend to remain in the grips of Soviet perceptions about what media should be and what people want. Training about how to convey information in more attractive formats, how to purge straight news of editorial commentary, and how to satisfy the market's needs can provide much-needed encouragement.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a mentor program. Arrange for itinerant Western mentor journalists to travel in small groups to the various regions of the republics, supplying advice, training, and encouragement to local journalists. Such a program might recruit American journalists, newspaper business people, or journalism faculty to tour specific areas in the summers or for short periods of a couple of weeks. These groups could be paired with American students of Russian, who could serve as translators while gaining valuable experience and furthering citizen diplomacy.

Fund training projects in the NIS which would instruct a wide variety of journalists working in both governmental and non-governmental media. Aim for quantity as well as quality.

11. **PROBLEM:** Poor journalistic education. The journalism schools at the universities in Almaty and Bishkek are desperately short of funds for faculty, textbooks and equipment. Before they are provided any aid, they should agree to a reorganization plan for providing short, concise and practical journalism

courses better aimed at the new realities of media in the post-Soviet era. There is an emphasis on theory rather than practice in the curriculum, and there is a lack of courses specific to broadcast journalism. There are too few venues for journalist training to produce a diversity of styles and approaches.

RECOMMENDATION: Start one or more new schools of journalism that incorporate significant exposure to real-life work situations through apprenticeships. Assist new journalism schools, such as the one in Karaganda, by developing short intensive courses, either in the U.S. or in Kazakhstan, for young professors of journalism. Work with the existing journalism schools in Almaty and Bishkek to encourage an increase in adjunct faculty, lecturers who are working journalists. Also, work to ensure that most or all journalism students learn English—both to be able to access information in the world's *lingua franca* and to allow them to participate in international study and travel projects. Add courses on the business side of journalism, which could be taught by professors at the Kazakhstan Institute of Management in Almaty. Invite visiting foreign journalists to journalism schools and provide libraries of video news programs and subscriptions to foreign periodicals.

12. **PROBLEM:** Lack of reliable market research. Without audience data on the advertising market, media's ability to sell advertising, especially to Western firms who insist on hard numbers, will remain limited.

RECOMMENDATION: Bring in experts in minimum-cost audience research (such as Paragon's Michael Swafford) to give workshops for social research organizations on how to conduct needed research; hold one-week courses for heads of advertising departments on how to use such research. Ensure that media research findings funded by public agencies are shared with all local independent media. Perhaps more creatively, provide loans to private market researchers to conduct pilot surveys, with the loan to be repaid from proceeds of sales of the reports to media firms and advertisers. Invite the submission of business plans by research firms in an announced competition for the loan and select the best to receive support.

13. **PROBLEM:** Libel laws which are too broad. Kazakhstan (and other Central Asian countries) have interpreted legislation to recognize libel as harm to a person's reputation. In the U.S. and other countries, a showing of "harm" is necessary but not sufficient to support a charge of libel; in addition to demonstrable harm, a libelous statement must be made with malicious intent, and in reckless disregard of the truth. If the court does not find malice and recklessness in a personally harmful statement, it is not libel; and if a harmful statement is true, it cannot be libelous.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a legal center in Almaty for the defense of media freedom, particularly where the courts encroach upon it. This need be only one lawyer with media defense experience and a travel and communications budget. Encourage amendment of libel and slander laws to make it clear that true statements do not constitute libel or slander, even if they harm someone's reputation. It is always in society's best interest to have official corruption and misdeeds revealed, so that corrective steps can be taken. The fear of such exposure disciplines officials much more thoroughly than any administrative decree.

14. **PROBLEM:** Lack of information from abroad. Neither the Kazakhstani nor the Kyrgyzstani media can afford subscriptions to international news agencies like Reuters or AP, nor can they support their own foreign correspondents.

RECOMMENDATION: Make grants to pay for news agency subscriptions and foreign correspondents by selected mass media (as Freedom Forum and the Soros Foundations have done elsewhere). Provide support for distribution of other news sources such as RFE/RL's Daily Report, preferably by electronic mail, translating on a regular basis where necessary. (Such efforts could yield Russian-language materials which might be used in other NIS republics as well, particularly if distributed by

electronic mail.) Helping create an indigenous news agency will result in a news source which can be bartered with an international service for local distribution of foreign news.

15. PROBLEM: Lack of information in general among the populace and a fragmenting national identity. Russian TV and Ostankino now require that the republics pay for rebroadcast rights, and as a result they are aired less and less. Without a core shared culture which common programming supports (and State TV in Kazakh or Kyrgyz is not popular enough to fulfill this role), economic, regional, and ethnic differences become exaggerated and can explode. Increasingly, national governments are demanding payment from Russia to cover transmission costs, which Russia is unable or unwilling to pay.

RECOMMENDATION: Create a fund that would help underwrite the costs of broadcasting Russian TV and Ostankino. This would enable the Kazakhstan government to serve the needs of the enormous Russian-language audience without opening themselves to criticisms from Kazakh nationalists about use of public revenue for such purposes.

Also, aid the development of the alternative TV network Sary-Arka with financial support and organizational advice. A U.S. television executive could spend two weeks every two months guiding its development. Supporting Sary-Arka with programming from Worldnet and the U.S.'s Public Broadcasting Service will help ensure that the network provides impartial national news and acquires programming legally.

16. PROBLEM: Burdensome registration requirements. Presently government registration drives, particularly in Kazakhstan, are used as punitive levers for threatening to close a media organization. The problem of annual re-registration provides the government with a regular opportunity to deny specific media the right to continue operating, without going to court to prove violation of a law.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue working with the Ministry of Press to encourage acceptance of the registration requirement not as a control lever but rather as a formality which allows for statistical tracking of the media. Advocate the removal of media law requirements that the location and name of the printing press be printed on all newspapers, since it has a chilling effect on press freedom; publishers, not printers, should be responsible for content.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

Fund the creation of a media center which would require close cooperation between the managing Western NGO and capable locals. Its functions should include the following goals:

- Create trade associations for independent media, which will provide liaison services with foreign organizations on behalf of media; American groups such as the National Association of Broadcasters or the Communications Workers of America are willing to help. Such domestic trade organizations can also help create a code of ethics for media workers to reduce abuses that are presently endemic, such as the common technique of disguising an advertisement as a news article.
- Create a domestic wire service which will become a commercial enterprise once it stands on its own, to serve both domestic and international customers. It should also produce a daybook of upcoming events, particularly press conferences.
- Create a press club which would hold regular press conferences of its own with local and visiting VIPs.
- Provide services to foreign correspondents, perhaps on a paid basis, such as logistical support in Kazakhstan. The Foreign Press Center in Washington and Reuters TV in New York are examples of

this model. Ideally, in five or ten years the media center will support itself with income from such services.

- Serve as a collection point for information about media in Kazakhstan, both for foreign programs aiming to aid media and for domestic organizations searching for media contacts.
- Translate and distribute information on the press to domestic media.
- Serve as a base for media training seminars.

Fund continuing seminars for media. These must be as widespread as possible and should transmit both journalistic and management skills. Ensuring participation of citizens from different Central Asian countries in media seminars, such as those presently being held by the Gamma Inter Press Agency with funding from Holland's Stichting Doen, can both provide skills and foster the development of contacts among journalists within the Central Asian area and with foreign journalist-instructors.

Work with governmental bodies responsible for creating and enforcing regulations governing media. This might include the following:

- ◆ Provide training to junior engineers in the State Electrocommunications Inspectorate (the Ministry of Communications section responsible for frequency allocation) in spectrum management at the U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute.
- ◆ Provide the State Inspectorate and private broadcasters with translations of assessments of the transmitter health risks that have been published by, for example, the (U.S.) Electric Power Research Institute, and with more generous exposure standards (e.g., the FCC's).
- ◆ Translate (into Russian) and distribute information about telecommunications regulation in the West, and continue the flow of information (preferably by e-mail) from such sources as SatNews to Kazakhstan's government ministries.
- ◆ Aid the work of the Central Asian Inter-Governmental Committee on Printing Problems, which is responsible for such projects as the development of new paper-production technologies.

SUMMARY

Media in Uzbekistan have little opportunity to display independence. Constraints are many and interrelated. The Karimov government restricts diversity of views and their consequent expression in media. Cultural traditions threaten the viability of independent media. And most of all, the economic situation makes it difficult for even governmental media to survive.

Supporting media independence in Uzbekistan is difficult but not impossible. Because of the government's sensitivity to foreign influence, media-related projects must be open and aimed at education and economic development, not at "democracy-building". Greater control of media is exerted in Tashkent than elsewhere; clearly, projects will meet with less obstacles if implemented outside of the capital, and they will have the effect of helping to decentralize power in the process.

UZBEKISTAN IN GENERAL

The majority of Uzbekistan's population of 22 million lives in the fertile Fergana Valley and nearby Tashkent, in the eastern quarter of the country. In general terms, the country can be divided into three regions, each with somewhat different traditions, linguistic inflections, and power structures that compete with each other for control of the capital. These are the Fergana Valley region in the east, the Samarkand area in the center, and the more distant Khorezm region in the west. The population is over 70 percent Uzbek, 10 percent other Central Asian nationalities, and less than 10 percent Russian. More than half the population is rural and culturally conservative.

Tashkent, the largest city in the country, has a population of two million. All other population centers are small by comparison, with about seven other cities of between 200,000 and 500,000.

THE MEDIA SITUATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Electronic Media

Almost the entire country can receive three television channels: Ostankino and Russian TV from Moscow, and the national Tashkent Channel in Uzbek. Kazakhstan State TV is rebroadcast in Tashkent, and in some of the major cities there is also a part-time second national channel, as well as Avras'e, a special TV channel in Turkish prepared by the Turkish government for satellite distribution to Central Asia. News programs on the two Russian TV programs are for the most part blanked out during their appointed broadcast time.

Most of the Tashkent programming consists of traditional Uzbek singing and dancing. This is the cheapest to produce, is moderately popular, is politically neutral, and many assert it is profitable for the state-run TV company inasmuch as the singers and dancers pay for air time as a sort of an advertisement, since they want to be paid to perform at weddings, an important part of Uzbek culture.

Several but not all oblast centers have their own government-run TV station, which produces several hours of TV weekly for broadcast locally on the frequency occupied in the evenings by the Tashkent Channel. Examples are Urgench, Fergana, and Samarkand TV. Their programming, however, is of dubious quality and not widely watched.

Non-governmental TV also began to develop in 1991 in Uzbekistan, but like the press it has met with severe economic difficulties. In many cities it began to broadcast semi-legally (as happened elsewhere in the NIS), but strong independent entrepreneurs did not develop and they have in most cases shut down, chiefly because of the lack of an advertising base and the expense of acquiring shooting and editing equipment which would allow them to produce local programs. Exceptions include the independent channel in Samarkand, which operates as a sort of "loyal alternative" to State TV but provides the kind of alternative news which is a first step toward independent media.

The frequency licensing center in Tashkent reported that they had licensed eight such "independent" frequencies countrywide, but no one knew how many of them were operating. The licensing authorities also noted that in some cases an oblast transmitting center has opened a "commercial channel" under its own roof, and the Tashkent authorities would be unlikely to know about its existence, since they are using a frequency already allocated to the local transmitting center. Such a commercial channel shows pirated films and may produce some programming of its own. Insofar as the pattern in other republics has been for such channels to eventually split off and form independent companies, they are worth finding and possibly supporting with programming and training.

Small cable networks appeared all over the country in the late 1980s and many continue to operate. In Tashkent there are at least 100 such networks, serving from 100 to 25,000 subscribers. Most show only pirated films, which are obtained from two chief sources: an independent but city government supported firm called Tasvir, which is trying to unite the small cable companies to obtain programming collectively, and an enterprise operating out of State TV, Teletron, which also distributes films and news clips to the cable head-ends.

The spread of cable networks outside of Tashkent is limited by the fact that, even in the cities, most people live in traditional Uzbek family households and not in apartment buildings. This makes the process of wiring homes for cable TV an expensive and for the most part unattractive proposition.

Radio is also national in scope, with the two Russian channels Maiak and Radio Rossii as well as several stations of Tashkent Radio universally available in Uzbek. At least in the urban areas, people pay considerably more attention to TV than to radio; as one person put it, "Why listen to radio when you can listen to TV instead?" However, it should also be noted that since most television sets are produced outside of Uzbekistan, as they break down and cannot be fixed, radio may acquire more importance. In rural areas radio retains its importance.

The Press

Several national newspapers serve the country. The main government organs include *Narodnoe slovo* and its Uzbek-language sister *Kbalk sozi*, as well as *Narodnyi progres*. All are stereotypically Soviet-style newspapers with little content and a great deal of praise for the leaders of the country.

In Tashkent, the oblast's *Tashkentskaia pravda* and the city *Vechernyi Tashkent* are the chief newspapers. The only press available in either kiosks or by subscription from outside Uzbekistan is *Trud*, *Sovetskii sport*, and sometimes *Komsomol'skaia pravda* or *Rabochaia tribuna*. If in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan this problem has economic roots, in Uzbekistan any foreign newspapers (including the Moscow press) that are at all critical of Uzbekistan are simply not allowed to be printed or distributed.

All oblast centers have two oblast newspapers, usually one each in Russian and Uzbek; most have very small print runs of 5,000 to 20,000.

Attempts to create an independent press during the period 1990-1993 all met with political obstacles that forced them to cease operation, usually as a result of direct government orders to printing presses. These include the newspapers (mostly unregistered) which appeared in 1991 and 1992 (*Erk*, *Mulnosabat*, *Birlik*, *Tumaris*, *Erkin soz*, *Biznismen*, *Rokodrom*, and *Mustakil khaftalik*). *Erk* and *Birlik* also operated local newspapers in several oblasts for a short period in 1992.

Because of the cost of paper, the last several ever-so-slightly independent papers, *Turkestan*, *Pravda vostoka*, and *Uzbekiston adabiet va san'ati*, were in 1993 and early 1994 forced back onto government subsidies which they and others receive through the "Fund to Support the Press"; as a result, they must avoid printing anything less than positive about the government. This fund received a substantial infusion of cash in mid-1993, but even its future is in doubt as the federal government's spending policies are in danger of causing hyper-inflation, and the Russian trade policy toward Uzbekistan continues to wreak economic havoc.

The Karimov government has taken the tack that while politics are off-limits in the press (aside from the official line), economic discussions are more or less acceptable. Thus, two independent weeklies with business news have survived for several years, *BVV* and *Kommercheskii vestnik*. Both have enough governmental involvement that it's difficult to call them independent, and as a result both have no choice but to carefully moderate the tone of their discussion and steer clear of any information which would cast the government in a negative light. A new newspaper, *Novosti ekonomiki*, is on the verge of release;

judging by pre-publication proofs, even more than other newspapers it will focus on the transmittal of pure information—classified ads, market price quotes, etc.

All of the above newspapers are national in scope, but they are distributed almost exclusively in the capital. On the local level, in any of the nineteen oblast centers, an independent press is slightly more likely to survive. Examples are *Shans* in Samarkand and *Panorama* in Urgench. However, these publications are not newspapers in the typical Western sense. *Shans* follows the pattern of many of the first independent publications in other NIS countries: it consists almost entirely of classified ads and light-hearted pieces about astrology. *Panorama* is personally financed by a former Party boss who maintains this once-monthly paper as an expression of his power, although it does provide some alternative news. Other such local independent papers may exist, but their latitude for open expression of opinions is extremely limited.

CONSTRAINTS SPECIFIC TO UZBEKISTAN

Economic

There are two basic economic problems associated with the development of independent media in Uzbekistan. Each is equally crucial.

First, media in Uzbekistan are hobbled by a command economy in which governmental control over every aspect of economic and social life is so pervasive that it is difficult to isolate individual causes for the lack of a free press. Little has changed since the Soviet era, when all organization in society was planned by the Communist Party. While the government today is not as monolithic, the structural levers remain all-encompassing. Production facilities, rights to land ownership, transportation, energy and management of currency all remain in the government's domain. Thus, the pervasive influence of government in all aspects of commerce effectively inhibits the development of an independent media.

Second, both the press and electronic media require major hard-currency financing. The purchasing power of the populace is not sufficient to cover media's costs if conventional Western models of revenue generation are used (advertising and subscription sales). In the case of newspapers, newsprint and printing supplies such as offset printing plates and inks must all be imported; in the case of TV and radio, substantial equipment is needed both for production and transmission facilities. The government has made it difficult to seek other forms of financing by prohibiting domestic media from having financial support from outside the republic.

In the realm of newspapers, presently there are two prime methods for control over freedom of expression. The first, naturally occurring and not an effect of government policy, is the cost of newsprint, now over \$200 a ton when purchased from Russia. This is a serious problem for government newspapers as well, many of which have reduced print runs, size and frequency of issue—or even ceased printing altogether—as a result of paper shortages. In Samarkand, for instance, the oblast newspapers (one each in Russian, Uzbek and Tadzhik) have cut back to publishing once per week.

The second is access to printing facilities. As a rule, the oblast administration (known as a *khokimiat*) controls the only large printing house in the area. This press can raise the prices charged to an independent publication to the point where it is no longer economically viable to print a newspaper; or they can claim that their presses are broken or that they do not have the materials to print. Although it charges lower rates to government publications, the press can argue to independents that it must cover its costs.

In some oblasts, a small organization has split off from the oblast press and has modest printing facilities of its own. Profit, more than political concerns, motivate these companies, making them prime candidates for support.

Cultural

The social structure of Uzbekistan is very traditional. Some 85 percent of the population is of local extraction, with Slavs now making up less than 10 percent. Regardless of whether the republics of Central Asia were in fact subsidized or profit-making units of the former Soviet Union, they were substantially colonized by Russians, and thus the feeling of independence is especially strong now.

This has a contradictory effect on media: Russian is the language of the more sophisticated media, because it is the dominant language among those for whom news is important, but at the same time most of the population (particularly in rural areas) is unlikely to read it. Partly because of government-articulated pro-Uzbek sentiment in the country now, Russians find themselves discriminated against. Many claim that the Russian-language state-run media are intentionally strangled. Because of these problems, plus the economic free-fall the government-mandated move toward the Uzbek language in official discourse, and in general the lack of cultural support (in the form of Russian-language TV, newspapers, schools and even social interaction), many Russians are leaving the country, causing serious shortfalls of qualified personnel in journalism and technical areas related to media.

Political

The Karimov government since 1992 has become increasingly harsh toward all opposition to its policies and has exercised strict control over the economy and information distribution. Censorship is less institutionalized than during Soviet times but remains the rule. Most publishers (even independents) acquire approval from the censor before going to press to insure themselves against retribution. The independent media actually have to pay for this service.

Any effort to help media in Uzbekistan should take note of the very real concerns of not only the government but a majority of the population as well: an actively critical press can foment ethnic strife such as in Tadzhikistan. While this is the excuse most often given by governmental figures in defending repression, it also appears that the majority of the population is convinced that vocal discord in general is dangerous to the well-being of the country, and that there is no particular need for it to exist except to serve the interests of a few.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON MEDIA IN UZBEKISTAN

The pervasive nature of governmental control of all economic activities makes it impossible to avoid retaliation for any misstep. Since there are so many avenues for exercise of such control—the electricity can be shut off, the bank account can be frozen, paper can no longer be acquired—any attempts to work with media on the part of outside organizations must to some degree have the complicity of governmental organizations. Projects must have official sanction, preferably under the aegis of an acceptable form of aid: economic, educational, or in the interests of furthering relations between foreign countries and Uzbekistan (i.e., cultural exchanges).

Because of the fundamental economic problems (acquiring paper for newspapers or air time for TV and radio programs), as well as direct prohibition on the part of the government, it would be overwhelmingly difficult to fund the direct creation of new media structures.

Aid to media can therefore be of two types:

- Support independent media wherever they appear, even though it is unlikely to approach Western ideas of what media should look like. Examples include small commercial newspapers which exist in most cities, as well as TV stations which are not directly within the governmental structure. They can be provided with programming, some equipment and training, but always in such a manner as to avoid the appearance of representing the subversive influence of a foreign power.

- Provide help to people within governmental media, in the hope that they will be able to do their job better (difficult but not impossible, given the constraints in which they work) or in recognition that they are the most likely candidates to leave the state-controlled media system and start new independent media—when and if that becomes possible.

Most projects will have to take place in Russian, because most of the educated people who would be the target of such work will either be Russian or speak Russian as comfortably as they speak Uzbek.

Efforts to help media should always particularly avoid creating the impression of a Western government meddling in local affairs. This can be done by working through local organizations, by structuring a project as a commercially oriented joint venture, or by working through another structure, such as a sister-city committee.

A major difficulty in implementing a project in Uzbekistan is finding appropriate local partners who hold similar goals; are well-enough placed that they can accomplish something; are not so radical as to be marginalized; and have a Western person who speaks Russian and possibly Uzbek well enough to comfortably survive in Uzbekistan while ensuring project completion.

Projects in Uzbekistan should build on existing contacts in media, in particular those established during research for this analysis and at the USIS post in Tashkent. Another good source is the network of Uzbekistan Journalists' Union members, who can be found through the union's head office in Tashkent.

Recognition should be given, but not exaggerated, to the potential for threats to life and family of Uzbekistani contacts working with international organizations to support independent media. This danger is another good reason why any projects should take place with the tacit consent of local governmental powers.

Because of pervasive government control, most projects will need to be oriented more toward education and information than the creation of new structures. The following recommendations are more specific than those for Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan, because the conditions in which they may be implemented are considerably more difficult.

1. Provide classes on computer literacy for people working in media. Eventually, newspapers will have computers, and if it is possible to identify key journalists in each oblast newspaper who are likely to eventually work in the independent press, they should be targeted for education. Care should be taken to ensure that participants are in fact working journalists; that they will continue to work in their newspaper after they return (note in particular that many Russians are emigrating); that the selection of journalists is balanced between Russians and Uzbeks, men and women; and that those selected are under 40, and if possible, under 30 years of age.
2. Assist the Union of Journalists or another group in forming a new professional organization of journalists, with economic rather than political reasons for existing. A strong positive factor in seminars should be the element of gathering together journalists from different cities to network, share experiences, and begin to build a sense of profession among one another. At present, the Union of Journalists has all but collapsed because of a lack of finances and for want of a reason to exist.

Such an organization would serve the following goals:

- to disseminate information about successful tactics for building coalitions on the local level so that media outside the government can emerge (e.g. TV in Samarkand);
- to provide an organization through which international media support projects can go to find appropriate people with whom to work; and

to provide a venue for informational networking among Uzbekistani journalists so they can utilize one another's regional or specialized knowledge.

3. Provide a way for journalists to receive materials from the outside on a widespread scale. This could be provision of e-mail facilities, although this would be expensive, or it could be paying for subscriptions to Western or Russian-language periodicals on journalism.
4. Provide seminars on how journalism in the West fulfills its mission, preferably led by working journalists. Participants should not be required to have a journalistic education, since in many cases the resultant indoctrination in Soviet journalism techniques is a severe impediment to their implementation of new work styles. It is crucial that instructors have some knowledge of the local situation; Eastern European instructors would be useful, as they would have faced (and continue to face) similar governmental pressure to toe the official line. Such an approach would also reduce charges of interference by Western powers who "don't understand" the situation.
5. Create a cooperative program with the Tashkent State University journalism department, or help another university (most likely Samarkand's) to create a journalism department. Translate Western textbooks on journalism into Russian and/or Uzbek. Provide copies of videotapes on journalism to journalism departments. Learn from successes and failures of existing models created by the University of Maryland joint journalism school program with Elta University in Budapest, the Center for Independent Journalism's work with Charles University in Prague, the Warsaw Journalism Center's independent two-year journalism course in Poland, and other similar programs in the Central and Eastern European area.
6. Structure a program to create one or more joint Uzbek-American newspapers, under the principle that this would allow more freedom to the newspaper and would provide a framework for bringing in information from the West for local distribution to a wide audience. Work through a sister-city group. Such a project's yield would not only be the product but also the process: it would hopefully allow for an exchange of journalists between the U.S. and Uzbekistan on a non-governmental level; it would increase understanding of Uzbekistan in the U.S.; in addition, it could function as a conduit for increased business contacts if approved by the Uzbekistan city's administration. Provision of a computer for e-mail and desktop publishing would also be useful, but only if a person on the Uzbekistan side were trained to use it.
7. Provide desktop publishing systems to organizations outside Tashkent so that journalists can start learning how to lay out newspapers. Place them with organizations that are both somewhat independent of the local government and under enough control that they will not start printing opposition newspapers and get themselves closed (or worse). Perhaps place the systems under the care of the semi-independent printing facilities, where they exist, as in Urgench and Samarkand.

Conclusions and Final Recommendations on Central Asian Media

Ultimately, the kind of assistance that international agencies offer to the media of Central Asia will depend on what such agencies are attempting to achieve. If the goal of assistance is primarily educational and philosophic, to ensure representation of a particular range of viewpoints in the media, then the best approach is to undertake direct sponsorship of media outlets. Rough models might be the off-shore radio stations of the Cold War (Radio Liberty and the like). The limited growth of commercial television suggests that American-produced or supported video "magazines" might also be appropriate tools. It must be understood, though, that such an approach would subject U.S.-supported media outlets to the same skepticism with which the other "sponsored" media are treated.

Along with the goals of promoting the transition to market systems and of promoting venues in which U.S. companies can stimulate demand for U.S. products, one course might be to encourage U.S. firms and their international subsidiaries to sponsor media through joint ventures. The advantage of this approach is that these joint ventures are legal entities in the country of registry, and so are not specifically "foreign". In addition, under the tutelage of international business local media will learn to become more commercially viable.

If, however, the goal of assistance is to foster the growth and evolution of a diverse indigenous media culture, representing a wide variety of views as part of the process of developing a diverse political and economic environment, then the intelligent application of assistance should be directed not so much at the end product as much as at the conditions which permit a variety of end-products to grow.

Such an approach would entail a double strategy of encouraging the growth of parallel sources of supply for necessary material and services, thus eliminating as many "choke-points" and "gates" as practicable, while also providing technological assistance which would "democratize" media, by reducing the financial threshold for economic success to a low level, making it practicable for as wide a number of individuals and groups as possible to step across it into the commercial arena.

Following this strategy, aid money invested in high-technology solutions is probably better spent in enterprises which will produce local paper (for example from straw and the reeds which grow abundantly in many places in Central Asia) than to provide ultra-modern presses. It is impossible to over-state the importance of the paper issue for media. If outside support to the press had to be limited to only one area, the supply of paper is, without question, the top priority.

Economics and demographics suggest that, rather than aiming aid resources at trying to change large quasi-national newspapers, a better model for journalists in Central Asia to imitate might be the thousands of smaller and more specialized papers which proliferate in the U.S. Recall that the U.S. has no real national or governmental newspaper; instead there are thousands of local newspapers, some of which have grown to embrace huge readerships, but which still serve a definable "local" interest.

Accordingly, one intelligent use of outside assistance would be to bring as many entrepreneurially-inclined local journalists and indigenous businesspeople as possible to America (for short stays) to give them a sample of how work is done at such enterprises as *Pennysaver*-style newspapers (free papers supported by the cost of individual advertisements); small town weeklies, surviving only on local news and revenues; highly specialized desk-top publications aimed at hobbyists; university and even high school newspapers; church or club newsletters; and small print shops producing such items as business cards, resumes, posters, and the like. Emphasis in such a program would be on stimulating potential indigenous suppliers to seek out comparable niches in their own society, which they could then exploit for commercial gain. A large part of any such program should be devoted to details of how small, low-circulation newspapers are financed, and what it takes for them to survive and grow.

Bringing indigenous businesspeople and potential local investors on such trips is an important part of such a strategy, which should be spelled out. These people are not normally addressed in projects on media, yet they would seem to be the most likely source for the kinds of sponsorship and underwriting which media must have in Central Asia if they are to survive independent of the government. One of the reasons local money is reluctant to support media development is that the Soviet legacy of the functions which media perform has generally left potential investors unaware of the media's commercial possibilities and its various support industries (such as commercial printing, paper production, and others).

As an addendum to this suggestion, one low-cost but potentially highly effective source of outside assistance in the sort of environment described above would be to make the resources of the U.S. Government Printing Office library available for translation and republication. The U.S. Department of Agriculture publications in particular could be of enormous potential benefit—and profit—to fledgling Central Asian commercial presses, while also providing a tangible, much-needed, and non-controversial service to local populations. The library of information and resources developed to assist American small farmers could certainly benefit locals who are attempting to revive private agriculture in their respective countries. This could also be dovetailed with U.S. Information Agency efforts to assist in various curriculum reform and other projects in the republics, providing both information and, importantly, another market on which commercial relations might flourish.

The practical difficulties which such a program might entail, especially those of language, suggest another area in which all the Central Asian republics could greatly be aided: the provision of as much English instruction as can possibly be arranged. As long as Russian remains the gateway language through which Central Asia's journalists reach the world, their ability to assist the development and maturation of their young societies will be limited. Along with instruction in English, the journalists of both republics should be given short courses in computer use, in electronic media, and in international communications.

CAUTIONS

As part of any program to provide aid, it should be recalled that the persistent shortages of the USSR were not entirely the product of waste and stupidity. The elites of the USSR were content to maintain a culture of shortages because scarcity creates power for those who are able to control supply of any commodity. Abundance is inherently democratic, while scarcity breeds power, position, and control. People in the successor states have learned this lesson well, fueling the tendency toward creation of new monopolies. Especially in circumstances of accelerating economic decline, the existing power elites in the new states have no interest in permitting increases in supply or access to anything, because this serves only to dilute their power.

Thus, even in Kyrgyzstan, where the political situation is calmer than Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan and the toleration for anti-governmental views is much greater, there is considerable danger that provision of any material assistance by outside agencies can come to be interpreted as anti-governmental and destabilizing. There is also a very real danger that resources provided to any country in the region, particularly if they include rare and valuable technical equipment, will quickly pass to the control of one of the hybrid governmental-criminal structures which are proliferating throughout the former USSR.

Aside from permanent vigilance, there are not many possible solutions to these twin dangers. Economic collapse, growing Russian aggressiveness (evidenced in elaborate concern for "off-shore" Russians), and the inevitable unwillingness of the existing elites to share power or be replaced, mean that the political spectrum throughout Central Asia, even in the most "democratic" of the states, is being pushed increasingly to extremes. In practice this means that governments will show ever greater tendencies to define "opposition" as anything less than overt enthusiasm, as Turkmenistan's Niazov and Uzbekistan's Karimov already have done.

Certainly any attempt to impose an American understanding of diversity of political opinion, of latitude of criticism, or of permissible resistance to existing conditions will, in the Central Asian environment, inevitably look like partisanship, and may appear to be destabilizing. This does not forbid a focus on local abuses or ills; muckraking at a local level is never as threatening to a regime as are system-wide criticisms. None of the existing regimes in Central Asia will last forever, so it would be a great mistake for outside aid agencies to become too closely identified with a particular government or leader.

Equally, the governmental-criminal groups of the ex-USSR everywhere show a growing aggressiveness in their drive to create, maintain and expand monopolies, meaning that in practice almost any donation of value, such as equipment, would easily become a "golden apple of discord" over which groups would struggle, until one of them managed to gain control to the equipment, after which they would deny all others access to it. Unless donor agencies can devise means to assure broad-spectrum access, donation of small quantities of expensive, highly specialized equipment will have the end effect of benefiting one small segment of society, while only adding to the tools by which all the other segments of a society can be controlled and used for the profit of the very few.

In such an environment, quantity is the only realistic method of insuring provision of aid in anything approaching a democratic manner. Ten one-year study fellowships in America would benefit only the children of a few presidents and ministers; 120 month-long fellowships might create a chance for a few people of promise who are not in the current elites to have an experience which might ultimately change the target societies; 480 week-long fellowships would almost certainly guarantee that some experience, knowledge, and training would "trickle down" to the non-*nomenklatura*. So too with equipment. One press might become the possession of the government, or of a Mafia (although the need for one means that such a press should be provided, and every effort made to insure access); but twenty desktop publishing stations might permit a few new newspapers to emerge, compete among one another, and struggle for survival, by providing the services which the citizens of these new states require; a hundred typewriters and fifty simple Xerox machines might, in turn, create a readership revolution.

INTERNEWS

Internews Network is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation which, since 1982, has worked to improve international understanding through television. The company, which has won a national news Emmy Award and the Du-Pont Columbia Award for Excellence in Broadcast Journalism, has produced and contributed to news programming on international and global issues for US networks, PBS, CNN, the BBC, and over 20 other broadcasters worldwide.

Internews is best known for spacebridges, or two-way satellite hookups for dialogues across international boundaries, and has developed more than a dozen such programs. These include the Capital to Capital series on ABC and Soviet State Television, linking US Congressmen with Deputies of the Supreme Soviet for live discussions on controversial topics such as arms control, human rights, and the future of Europe.

Since 1989, Internews has developed a number of programs directly supporting independent television producers and broadcasters in the former Soviet republics and eastern and central Europe.

Internews is based in Arcata, California with offices in Washington DC, New York, San Francisco, San Anselmo, Moscow, and Kiev.

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