

Media Reform Centre

**ARE THE CHANGES IN UKRAINE'S MASS MEDIA
INDUCED BY THE ORANGE REVOLUTION REALLY IRREVERSIBLE?**

Media Survey

conducted jointly with the
School of Political Analysis at the National University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy,
Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, and
Telekritika Internet Bulletin

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Did the “journalist revolution” really occur?

What are its attributes?

When did it begin?

What are its implications? Are they positive?

To what extent are the processes launched by the “journalist revolution” sustainable?

What should be done to make them sustainable?

One of the most remarkable and momentous results of the Orange Revolution was the journalist revolution, when journalists of leading TV channels and print media refused en masse to carry out the recommendations of *temnyki*, distort information, and manipulate public consciousness – practices that were extensively applied during the 2004 presidential campaign. Practically within one day the image of the main TV channels, radio programs and print media underwent change. They occurred in the wake of the overall change in the political situations, offering journalists the opportunity to discard somebody else’s wilfully imposed role of an agitprop tool and thus evade censure and contempt of society, accusations of inciting enmity and, finally, retain the ratings of their media outlets.

However, the “journalist revolution”(JR) is not yet complete or irreversible. The depth of changes depends on the type of the mass media and region. In Kyiv, just like in other large cities, the changes are more obvious than elsewhere, while on television they are much more visible than in the press. Some media outlets imitate the changes, substituting subtler manipulative techniques for blatant propaganda.

A poll conducted by the *Telekritika Bulletin* among journalists proved that most of them stated that they felt more secure in their own stance and did not meet with any problems for publishing their material (in 2003-2004 over 60% of polled journalists stated that they knew cases of censorship). For all that, trade unions are non-existent in the overwhelming majority of editorial offices; editorial policy is framed either by the editor-in-chief or jointly with the editors of departments and it is only with them that media owners communicate whenever they show up; and disputes are mostly settled through “personal connections” in the “usual order of things.”

Therefore, the changes are frequently not institutionally secured and depend on the good will of the managers and owners of medial outlets. (In the immediate future, the issue of economic independence of the mass media will hardly be settled, as the journalists’ pay is, as before, handed out in envelopes as untaxed remuneration).

A public opinion poll conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology also proved that the citizens’ reactions to changes in the media and their assessment of these changes coincide, on the whole, with the stereotypes of receptiveness or unreceptiveness of the changes in the country. Respondents from the West and Centre are much more optimistic about JR than the representatives of the East and South. Over a half of the latter believe that no changes have occurred at all. Is this to mean that for them the mass media’s bias did not exist? In the East and South people are more inclined to expect the authorities to continue bringing pressure to bear upon the mass media which will remain financially dependent on their owners.

So the citizens’ expectations of changes in the media coincide with their expectations of the prospect for the development of a better situation in the country – and these expectations are rooted in the myths produced by both parties during the presidential election campaign. What remains then is the opportunity to manipulate public opinion and reproduce by electioneering techniques the very same stereotypes that almost split society in 2004.

This trend is especially dangerous before the onset of the parliamentary election campaign in 2006, when the current government might be tempted to employ the “administrative resource” to transform state, municipal and neutral commercial media outlets into its mouthpiece, while the

new opposition will again use “its own” channels as a manipulative tool. If throughout the pre-election year the changes in the media environment will not be secured by legal and organizational mechanisms, the risk of a media counterrevolution might become a stark reality.

On the whole, experts arrived at the consensus on the need to secure the achievements of the JR. In the publications of *Telekritika*, this approach is formulated as follows:

- secure the current impartiality and balanced nature of TV news; revive professional political analysis on TV as quickly as possible;
- put into effect the mechanisms for setting up Public TV and Radio Broadcasting as a public service and the most effective instrument in dealing with the problems not only of political censorship but also of market requirements;
- introduce into the practice of the majority of media outlets the conclusion of agreements of open editorial policy concerning news (information) on the basis of professional standards;
- develop new legislative initiatives to ensure market reforms in the mass media and to legislatively regulate the above-mentioned issues;
- develop mechanisms of public control and the influence of society on compliance with legal information rules.

The first step to effect these changes could be the parliamentary hearings in April – if the plan of introducing amendments to laws will be accepted and implemented as a result of the parliamentary discussions.

But the execution of these laws will be impossible without the active stance of all journalists, who could not only address the government with manifestos, but also stand up for their rights in their editorial offices and before owners and themselves abide by the standards of honest and impartial journalism.

Concurrently, reform should be launched in the system of professional education and respective study programs should be introduced at higher education establishments for training journalists who would be knowledgeable about both professional and ethical principles of their work.

The Causes and Onset of the Journalist Revolution

We have already become used to the term “journalist revolution” (JR) when identifying the distinctive processes of “disenthralment” in the journalist community caused by the changes in public consciousness and the protest rallies during the presidential campaign of 2004.

The political scientist **Olexandr Dergachov said that one of the most obvious results of the Orange Revolution was the change for the better in the work of the electronic media throughout December 2004.**

As a term, JR was most frequently used by representatives of the Opposition and the mass media that sympathized with it. Shortly before the second rerun elections Victor Yushchenko mentioned JR in a statement he made at a press conference. The presidential candidate said then that during the past three weeks his interviews were reported on TV channels on which he had not appeared “throughout two-three years.” The information bulletin distributed by his press service was titled “Yushchenko believes that a *journalist revolution* took place in Ukraine.”

Under a common definition, revolution is a fundamental (radical), qualitative and sharp change (leap) built on gradual qualitative changes. So the term JR is hardly in complete accord with what is said here. But the rapid pace and obvious radicality of the changes (especially when compared with the preceding period of the election campaign) makes this term valid enough for usage. After all, **even a partial departure from the one-sided reporting of events before the second rerun was tantamount to the Opposition’s revolutionary breakthrough of the information blockade**

Let us take a closer look at the causes and sources of this distinct JR, its most typical manifestations, the current status of the Ukrainian media environment, and the possible areas where the positive achievements of this revolution can be secured.

Among the **causes** that occasioned such radical changes the following can be singled out:

1. **Overall changes in societal consciousness** owing to attempts of basely rigging the returns of the first and second rounds of the presidential elections in 2004 and, accordingly,

the **threat of a possible public censure or contempt** of the professional environment. The specific examples of such changes in the journalist community were:

- Unacceptance of the old political regime and the order it had imposed, on the mass media included.
- Unacceptance of the part assigned to the mass media in the scenarios of the presidential administration's spin doctors (participation in the information war against the Ukrainian people and representatives of the Opposition, character assassination), which could not but lacerate the professional and human self-esteem of journalists.
- Reluctance to assume the responsibility of a split in society engineered by the blatant propaganda campaign and the deliberate lies of the country's leadership.
- Understanding of the depth of the conflict inspired by Russian spin-doctors with the assistance of the mass media.

2. **Decline in the prestige (and ratings) of leading media outlets** owing to the discrepancy between reality and the "picture" presented by such mass media.

3. **Journalist solidarity** with the media outlets that were under pressure because of their independent editorial policy and Opposition-oriented stance (such as Channel 5, ERA TV and Radio Co., Kyiv TV and Radio Co., Radio Liberty, *Silski visti* [Rural News] newspaper).

4. Pressure and **solidarity of the international community with the public protest rallies.**

5. **Revival of a sense of personal dignity** and inner freedom.

6. **Restrictions imposed by the management (owners) of a number of leading Ukrainian media outlets on the freedom of creativity**, compulsion to flout ethical rules and principles of journalism, **political censorship.**

The latter cause also served as a pretext for the protests of journalists.

Although censorship was prohibited and its practice entailed criminal liability under the Law *On Introducing Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts on Assurance and Unhindered Exercise of the Human Right to Freedom of Speech* (2003), written **instructions called *temnyki* with "recommendations" for the content of information programs were sent out to all leading national TV channels over a lengthy period of time.** Truth is, after a public expose of what the *temnyki* were about, some of the TV channels – instead of the written instructions all editorial personnel could peruse – kept receiving "recommendations" intended only for news program directors.

A situation was created when events of serious public consequences were presented on different TV channels in a similar or identical manner. The commentaries on these events gave preferences to the viewpoint of the president or his administration.

The *temnyki* offered recommendations for overtly manipulative methods of reporting or direct disinformation of the audiences:

- suppression of certain facts or events, unbalanced presentation of information about some political parties as compared with others;

- domination of assessments over facts in news casting;
- presentation of facts separately from the general context.

Attributes/Manifestations of JR:

1. **More vigorous activity of the independent media union**, especially its Kyiv regional chapter.
2. **Refusal of journalists to broadcast information subjected to political censorship** by media managers or their owners.
3. **Changes in the editorial policy of leading TV channels**: mass rejection of *temnyki*, appearance of reports presenting different opinions instead of the opinions preferred by the then government in power.
4. **Public protests** against censorship and expression of solidarity with the journalists of the Opposition media outlets.

An important factor that spurred JR was the presence of a rather powerful media trade union and a number of other independent NGOs established on the crest of the “journalist rebellions” in 2001-2002. These organizations, as experts conceded, stimulated respective sentiments in the media community, upheld the idea of the priority standards of journalism, and campaigned an awareness of journalists’ rights and methods of their protection.

Through monitoring, critical articles, and the like the NGOS also provoked public rejection of the media outlets that had submitted to censorship, which could not but tell on their ratings.

In consequence of the overwhelming lies of the pro-government media outlets, over 34% of TV audiences had little trust in what the TV channels reported, as revealed by a national public opinion poll conducted by the Democratic Initiatives Foundation and the *Telekritika* Internet Bulletin on October 2-11, 2004. **A mere 7% trusted the electronic mass media completely.** Almost 40% of the respondents doubted the honesty of the majority of TV channels. Of this number two-thirds (66%) were convinced that the TV channels indulged in a foul game in favour of Victor Yanukovych against Victor Yushchenko (over 50% of the respondents). Ukrainian audiences referred UT-1 (17.4%), 1+1 (13.5%) and Inter (13.3%) to the most biased TV channels.

The journalists of *Lvivska hazeta* (Lviv Gazette), *Silski visti* (Rural News), Radio Liberty, and Radio Continent became an example of civic courage and opposition to outside pressure. Yet the most resonant outcry was provoked by the persecution of the Opposition-oriented Channel 5. For more than a year its journalists pursued their craft despite repeated attempts of closure by different government agencies and all sorts of methods of pressure or even threats of direct use of force. One week before the elections on October 31 the then regime went over from manipulating the mass media under its control to completely blocking all information channels of the Opposition. An attempt was made to paralyze the operation of Channel 5 by a court ruling under a laughably contrived claim filed by a Member of Parliament.

The publicly voiced solidarity with other TV channels spurred the onset of JR. International support also invigorated the processes within the journalist community. The international organization Reporters with Borders and the International Journalists Federation lent their wholehearted support to the intimidated channel. They qualified the arrest of Channel 5 accounts and the revocation of its license as a blow not only against freedom of speech in Ukraine, but also against the citizens’ rights before elections. The pressure on Channel 5 was recognized as a political action aimed at destroying a media outlet that defied government control.

The active movement for the professional rights of journalists investigating and commenting on political subjects commenced on October 25, 2004 in Kyiv on

Khreshchatyk Street with a rally of journalists to protect freedom of speech and support Channel 5.

Rallied under the slogans “Freedom Cannot be Curbed!” and “We’re Denied Jobs!” some one hundred journalists from different print and electronic media, including those supposedly under government control, organized a theatricalised show on Kyiv’s central thoroughfare, as they swept its sidewalks with brooms. They stated that they were prepared to change their profession to street sweepers, if denied the opportunity to provide truthful information to readers and viewers.

Rallies in support of Channel 5 also took place in other cities throughout the country, In Lviv, some 80 journalists protested in downtown at the monument to Taras Shevchenko, while in Uzhgorod up to 20 journalists took to the street.

Interestingly, in February 2004 experts of the Institute of Mass Information described the situation in Ukraine’s freedom of speech as “negatively positive.” That same month the uncoordinated protests against the closure of *Silski visti* (Rural News) and Radio Liberty as well as in defence of the Donetsk journalist Volodymyr Boiko failed to sway either society or the journalist community, although in Kyiv alone over 200 representatives of the Opposition took part in the demonstration in support of these media outlets.

Then on October 28, 2004, 334 journalists of five central TV channels – ICTV, Inter, New Channel, Tonis and NTN – protested against how the progress of the election campaign was reported on the leading channels.

One of the first journalists of the pro-government channels to refuse abiding by the *temnyki* recommendations was Volodymyr Holosniak, announcer of the News Program on the 1st National Channel. It occurred on November 5 prior to the second rerun. Shortly after, the management tried to fire him but met with the resistance of the Kyiv Independent Media Trade Union. Nonetheless, he was taken off the air.

The most resonant demarche was made by journalists of leading TV channels Igor Skliarevsky, Yulia Borysko, Natalia Fitzych, Victor Zablotsky, Fedir Sydoruk, Mariana Voronovych, Halyna Bestko, Yevhen Hlibovytsky, Kyrylo Yakubovsky, Olexandr Lukianenko and Yulia Lytvynenko.

On November 21 Andriy Tychyna and Oles Tereshchenko refused to newscast the election campaign on Channel 1+1, and the next day, November 22, Liudmyla Dobrovolska and Alla Mazur of TSN followed suit. As an expression of solidarity with the TSN, the Passport Program did not go on the air after V.Pikhovshek’s program. It was a joint decision of the program’s editorial office and announcer Serhiy Polkhovsky. Other of the channel’s programs – Double Evidence, That’s What I Think, and I Want and I Will – also lent moral support to their colleagues.

As pointed out by *Telekritika* analyst Boris Bakhteyev, “once the journalists just had the wish, it proved that not a single *temnyk*, not a single managerial instruction, not a single ‘objective circumstance’ had that demonic, all-embracing power attributed to them. Once the journalist just wanted to be free – they became free.” Yet the **obvious unrestraint of these processes should not blot out the real gist of the courage of journalists who opposed the pressure and quit their jobs.** They departed actually for nowhere. It was not just a question of some abstract “principles,” but absolutely definite advantages and good pay they were losing upon resignation.

Implications

Reaction to the JR differed depended on the type of media outlet and regional affiliation.

On the whole, the JR coverage coincides with the regions whose population gave preference to presidential nominee Victor Yushchenko. Its *intensity* was uneven as well: in the Centre the

impact of JR was much stronger than in the outlying regions. In the large cities (Lviv, Kharkiv and even Donetsk) it was much stronger than in the districts and at the local level (see Annex 3).

Changes in the electronic media outlets were the most obvious. As the Equality of Opportunities Committee observed, in the interval between the second and “third” round *central TV channels* presented both candidates in a more balanced manner. Positive trends were evident even on the Ukraine TV and Radio Co. – negative information about Victor Yushchenko went down markedly, he was mentioned positively and interviews with him were broadcast (see Annex 2).

However, manifestations of likes and dislikes became a typical feature on one or another channel, without any pretences at “impartiality.” Now news programs were more actively applying manipulative techniques, specifically by shaping the likes and dislikes.

The *central print media* changed but a little of the trends of the previous period. For instance, the newspaper *Segodnia* (Today) distanced itself from politics, practically passing political information over in silence. Instead, *Kiyevskiyе vedomosti* (Kiev Herald) revived its practice of total discrimination against Yushchenko along with manipulative techniques. *Den* (The Day), *Zerkalo nedeli* (Mirror of the Week) and *Kiyevskiy telegraph* (Kiev Telegraph) remained relatively impartial.

As to *regional TV*, it practically did not change anything of its previous attitudes. However, when compared with the previous months, in the East reporting about Victor Yushchenko was much less aggressive – a little over 11% of negative information. There was a divide in the informational preferences – in the West and East the neutral key predominated in the reports about Victor Yushchenko, while in the North and South – this held true for the reports on Victor Yanukovich. The least balanced reporting on the candidates was evident in the West – here Victor Yushchenko enjoyed an overwhelming advantage (80%, with no negative information about him whatsoever).

In December, for the first time in the election campaign, Yushchenko took the lead over Yanukovich in the number of times his name was mentioned on the TV channels. This is sustained by a content analysis conducted under the Academy of the Ukrainian Press Political News Monitoring Project. According to its findings, the onset of the election campaign followed the trend of “keeping silent” about the principal Opposition candidate, Victor Yushchenko. The Our Ukraine leader was on the air 136 seconds against the 1,270 seconds of Yanukovich.

No marked changes in the trend on central TV and in the press were observed throughout the last week before the rerun. Although the political situation remained tense, the context of discussions of events in news programs was predominantly neutral (62% – the highest rate within the entire period of observation). The least controversial and negative context was in the news of UT-1 and Kyiv TV and Radio Co. – 20%, while the most on Ukraine TV and Radio Co. – 43%. In the news programs events were commented on predominantly by journalists and politicians (89% and 41% of the comments respectively), while experts had only a 4% say in the comments (7% on STB).

The *regional press*, in particular in the South and East, resumed an “information war” against Victor Yushchenko, about a half of its reports discrediting him. More balanced were the reports only in the press of the North where the proportion of negative, neutral and positive information about both candidates was retained. The press of the West was aggressively disposed to Victor Yanukovich (21% of all information), while the press of the South and East was waging an open war against Victor Yushchenko (35% and 51% of all information respectively).

According to the conclusions of the Academy of the Ukrainian Press, the media picture in the country had beyond doubt changed before the second rerun: the journalist community tried to abide by the professional rules of news casting, extensively presenting the Opposition on the national channels for the first time that year. The news became more balanced, as 1) the attention to the key political subjects and figures evened out, 2) the positive and neutral assessments of the

Opposition and its leader gained legitimacy, and 3) the focus on the “bonus of the government” in the news was actually absent.

Live broadcasts of the sessions of Parliament and the Supreme Court also contributed to the impartial picture of events between the election rounds. For almost two weeks Channel 5 and Kyiv TV and Radio Co. kept up a round-the-clock marathon, “Elections 2004,” constantly reporting direct from Independence Square and other focal points of the Orange Revolution. Discussions were a frequent feature on the 1st National Channel, Era TV and Radio Co., 1+1, ICTV, the New Channel, and Tonis.

Interestingly, after the TV channels rejected the *temnyki*, Yanukovych’s team began accusing the media outlets of biased reporting about the events in the country. To deny access to more or less impartial information, the broadcasts of the 1+1 TV channel were switched off in Kharkiv oblast and Donetsk oblast.

An analysis of the cause-and-effect relationship of events of the Orange Revolution makes it possible to maintain that the **processes in the journalist community, termed JR, had a secondary, i.e. derivative nature of the overall ebullient democratization process of Ukrainian society.**

In this respect we can speak about a paradox of JR. It is a democratization process in the midst of the media caused, not in the least, by the influence of the oppositional electronic media, primarily on the Internet. As the earlier quoted Boris Bakhteyev remarked, “in democratic societies it is precisely journalism that is the driving force of changes in politics. In Ukraine, it happened absolutely the other way around: at first the political situation began to change abruptly and only then was it emulated by journalists.”

Enforcing the Irreversibility of the Changes

A logical question arises as to the irreversibility of the changes initiated by JR. Regrettably, the Ukrainian reality provides no reason for radiant optimism.

Judging from expert polls conducted by *Telekritika* and some other media outlets, the **majority of experts are inclined to believe that manipulation with information typical of some former pro-government channels has not ceased after all. Now they are just subtler** and manifested in shades of interpretation, tendentiousness in selection of information, concealment of the entire truth, consistency in news presentation, leadups to subjects with quoted statements, and selection of experts commenting on certain news.

Many TV channels and printed media rather demonstrate impartiality and a balanced approach than practice real impartiality.

Experts and analysts note an extremely low quality of political analysis offered to readers and viewers. Attempts are being made to drown facts and adequate communication of the gist of what’s going on in the torrents of diverse assessments and opinions. **One gets the impression that the main purpose of these so-called analyses is not to seek cause-and-effect relationships or glimpse into the future, but to disguise the true substance of one or another event. Actually, such an approach is yet another subtle method of manipulating facts.**

As was revealed by the monitoring of political news for December 2004, conducted by the Academy of the Ukrainian Press and the Institute of Sociology under the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, **even at the height of the JR the news on television was of an extremely poor quality.**

This is confirmed by the following: a part of the events from one point of view remained at the level of the previous months; retention of the disproportionate access to airtime in favour of the pro-government candidate (first of all for account of interviews, i.e. exactly the instrument, the presence and duration of which is determined by the top managers of TV channels); lack of

references to sources of information; a negligible number of opinions by experts in the commentaries on political news that were difficult to understand by TV viewers at large (4% on the average and 7% on STB); invitation of politicians as experts; and the practice of announcers assuming the function of experts.

It seems that after having discarded the *temnyki*, the journalists of many a media outlet failed to learn how to live with their own brains and are in continued need of generalizations set forth in directive instructions such as the *temnyki*.

Said Dmytro Desiateryk, columnist of the department of culture, *Den* (The Day) newspaper: “Most of our channels and the press resemble a critically injured person who emerged from a lengthy coma and is now learning to walk and speak independently. He’s weak in the knees, his balance is in constant danger, and his tongue fails him.”

In the experts’ opinion of the Institute of Politics, **the most important function of the mass media in Ukraine is for their owners to continue gaining additional political capital.** A TV channel, newspaper or radio station performs the role of an instrument of political propaganda of a definite financial-and-political group. The informational function of the mass media is smoothed over.

Therefore, there is **still a great danger that journalists might not abide by the principles of impartiality in their work:** “inversion” of the media, i.e. transition to indiscriminate criticism of the new government, or else the continued practice of immoderate eulogizing of the current high powers.

To date, with parliamentary elections looming on the horizon, **practically no institutional or legislative checks are in place to avert the relapse of the previous practices in journalism.**

In the opinion of Serhiy Huz, President of the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine, substantial changes in the media environment cannot occur, at least for two fundamental reasons:

- **No changes whatsoever occurred in the remuneration of journalists.** “Envelopes” have not disappeared anywhere, the contracts are not of the best, collective contracts on conditions of work are lacking, etc. All this makes it possible for media owners to bring pressure to bear upon journalists and change the information environment to the advantage of clients, although, undoubtedly, this pressure is not as brazen as it used to be.
- **On the whole, the media business did not become any more transparent.** Mass media economics has become more effective and less costly, and taxes have remained onerous, especially insofar as they concern the payroll fund. This makes media owners dependent on an extremely large number of organizations, on the entire government included.

As we see it, there are some other factors that will impact on the possibility of changes in the journalist community.

First of all, **political confrontation between the new government and the political forces representing the former regime prevails.** Moreover, the latter are desperately itching for revenge and recovery of access to levers of power. For them a “window on opportunities” could be the 2006 parliamentary elections that will be held under a modified Constitution.

The election campaign of 2006 and its presumable returns might entail risks for the mass media (see Annex 1).

The victory of the referred to political forces in the elections will offer them the opportunity to access to the formation of the executive and, accordingly, a marked influence on the political and economic processes in the country. Therefore, **there are all reasons to believe that society will become more politicized the closer the day of the parliamentary elections. In consequence, information wars might again recur on a number of media outlets that had hobnobbed**

with the leaders of the former regime (primarily the TV channels Inter, NTN and Ukraina, partially ICTV and STB, and the newspaper *2000*).

We should neither exclude the great **influence Russian newspapers and TV exert on the consciousness of a certain number of Ukrainians in the eastern regions and the Crimea**. They practically did not come under the influence of the JR.

However, the situation in the Ukrainian media environment depends not only on the journalists, but also on the position of media owners, editorial offices and management.

Media expert Serhiy Datsiuk (Gardarika Corporation) believes that the **media top management did not yield to the influence of the JR**. Whatever depended on the journalists – balanced presentation of news about each of the presidential candidates and absence of obvious manipulations and distortions – was fundamentally improved. Yet the top management of the TV channels did not change their stand and continued using television for an information war against one of the contenders in the election campaign.

One of the ways of securing the achievements of the JR, as experts suggest, is to **make public as much as possible and formalize the “owner – manager – journalist” relationship**. The owner should be made liable for urging the journalist to violate professional standards, while the journalist for their deliberate breach.

In the opinion of Mykola Tomenko, Deputy Prime Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, the changes occasioned by the Orange Revolution have to **be secured at the legislative level**. He maintains, in particular, that it is necessary to “introduce amendments to Ukrainian legislation and regularize the relations between the media managers, owners, journalists.”

The Deputy Prime Minister considers as no less important to **“bring to account all those involved in the introduction of censorship and *temnyki*, fomenting of inter-ethnic enmity, and other violations of the law.”**

Vitaliy Shevchenko, member of the National Council of TV and Radio Broadcasting, concurred: *“I do not believe that the rebellions of journalists will have tangible positive consequences, if the enemies of freedom of speech are not brought to account. For two years now our legislation refers censorship to criminal offences that entail strict liability. On every TV channel and in every newspaper involved in political character assassination or in cultivating censorship, there were (and still are, as a rule) definite people who were the mainstay of such practices. The offenses have to be investigated with the subsequent establishment of the causes, motives, consequences, and degree of guilt, and the guilty have to be convicted. Then, later on, if we are such a merciful nation, someone will seek release on bail, reduce fines, change the real prison terms to conditional sentences, or appeal for amnesty. But everyone has to be cognizant of the fact that a repetition of something similar in the future will not go unpunished.”*

At the same time we can hardly welcome the Deputy Prime Minister’s proposal to **terminate or substantially reduce financing the state-owned mass media** in the next few years. In the opinion of experts – in particular, Serhiy Hrabovsky, deputy editor-in-chief of *Suchanist* (Contemporaneity) – reduced financing will make the media outlets seek resources from so-called “political sponsors.” Otherwise, most of the media outlets will cease or minimize their operation. So far it is impossible to publish newspapers that would be financially dependent only on mass readership in the vast majority of Ukraine’s regions. One or another option will not improve the situation with freedom of speech nor overcome the distortions in the presentation of information in the regions.

In case of total privatization of central state-owned information agencies – as, for example, Ukrinform – the government will lose an important channel of access to the public not covered by the private mass media outlets, which, as the Inter TV Channel, for example, might become an effective transmitter of disinformation and a tool of manipulating public opinion.

Irina Bekeshkina, scientific manager of the Democratic Initiatives Foundation, sees a way out by **reorienting the journalists' attention to the public at large**: "Not one specific TV or radio channel but all of them should 'go public,' because their main purpose is to work for readers, viewers and listeners. So far we see and hear irksomely boring interviews with one and the same MPs and political scientists. What we do not hear is the voice of the street, seeing instead only some beautiful cityscapes in the background. We need programs on problematic issues examined and commented on by extremely diverse voices – from different regions, by representatives of different social strata, age groups, and the like. Throughout these years journalists have developed a definite mindset of being no more than part of a body politic. They can become a fourth estate only when they become aware of being part of the people, taking their side, and standing up for their interests before the government whatever that government might be."

In the opinion of *Telekritika*, which featured in its pages a discussion of experts on the prospects of media reform, a top priority objective on the agenda of the media and journalists for the next year years is to:

- secure the current impartiality and balanced nature of TV news; revive professional political analysis on TV as quickly as possible;
- put into effect the mechanisms for setting up Public TV and Radio Broadcasting as a public service and the most effective instrument in dealing with the problems not only of political censorship but also of market requirements;
- introduce into the practice of the majority of media outlets the conclusion of agreements of open editorial policy concerning news (information) on the basis of professional standards;
- develop new legislative initiatives to ensure market reforms in the mass media and to legislatively regulate the above-mentioned issues;
- develop mechanisms of public control and the influence of society on compliance with legal information rules.

Problems of Media Reform Implementation

In general, **the community of professionals and experts has a unanimous understanding of the approaches to media reform.**

A few days ago a conference held by the Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine and the National Journalists Union of Ukraine adopted a Manifesto setting forth the requirements to media reform, which, on the whole, were similar to what the experts suggested.

But the current status of the media is not too favourable for implementing effective reform, because:

- First, no real positive changes have occurred in the overall economic situation in which the Ukrainian mass media operates.
- Second, the practice of using the mass media exclusively as an instrument of political influence or a tool for manipulating the electorate contributed to the *deskilling of a substantial number of journalists* as well as top managers, who discarded the habit of learning (or did not learn at all) to work in the media as in a normal business, i.e. taking their cue from the real needs of the audiences, but not from the orders of owners or political sponsors.
- Third, journalists frequently hold onto their old ways of thinking. Especially those employed in the state-owned and municipal media find it much more difficult to depart from propaganda and begin independently analyzing processes and collecting information from different sources. Quite a few fail to keep up with the new pace and wilfully revert to the

“old” format. To avert such a development in the future, it is necessary to educate young people on new principles and *pay a greater deal of attention to the education of journalists*.

- Fourth, the extremely low level of corporate self-organization of the journalist community as well as the *embryonic status of the trade union movement* make it impossible to effectively and continually deal with the problems of social guarantees of journalists;
- And finally, the existence of a huge number of state-owned and municipal mass media outlets will inevitably breed a multitude of social problems for their employees, once these media are denationalized en masse or a public broadcasting service is set up.

The new government has actually been plunged into a situation when the declarations on the need for media reform voiced so naturally by the recent Opposition have run into a harsh reality that is full of dramatic contradictions.

For instance, the need for establishing a public broadcasting service is at variance with the obvious political requirement of the new government to possess its own information potential lest it be edged out by the already long operating and well financed potential of former government members dreams of political revenge. Besides, there loom the already mentioned social problems when employees will have to be dismissed in the process of restructuring state-owned television.

The desire to demonopolise the media market conflicts with the formally legal procedures for acquiring media outlets.

The rules of Ukrainian legislation on information, even in their current version, are sufficiently progressive, as a lot of experts believe, but they have been traditionally flouted by total non-compliance.

Taking into account all these contradictions, it is obvious that the success of the media reform will depend on the political will of the new government that has demonstrated its resolve for change and sustainability of democratic standards of freedom of speech and the press. An important step to this end should be a quick establishment of a public broadcasting service, which would radically change the situation in the information environment.

Let us now identify the main areas of media reform, which, as we see it, have to be implemented in the short run.

Top Priority Phases of Media Reform

For the **establishment of a public broadcasting service** it is necessary to:

- set up a managerial body on the basis of transparency, independence and pluralism;
- guarantee public broadcasters independence from political and/or economic interference;
- guarantee public broadcasters all the required transmission equipment and radio frequency resource;
- ensure budgetary appropriations for the period of evolvement of the service and of a design of effective and transparent funding arrangements in the future (for account of targeted dues, subscription, and the like).

Legislative regulation of new relationships between owners, founders, top managers and journalists

For this purpose it is necessary to:

- formulate print media and TV companies’ editorial policy which should be consistent with the principles of information and journalist activity and ethical principles of journalism, and involve the participation of the staff of editorial offices in formulating policy;

- draw up editorial statutes to protect the professional independence, reputation and rights of journalism to abide by ethical standards;
- familiarize journalists with the editorial policy during admission to work and not establish for them additional requirements to any values or content that are not set forth in the text of the editorial policy;
- secure legislatively equal rights of journalists for dismissal in case of change of a media owner or change in editorial policy and establish compensation in the amount of six-months pay and an additional one-month pay for each year of work with the media outlet to promote independence of journalists;
- introduce amendments to legislation concerning the system of payroll fund taxation to legalize the journalists' pay.

Legislative enforcement of media owners and founders' accountability to the public, for which purpose:

- obligate media owners to make public the content of editorial policy not less than once a year, before the onset of each national election campaign, and immediately in case of any changes in editorial policy;
- establish legal accountability for failure to make public or failure to make public on time editorial policy, or pursuance of editorial policy that is inconsistent with what had been made public;
- enforce legislatively the obligation of print and electronic mass media to provide information about owners of media and persons who may influence their activity when they apply for state registration and submit documents for broadcasting licenses, and also the obligation to make public this information and/or any changes not less than once a year and by all means before the onset of elections. Clearly defined legal accountability of the media should be established for failure to make such information public.

Development of the journalist trade union movement, determination of the professional and social status of journalists, and assurance of their labour and social rights, for which purpose:

- ensure legislatively guarantees of establishment and activity of trade union organizations in the mass media;
- actively promote, along with the government, public and international institutions, the development of a trade union movement and other forms of corporate self-organization of journalists;
- determine the status of a professional journalist as a person who collects, processes and prepares information for the mass media, derives a profit from this activity, and abides by the rules of professional ethics;
- take measures to legalize the labour relations and remuneration of journalists in order to ensure independence of journalists and restore all of their labour and social rights if they are violated;
- design jointly with trade unions and other representative journalists organizations a system of rate-setting of journalists' pay, taking into account their qualification and experience, and ensure compliance with Ukrainian legislation defining the social rights and guarantees of journalists;
- enforce legislatively the obligation of media owners to ensure security and insurance of the life, health and property of journalists, as well as the risks related to possible lawsuits;

- align Ukraine's ethical codes of journalist activity with the International Federation of Journalists' *Declaration of Principles of Behaviour of Journalists* and draw up a single document on applying ethical principles;
- improve the system of professional training and retraining of journalists, introduce modern European standards of journalist education in the programs of corresponding higher education establishments of Ukraine;
- identify a single body of professional self-regulation that would be entitled to make decisions on violations of rules of professional ethics by journalists; engage in its work authoritative representatives of the journalist community, publishers and lawyers.

Enforcement of transparent and publicly accountable process of denationalization of state-owned and municipal mass media, for which purpose:

- take into account how the population in the regions is provided with information;
- grant priority right of editorial staffs of state-owned and municipal mass media to receive tangible and intangible assets of these media, and design a program of transferring the assets with the participation of journalists associations;
- implement measures of social protection of journalists who will be dismissed in case of reorganization/liquidation of state-owned and municipal media outlets.

We view the parliamentary hearings as the first step toward implementing the referred to measures. As a result of these hearings, amendments to legislation should be introduced and an organizational foundation established for protecting the rights of journalists and ensuring the irreversibility of the changes in the media market.

ANNEX 1

Assessment of the Political Dangers to the Mass Media in the 2005-2006 Election Season

1. Dangers preceding the 2006 elections

1.1. The election campaign in 2006 might “tempt” the government to bring under its control the neutral media outlets

The first serious danger to journalists might be the *new government's attempt to revert to the practices of the former regime, i.e. put under its heel the information flows in the press and on television*. The pre-election contentions in 2005 could easily encourage such a development. If the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united) or Victor Pinchuk manages to keep under the control serious information channels and be ready to compete with the new government in spreading information, especially pre-election information, the government and the President might be tempted to make “their mouthpiece” other channels. Since most of the media channels are still weak to date and are prepared to yield to influence (UT-1 Channel can in no way give up praising the President), there would be no need to introduce *temnyki* for controlling the information environment.

1.2. The rapid change of government does not alter the mindset of the authorities in the regions

At the local level the situation cannot change, because under the new government the local authorities are appointed on the spur of the moment. In many regions, former members of Victor Yanukovych's election headquarters are becoming leaders of the local executive on behalf of the new government. Under such conditions it is *difficult to guarantee that the executive will be joined by people who in practice will observe freedom of speech and not pressure the mass media*. Say, the press under the control of the local state administrations will be compelled to report events inadequately for fear of dismissal.

1.3. The “Revolution” is turning into a self-purification of journalists

Once they were free from serious pressure, the journalists began falling into dispute about who was the closest to the revolutionary ideas and who showered the most voluble praises upon the former government. When Roman Skrypin (Channel 5) accused UT-1 of selling alcoholic beverages at its snack bar, the UT-1 employees wrote an open letter to the leading media outlets with the demand for apology, along with a string of commentaries. The Internet publication *Ukrainska pravda* featured a critical article about the methods of work of Ukrinform, which today is supposedly to have become a refuge for journalists short of retirement and given to excessive drinking.

Mutual criticisms and controversies among journalists is a positive signal, because it induces a review of their place in the media (what media is needed for the state or the public). But on the other hand, *such a situation distracts journalists from their main mission of keeping the public informed about what's going on*. It's a case of perverted democracy, when lack of control over journalists kindles chaos and arrests real work.

2. Dangers after the 2006 elections

2.1. If the opposition candidates win the elections

Today the opposition is being deprived of a part of its property. Reprivatization will involve the strategic Kriviy Rih Steelworks, oblast power generation enterprises, and a host of small enterprises. The new members of the government are liquidating some shadowy schemes of money laundering.

For all that, *mass media outlets are not yet being taken away from the opposition*. The SDPU(u) still holds on to the popular Inter TV Channel, while the Donetsk tycoon Rinat Akhmetov is the

actual owner of the Ukraina TV Channel. The information environment remains open for the opposition and, moreover, a part of this environment belongs to the opposition.

All too little time has elapsed for the opposition to gain democratic forms and learn to play by the rules. Therefore, once the opposition comes back to power (the least probable scenario), it will again launch the process of returning businesses and enterprises under its control.

The list of recoveries might also include media outlets. It's not only a question of recovering control over state television or reviving *temnyki*, it's also the *probability of mass redundancy and pressure against the bitterest enemies of the former government*. Such a "professional axe" could be laid on journalists who stood up for freedom of speech as well as on publications and TV channels who did not abide by the "recommendations" of *temnyki*. Playing off one journalist against another and organizing provocations might be yet another element of persecuting journalists (such schemes were successfully applied by the former government).

Another reality might be *the growing presence of Russia in the Ukrainian information environment*. Most of the opposition forces – Party of Regions or the SDPU(u) – are in favours of closer links with Russia in contrast to the pro-European aspirations of the current government. The victory of the former will mean access of Russian business and government to the Ukrainian information environment as well. For example, the Russian Club in Ukraine might gain new influence, while the Russian business elite or government officials might become owners of leading newspapers. Then there is also the possibility of journalists applying Russian methods of influence, which are not distinguished for their democratic substance.

2.2. If the pro-government candidates lose the elections

Should the government successfully use the media outlets during the election and gain a predilection for pressure, there will be the danger of *growing control over the journalists*. Instead of *temnyki*, the new government might find much subtler methods of influence – say, by suppressing the most important events (already now experts emphasize the fact that Victor Yushchenko is issuing too many edicts classified "not for publication").

Another danger to journalist could be the *"implantation of unprofessional"* journalists. The government might lend its support (assignment of frequencies, award of benefits, etc.) to its likeminded publications and channels, using as a criteria loyalty instead of professionalism. This will erode journalism standards, and should the opposition-friendly media outlets revert to "information wars," society will be deprived of quality journalism.

Rejection of impartiality could become to journalists a danger in its own right, if the pro-government candidates win the elections. If Victor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko manage to win the sympathy of the population, journalists, swept up by the wave of general approval, might reject impartiality in assessing the situation and fall a prey to "good politics." *Criticizing the President and the Government might become simply unpopular*. Then the media outlets might become no more than "supervisors of democracy" and fall under the very same control as during Kuchma's presidency, but now doing their jobs of their own free will without any pressure. Today TV channels frequently report on the positive decisions of the new President, his family traditions and values, relegating to the background analyses of negative trends and comparisons of Yushchenko's pre-election slogans with his real activity.

Yet another danger is the excessive *indulgence of the government in adjusting Ukraine to the requirements of Western standards*. Regrettably, the current circumstances make it impossible to quickly and painlessly accept Western standards of information disseminations. Open and transparent sale of newspapers would not mean at all that the situation with freedom of speech in the country would change for the better – it might be simply bought by a Russia owner, and should the Russians buy up a critical mass of newspapers the destruction of the freedom of speech could be highly probable and, moreover, pose a threat to Ukraine's national security.

Even given transparent privatization and compliance with rules, no system has evolved in Ukraine for easily implementing the democratic principles declared in the West.

2.3. If the elections end in a draw

If the elections yield comparable returns (the most probable scenario), the government and the opposition will have to come to an agreement on building a majority. For the mass media such a scenario will be more negative than positive. Among the negotiation terms there will also be secret agreements (when building the majority for her activity after the victory of the Revolution, Yulia Tymoshenko was inclined to make covert agreements). *Since access to the mass media is the principal resource of the opposition, it is absolutely probable that the bargaining will revolve around the access to the press or ownership of media outlets.* This step could seriously make null and void the government's declarations about its democratic aspirations and assurance of freedom of speech.

Yet another element of the bargaining might be the allocation of offices. The current government has demonstrated that despite its pre-election campaign declarations about personnel selection by professional criteria, it nonetheless professes the principle of "appointment in return of gratitude." It cannot be excluded that this principle will have to be applied for building a majority after the 2006 elections as well. Then the information environment might also be drawn into the "distribution" process. *Appointment of people by "quotas" or the creation of new offices as "gratitude" might pollute the information environment and misshape its management.*

ANNEX 2

Preliminary Analysis of the Situation in the Central Media Outlets

Despite the changes in the media environment, an analysis of the results of a poll among journalists (conducted by *Telekritika*) gives enough reason to say that to date:

- ***The mechanism of relationships between the owner, editor and journalist is far from clearly defined.***

Only eight out of the 30 interviewed journalists had contracts with owners, collective contracts or published principles of editorial policy executed in practice. One-third of the journalists (nine of 30 respondents) had labour contracts.

In this case, the recommended *introduction of labour contracts with clearly defined labour relations* will mean: first, reduction in a journalist's pay to his disadvantage, and, second, commencement of tax inspections and, accordingly, increase in the number of opposition media, which is very undesirable for the government before the parliamentary elections.

Then the question arises of increasing the pay of journalists. Introducing contracts at all media outlets without exception remains so far an idea of the distant future.

- ***The procedure for formulating editorial policy as a mechanism of enforcing media independence needs to be regulated.***

Most of the journalists approve, in the main, the editorial policy of their media outlets (21 of the 30 respondents).

But only one-third were prepared to hand in their articles, knowing beforehand that they would not be accepted because of the content. About a half of the respondents stated that they had to revise articles because of subjects (topics) that were "inconvenient for publication," and almost one-third (eight of 30 respondents) was compelled to withdraw their articles at the last moment.

Therefore, it is extremely urgent to *formulate editorial policy which would obligate media owners to make public its substances once a year and before the next election campaign*. The Manifesto issued by the National Conference of Journalists held on March 4-5, 2005 stressed the need for establishing legal accountability for failure to make editorial policies public. Since the term "editorial policy" has still to be clearly defined, meeting the referred to requirement is rather difficult and calls for the establishment of a monitoring commission to trace whether the declared policies really accord with the media's positions.

- ***The influence of owners on editorial policy is not always transparent.***

About a third of the journalists (eight of 30) stated that their media owner did not show up at the editorial office. Only seven out of the 30 said that the owner was visiting the office regularly (in four of the referred to cases the owner was the editor or the editorial staff). And only in five cases did the journalists communicate with media owners in private or at general meetings.

To regulate the owner-media relationships, experts suggest to *legally enforcing the obligation to make public the information about media owners and persons who may influence the activity of the media*.

Meeting this condition implies the obligation of the media outlet to provide information about the owner when he submits documents for securing a license.

- ***The mechanisms for protecting journalists' rights have little effect.***

A third of the respondents (20 of 30) certified the fact that their media outlets did not have any trade union organizations, and in most of the cases the journalists did not see any need in setting them up.

The majority of the respondents referred to the relationships that evolved in their editorial offices as the principal mechanism for protecting their rights. Most of the respondents did not state any legal guarantees of protection of their own professional activity.

Only 12 journalists believed that their rights in the workplace were adequately safeguarded.

The effective mechanisms for dealing with the referred to problems could be:

- *Establishment of trade unions for the exercise of the journalists' professional rights and freedoms.*
- *Training courses for journalists in legal safeguards of mass media activity;*
- *Legislative enforcement of media owner's obligation to ensure the security and insurance of journalists.*

ANNEX 3

Preliminary Analysis of Publications in the Regional Press

Processed were 176 regional publications represented in the Chapter “Regional Newspapers” of the Ukrainian “Meta” Search System. This analysis reveals certain trends typical of the regional press.

The analysis of this body of information revealed the following:

1. The most neutral was the material devoted to politics in business newspapers, such as *Delovaya nedelya* (Business Week) and *Merkuriy* (Mercury, Zhytomyr), *Vlasna sprava – Nash krai* (Private Business – our Region, Transcarpathian oblast), *Nashe vremya* (Our Time, Mykolaiv), *Berdiansk delovoi* (Entrepreneurial Berdiansk), *Delovaya Odessa* (Entrepreneurial Odessa), and *Kurier* (Courier, Luhansk).

2. The most politicized were the newspapers in the West – Lviv, Khmelnytsky, Rivne, Chernivtsi, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Transcarpathian oblasts – *Lvivska hazeta* (Lviv Gazette), *Postup* (Advancement), *OHO* (Wow), *Rivne vechirne* (Evening Rivne), *Doba* (Day), *Reporter*, *Zakhidny kurier* (Western Courier), *Pravozakhyst* (Legal Protection), and *Argument hazeta* (Argument Gazette). Although the newspapers that could be referred to the obviously biased represented both principal political camps, this quality is the most bluntly expressed in the SDPU(u) newspapers and publications concurring with the party’s political platform.

To such newspapers can be referred the *Visnyk* (Herald, Transcarpathian oblast), which is replete with aggressive accusations against the new government, its abuse of power, persecution for political reasons, and the like. Here is one example: “*The ‘revolutionary people’s’ government is not only transforming Transcarpathia into a private property of one of Mukacheve’s clan, but also launched a veritable ‘mop-up operation’ on our land, as if in Chechnya, using for this purpose even a powerful police ‘landing force.’*” (*Visnyk*, March 5, 2004). There is not a single trace of an alternative opinion in the pages of this newspaper. Frequently the newspapers reproduce articles from the web sites of *Provokator* (Provocateur), *Forum*, *Pravda.ru*, *Kremlin.org*, *Lenta-au.com*, *InoPressa.ru*, and the weekly *2000*. Beyond comment are certainly the articles that appeared in the newspapers during the pre-election campaign. The following headings speak for themselves: “Yushchenko was poisoned by his adherent who arranged her plait in a Ukrainian manner” (*Visnyk*, December 28, 2004), “The orange is not a Carpathian fruit!” (*Visnyk*, December 24, 2004), “Overcoming a fainting fit, or why I vote for Yanukovych” (*Visnyk*, December 22, 2004), “Facets of the ‘Orange’ craze” (*Visnyk*, December 8, 2004), “Yushchenko pays young people 20 hryvnias each for staging provocations” (*Visnyk*, November 10, 2004).

Such an aggressive stance to the new government has now been assumed by the Ternopil newspaper *Reporter*, which in the election campaign was not distinguished for tolerance or balance. In the articles of the newspaper an obvious gravitation to the SDPU(u) can be traced.

Also biased are the articles in the Dnipropetrovsk newspapers *Novaya volna* (New Wave), the print organ of the Young Communist League of Ukraine, and the pro-communist *Obyektivnaya gazeta* (Impartial Newspaper). The newspapers in the South are mostly one-sided when presenting political subjects. An article featured in the newspaper *Melitopolskiye vedomosti* (Melitopol News) in March is titled “Orange Anarchy.” Its main idea is expressed in the subhead “*The first months of the recent opposition at the helm of state authority is depressing: many words – few deeds.*” (No. 17, March 2, 2005). The newspaper does not carry any alternative opinions about this and a lot of other critical publications of recent date. This is also true for the Zaporizhia newspaper *Verge* and the Odessa newspaper *Chass Ch* (Zero Hour).

Slava Sevastopolia (Glory of Sevastopol) is yet another example in this category. The newspaper was not in any way affected by the JR either at its height or now. Although the general key of

its publications has become more restrained when during the presidential election campaign, the newspaper can hardly be called impartial.

3. Since early 2005 a large number of regional newspapers in the East and Centre give preference to subjects far removed from political passions: social and domestic matters, folk medicine advice, local municipal problems, e.g., *Ogni Severodonetska* (Lights of Severodonetsk) *Donbas*, *Salon of Dona i Basa* (The Salon of Don and Bas), *MIG*, *Zaporozhska sich* (Zaporozhian Sich), *Vestnik Priazovia* (Sea of Azov Herald), *Vostochny proekt* (Eastern Project, Sloviansk, Kramatorsk, Druzhkivka), *Vasha vizitka* (Your Business Card, Kremenchuk), *Pervaya Krymskaya* (First Crimean), *Vecherniy Svitlovodsk* (Evening Svitlovodsk), *Misto* (City).

4. Most frequently newspapers tend to combine bias and neutrality, as is the case with the Kirovograd newspaper *Ukraina-Centre*. However, certain scepticism about the new government is expressed and occasionally some excessively stinging statements. Kharkiv's *Piatnytsa* (Friday) chose a lighter and ironic tone.

5. The print media founded by state administrations belong to a category that is anything but impartial. Their publications clearly reflect loyalty to the current government and concentrate on publicizing the activity of the local authorities, e.g. *Ploshcha Nezalezhnosti, 2* (Independence Square, 2, Sumy), *Stary zamok* (Old Castle, Transcarpathian oblast), *Pryluchyna* (Pryluky District).

Certainly, they, too, try to adapt to the new circumstances and feature the opinions of politicians advocating different views. For instance, the newspaper *Volyn* (Volyn oblast) carried during the past month interviews with the leader of the SDPU (u) oblast chapter and with Hryhoriy Omelchenko, as well as an article about the visit to Volyn of MP V.Zubanov who is famous for saying that he was prepared to relinquish his MP mandate to “free” this election district for Victor Yanukovich.

Diverse opinions are presented in the pages of *Vilne slovo* (Free Word, Zhytomyr) and *XXI vek* (21st Century, Luhansk).

6. What should be singled out in this list is the position of *Donbas* that claims to have the largest number of subscribers in the Donetsk coal basin. The newspaper tries to publish impartial articles about the situation in Ukraine and the region. In particular, it publishes and comments on reader's letters in an attempt to shatter the myths that were thrust on the region's voters during the election campaign (e.g. S.Tyshchenko's article “For the Judgment of your Reason,” No.38, February 24, 2005).

At a time of the highest passions in the election campaign, *Donbas* wrote about simple mundane things – how to deal with a cold, preventive medical treatment of eye ailments, municipal services and how they are provided, and the like. An example in point is the title of a lead article in an issue on the eve of the second tour of elections – “And Life Goes On” (No.211, November 18, 2004).

General impression. The impartiality of the publications depends to a large extent on the following:

- position of the media's owners, sponsors and founders;
- professional skill of journalists;
- prestige/popularity of the newspaper. There is an obvious correlation: the larger the print run of a popular newspaper the more restrained its statements, especially when it has to reckon with the competition of other newspapers;
- personal convictions of journalists, as reflected in their own articles and comments.

Tr.A.B.