



Quarterly Report
SERBIA: POLITICAL PARTY BUILDING AND CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00
October 1 to December 31, 2000

I. SUMMARY

The convincing victory by the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) in Serbia's December 23 parliamentary elections completed the dismantling of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic that had begun three months earlier with DOS' victory in federal presidential and parliamentary elections and a peaceful, popular uprising that forced Milosevic from federal office. Official results of the December 23 parliamentary elections gave DOS 64.3 percent of the vote, followed by the Serbian Socialist Party (13.3 percent), the Serbian Radical Party (8.7 percent) and the Serbian Unity Party (5.6 percent). By year's end DOS was in the process of forming its own majority government with Zoran Djindjic slated as prime minister.

The magnitude of political, social, economic and institutional reforms that Serbia must undertake is immense as it emerges not only from the Milosevic era but from the preceding 40 years of communist rule. In the democratization arena, key reforms of the political system are needed, among them decentralization, minority rights protection, and media and electoral reform. Further, political processes and governmental institutions must be open to transparency, accountability and citizen participation. These challenges must be addressed by political leaders who possess little experience in governance. NDI's four years of political party and civil society development in Serbia place the Institute in a favorable position to support the political reform efforts of Serbia's democrats.

In this quarter, as Serbia prepared for the December 23 parliamentary elections, NDI undertook the following activities:

- Trained 1,674 democratic political activists through the regional trainer program on voter contact, identifying supporters, political message development, rural campaigning, get out the vote (GOTV) and campaign calendars;
- Conducted political transition training with the minister for national and ethnic communities, the mayor of Belgrade and several chiefs of staff to key government officials;
- Conducted an opinion poll of Serbian voters and presented its findings to key organizers and strategists from the DOS; and
- Provided strategic consultation to DOS organizers based on polling information.

Some of the notable program results this quarter include the following:

- For the first time, CeSID received accreditation from the Serbian government to monitor elections inside polling stations as nonpartisan observers. CeSID placed more than 12,000 volunteer monitors in polling stations – more than double the number of volunteers deployed in September.
- CeSID regional offices, especially in Nis, Novi Sad and Kragujevac, used newly developed communications skills from NDI to earn effective, on-message media during the December election campaign.
- The Women’s Political Network effectively utilized election result information provided by NDI to build a campaign to get more women on the DOS candidate list.
- Nearly one-third of candidates on the DOS Republic parliamentary list were trained by NDI.
- As a result of NDI’s grassroots training, a number of NDI’s regional trainers stood as candidates and won election to local office, including the deputy mayor of Nis and city council seats in several Belgrade municipalities. Others were appointed to the Republic Election Commission and the Executive Board of the City of Belgrade.

II. BACKGROUND

DOS’ parliamentary election victory signaled the end of the Milosevic era. Repudiated abroad and discredited at home, Slobodan Milosevic resigned as federal president on October 6 in the face of a popular uprising over his refusal to accept his defeat and that of his party in federal presidential and parliamentary elections held on September 24. DOS’ ascension to power at the federal level and its anticipated victory at the December polls unleashed a wave of support from the U.S. and others delighted at Milosevic’s removal of power. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) was quickly readmitted to the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Negotiations on readmission to international financial institutions have been moving quickly. Vast sums of international assistance have been pledged to meet Serbia’s short-term energy needs and to rescue its moribund economy. The U.S. is in the process of suspending its sanctions on the regime.

Nevertheless, concerns have been raised over the international community’s rush to reward the new government without guarantees of Belgrade’s cooperation with the investigation and prosecution of international war criminals linked to the Milosevic regime.

The challenges before the new Federal Yugoslav and Serbian governments are enormous. First, the magnitude of the political, social, economic and institutional reforms that Serbia must undertake is immense. Key reforms of the political system, among them decentralization and new laws regarding elections, media, public information and government institutions themselves, are needed. A new banking system, a new judiciary and modernization of industry are also among the massive reforms required. Second, Belgrade must confront complex political challenges in seeking peaceful solutions to the final status of Kosovo and Montenegro, respectively, and consider how ethnic minorities and refugees within its borders can be politically enfranchised. Third, and perhaps most difficult, Serbia must eventually and inevitably confront its recent past, for the foundations of its democracy cannot be built without examination

of the vast human rights atrocities in Bosnia, Kosovo and elsewhere that have been perpetrated in Serbia's name.

Serbia's political reform process in 2001 will be played out in an election context, as important presidential elections must be held and, should a political solution between Serbia and Montenegro be found in which the federation is maintained, early federal presidential and parliamentary elections may be called as well. These elections in 2001 will be critical in establishing democratic precedents.

NDI views its assistance in a two-track approach. First, NDI plans to focus on the longer-term institution building of political parties as key not only to the creation of a multiparty, pluralist political system but to the development of government institutions, such as parliament and local government. Second, given the continuation of elections in 2001, NDI proposes to continue its election-based assistance in order to assist the political parties that comprise DOS to achieve a "soft landing" as the coalition likely splits apart and to help Cesid and other groups position themselves as nonpartisan watchdogs and proponents of reform. With regard to political party assistance, NDI plans to utilize the training skills of its Serbian trainers who have proved to be excellent "in-house" trainers of many of the approximately 5,000 DOS activists trained by NDI during the 2000 election cycle.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Political Party Program

Pre-Election Training

Prior to the September 2000 local and federal elections, NDI trained a core group of activists in political training skills so that they could communicate these techniques to activists throughout Serbia. Similarly, NDI's regional trainer team conducted trainings in preparation for the December parliamentary elections. This training was seen as important given an anticipated lessening of enthusiasm and motivation following the dramatic and decisive elections in September.

The Cycle I training was dedicated to voter contact, supporter identification and political message development. Several participants remarked that they had never before tried door-to-door voter contact techniques. Training took place in 40 cities and towns throughout Serbia with 961 activists from Democratic Opposition of Serbia member parties. NDI telephoned each branch of each DOS party in each location to communicate the training schedule directly. Training sessions were held in DOS regional offices that NDI helped to establish and, where none existed, in party branch offices or municipal buildings. NDI regional trainers conducted the training.

The Cycle II training focused on rural campaigning, campaign calendars and get out the vote (GOTV). NDI trained more than 600 activists during this cycle in 40 cities and towns.

Public Opinion Polling and Strategy

A total of 1,088 interviews with voters were conducted between November 1 and 9 throughout Serbia, excluding Kosovo. Later in the month, NDI presented the poll findings in Belgrade to more than 30 organizers from the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, including, for the first time, members of the Democratic Party of Serbia.

The poll found that President Kostunica's favorability rating and that of DOS are extremely high (86 and 74 percent, respectively) and that of former President Milosevic and the Socialist Party of Serbia were significantly lower, each at 13 percent. Sixty-nine percent of respondents said they were prepared to vote for DOS in the December parliamentary elections. Nearly two-thirds of poll respondents agreed that Milosevic should stand trial "for his actions as president," and the vast majority of those respondents favor a Belgrade trial for crimes against the state and not a trial in The Hague for war crimes. The poll's major findings were posted on the Institute's website and a press release was sent out to Washington, D.C. government offices and NGOs.

Later in the month, NDI presented the poll findings in Belgrade to more than 30 organizers from the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, including, for the first time, members of the Democratic Party of Serbia. NDI conducted a comprehensive strategy session with 30 DOS activists following the polling presentation, focusing on using the poll numbers to make strategic links and decisions that build winning campaigns. This workshop included a discussion on how to balance the DOS election campaigns with new government responsibilities.

Government Transition Consultations

In December, NDI government transition expert Eugene Kostyra consulted with DOS leaders who assumed new government positions at the federal and local levels. Kostyra is an advisor on economic development to the premier of Manitoba and has an extensive background in election campaigning, transition planning and political organizing. Through NDI, Kostyra counseled the chief of staff and communications director of the office of the president in Montenegro in 1998 following President Djukanovic's ascendance to that position.

During his visit to Belgrade, Kostyra held intensive consultations with Milan St. Protic, mayor of Belgrade, and Rasim Ljajic, minister for national and ethnic communities and their respective staffs. These sessions were supplemented by consultations with chiefs of staff to the speaker of the Chamber of Citizens, foreign minister, and federal minister of police.

Kostyra produced a list of recommendations for Protic and Ljajic related to defining roles and responsibilities of staff, establishing clear and effective lines of communication, and implementing responsive constituency relations. NDI also provided ample documentation of transition and government staffing models from Canada during the consultative sessions. For example, Kostyra noted that newly elected officials, when they achieve office, are forced to follow past practices. Staff structures and procedures that supported previous approaches to government are followed. It is important in a change of government that the staff and procedures be flexible to follow the needs of the new regime and not the opposite.

Following are specific recommendations from Kostyra:

- The revised structure for the office should ensure that there are additional resources devoted to political strategy, constituency, outreach and communications needs, and, as needed, international affairs.
- The roles and responsibilities of staff should be clearly defined to ensure that the needs are met in an efficient and timely manner.
- A system of tracking should be instituted to ensure that all citizen complaints are followed up on in a timely fashion and receive responses. A consistent protocol should be devised for greeting visitors and answering phone calls.
- Regular meetings should be held on a daily basis with the senior staff and on a weekly basis with all staff.
- In order to meet the staffing and policy needs, the possibility of secondment arrangements should be reviewed with universities, NGOs and other governmental offices. This is an arrangement whereby staff from those organizations could be offered without cost to the office.
- The use of volunteer committees of experts should be reviewed to ascertain if they can meet policy needs.

Material Assistance

To further assist the direct communication with voters during the election preparation period, NDI provided \$29,000 in material assistance, which comprised printers and stage assistance for the republic-wide bus tours and speaking engagements undertaken by DOS leaders and candidates.

The Center for Free Elections and Democracy

Strategic Evaluation

CeSID held an evaluation session of its performance in September's elections. While CeSID personnel expressed satisfaction with the organization's role in proclaiming Kostunica the democratic victor, a number of performance issues surfaced as well. Aware that CeSID's accredited presence inside polling stations for the first time would present new challenges, CeSID focused on improving election day reports, minimizing information lost between polling stations and CeSID headquarters, and alleviating confusion about individual roles and responsibilities in the communications hierarchy.

CeSID made visible efforts to correct for these issues long before election day by creating new, more detailed paperwork for observers to report on the conduct of elections at each polling

station, and by producing a written document delineating responsibilities of each position in the organizational hierarchy and establishing an election-day communication procedure.

Media Training

In December, NDI communications expert Mark Webster (U.S.) led a communications strategy consultation with Cesid.¹ Webster held separate sessions with Executive Director Slobodanka Nedovic, spokesperson Marko Blagojevic, communications personnel from 12 of CeSID's regional offices, and the regional coordinator from Novi Sad, where staff turnover had significantly affected volunteer recruitment. These sessions covered message development, message delivery, earned media, leaflet and press release writing, and public speaking skills.

Webster's training of regional communications personnel expanded CeSID's media skills base laterally and focused on media or press situations that regional office staff regularly confront. The 12 participants worked in teams to write press releases and photo captions and then practiced "staying on message" in taped mock-interviews. As Webster's visit coincided with a previously scheduled CeSID press conference, he was also able to give direct feedback on this event.

Election Day Activities

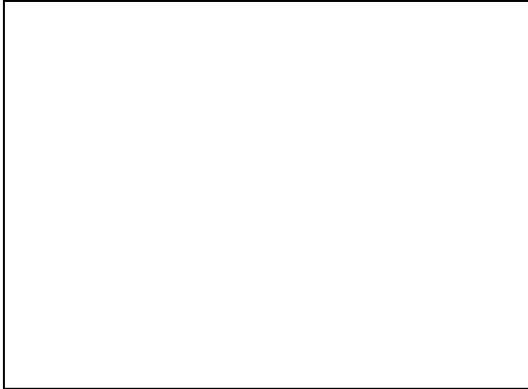
For the first time, Cesid received accreditation from the Serbian government to monitor elections inside polling stations as nonpartisan observers. CeSID placed more than 12,000 volunteer monitors in polling stations – more than double the number of volunteers deployed in September. With newly clarified communications mechanisms and clearly defined roles for monitors, coordinators, and team leaders, station reports and election day results passed clearly to CeSID headquarters, which were quickly released to the public through press conferences and the internet.

NDI noted the accuracy with which CeSID monitors documented all activities at their assigned polling station. One CeSID monitor confided to NDI staff near Velika Plana that "they [election officials] aren't checking IDs very consistently here. I know its because the village is small and everyone knows each other, but they are supposed to, so I'm writing them up." In other polling stations, CeSID's accurate record-keeping led some election officials to suggest that OSCE observers consult with CeSID monitors regarding accurate voter turnout.

Publication of Election Results

While official election results were not released for several days, CeSID accurately called provisional results (to within 1 seat) by 10:30PM on election night. Both English and Serbian versions of its website hosted the following chart, showing results and parliamentary seat allocations.

¹ Webster worked with CeSID on developing a communications strategy prior to the September elections.



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As polling station results poured in over the next several hours, CeSID posted an interactive map of Serbia, which allowed users to click on the districts to see that area's results.

Campaign Training for Women

In December, NDI consultant Diane Cromer met with the leadership of Serbia's Women's Political Network to discuss campaign strategy issues and the use of polling. Cromer focused specifically on expanding the appeal of a women's campaign to include women of all backgrounds, not just the urban educated.

During the week of the Republic elections, NDI staff attended the Women in Politics Conference organized by Ambassador Swanee Hunt at the Sava Center. Approximately 50 women from around the region and several NGOs across Serbia were able to gather for the event. NDI contributed actively to a variety of the sessions, and follow-up throughout the region is to be expected. Many of the women present reported previous positive experiences with NDI.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- CeSID regional offices, especially in Nis, Novi Sad and Kragujevac, used newly developed communications skills from NDI to earn effective, on-message media during the December election campaign.
- The Women's Political Network considered communications advice provided by NDI and revamped its campaign to appeal to a broader audience of women voters—not just educated women who comprise the network.
- The Women's Political Network effectively utilized election result information provided by NDI to build a campaign to get more women on the DOS candidate list.
- The Serbian election law promulgated in October 2000 reflects elements of Cesid's 1999 model election law that NDI helped to fund. Of practical note is the official laws

² Directly from the CeSID website: <http://www.cesid.org/english/index.shtml>

specification of circumstances of repeating a vote, taken from Cesid's model law, which was put into use as 19 polling stations are scheduled to repeat the December vote.

- Nearly one-third of candidates on the DOS Republic parliamentary list were trained by NDI.
- The mayor of Belgrade instituted a greeting protocol at the recommendation of NDI.
- Also at the recommendation of NDI, the minister of national and ethnic minority communities instituted a database and automatic letters to all delegations that meet with him.
- Following recommendations from NDI to share visibly in the hardship of citizens, the prime minister of Serbia changed the policy of electricity outages to include the homes of leading politicians, including his own.

V. EVALUATION

Throughout its democratic assistance program in Serbia, NDI maintained that peaceful political change in Serbia leading to democratization was impossible with the Milosevic regime in power. In 1997, the Institute committed to working with democratic forces in Serbia in an effort to level the political playing field by imparting political organizing skills to democratically oriented political parties. With significantly enhanced support in 1999 and 2000 from USAID, the Institute increased its training activities and engaged in public opinion polling, material assistance, and strategic consultations with the opposition leadership. With the September and December DOS electoral victories, substantial progress has been made in establishing a political opening for a multiparty system.

In this quarter, NDI expatriate staff met with regional trainers based throughout Serbia to witness for the first time political changes due in part to grassroots training conducted by the regional trainers. It was apparent that political leaders and activists conducted political campaigning and governing fundamentally differently as a result of NDI's training. Vojislav Jovanovic, deputy mayor of Valjevo, commented that "NDI's activities are of great importance for all the parties in Valjevo; it can help us overcome our problems." Indeed, some of the regional trainers themselves stood as candidates and won election to local office, including the deputy mayor of Nis and city council seats in several Belgrade municipalities. Others were appointed to the Republic Election Commission and the Executive Board of the City of Belgrade.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI submitted a 2001 proposal to USAID in December 2000, which is currently under review. In that proposal, NDI envisages a continuation of its political party training and its technical and financial assistance to Cesid. NDI also proposed to work with political parties in governmental institutions, such as parliament and local government. To this latter end, NDI plans to place in Belgrade an expatriate representative to implement this portion of the program.

In the first quarter of 2001, NDI plans to establish a training schedule with political parties, recruit and place a third expatriate representative in Belgrade, undertake an assessment of political party work in parliament and local government, and possibly, pending further review, provide informal technical assistance to ministerial chiefs of staff in the Serbian government on how to manage political affairs and internal and external communications.