



Quarterly Report
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:
POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00
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I. SUMMARY

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has provided democratization assistance in Macedonia since 1993 in the areas of civic education, election monitoring, voter education, political party building and parliamentary development. Since 1999, NDI has conducted a program designed to increase the capacity of members of parliament (MPs) to play a substantive role in legislative development. In late 1999, at the request of parliamentary group leaders and MPs, the Institute expanded the scope of its work to include constituent liaison assistance, a parliamentary internship program and consultations on the implications of transitioning from a part-time to a full-time parliament. The Institute's long-term goal in Macedonia is for the parliament to build and maintain ties with the electorate, to draft and analyze legislation, and to conduct legislative oversight. This goal falls under USAID's strategic objective 2.1.2 (strengthened parliamentary structures and operations and enhanced communications between citizens and legislators). To this end, NDI has set forth the following objectives in Macedonia:

- A professional nonpartisan staff is created or is in the process of creation;
- Parliamentary commissions conduct public hearings to incorporate citizen input into legislation and strengthen legislative deliberation and oversight;
- Members of parliament and parliamentary staff have skills with which to conduct legislative affairs through expanded information technology;
- An expanded group of parliamentary interns increases legislative research skills and begins to work outside the party caucus groups in other parliamentary domains, such as commissions;
- Members of parliament and non-governmental organizations strengthen their interaction on legislation; and
- Members of parliament employ constituent relations techniques that contribute to parliamentary accountability and citizen representation.

This quarter was marred by violent clashes between Macedonian forces and ethnic Albanian insurgents in the northern part of the country. The insurgents claim to be fighting on

behalf of the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia, who feel they are treated as second-class citizens. Despite these occurrences, NDI was able to carry out scheduled program events. Much of the first half of the quarter was spent laying the groundwork for activities held in March, such as the political party assessment and consultations with MPs on legislative ethics. The parliamentary interns were introduced to techniques in public speaking and debate, and the constituent relations program began its third session with a new group of MPs. This quarter saw important results: additional MPs held office hours, all parliamentary groups installed computers in their coordinators' offices, and Deputy Danevski agreed that the working group on the law of the status of MPs should hold a public hearing on the bill – the first time in 10 years that any parliamentarian has shown willingness to make a piece of legislation available for public comment.

NDI is hopeful that the current conflict will not disrupt future activities. Rather, the Institute hopes this opportunity will allow advancement of its parliamentary work, as attention is focused on strengthening Macedonia's political institutions and making them more responsive to people's needs.

II. BACKGROUND

After a four-year boycott by the opposition, the 1998 parliamentary elections returned all major political parties to the parliament. NDI recognized an opportunity to support the parliament, and to assist it in developing as a representative political body. The most recent events in the country (detailed below) demonstrate that the biggest challenge to democracy in Macedonia is found within the country's borders. The parliament has constantly been referred to as one of the only institutions equipped to handle the political demands during the crisis. NDI's parliamentary program is designed to increase the institution's ability to act as a representative body of all its citizens.

Macedonia's northern region, which shares its borders with Kosovo, has been the scene of violent clashes between Macedonian forces and ethnic Albanian extremists of the National Liberation Army (NLA). Fighting began when Albanian insurgents attacked police in the border village of Tanusevci on February 18, triggering a conflict that spread west into the surrounding mountain villages near Tetovo, Macedonia's second-largest city.

Macedonian officials have blamed NATO's KFOR peacekeeping forces for failing to control the cross-border movement of weapons and armed men, thus allowing the violence to spread from the Presevo valley in southern Serbia into Macedonia. Despite alleged ties with the Albanian Liberation Army of Presevo, Medvedja and Bujanovac (UCPMB), which is active in southern Serbia, the NLA seems to draw its membership from the ethnic Albanian minorities in Macedonia as well as from veterans of the now-disbanded Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

The rebels want to expand and internationalize their conflict in hopes of mobilizing Western sympathy and support in order to improve political and economic rights for ethnic Albanians in the face of systematic discrimination by majority Slavs; ethnic Albanians constitute roughly 30 percent of Macedonia's population. However, the international community has responded with much criticism toward the violence and destabilization spurred by the rebels. Ethnic Albanian

parties in Macedonia have denounced the violence, fearing that it is counterproductive to their efforts of instituting constitutional change through democratic means.

On March 23, under the support of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and KFOR, the Macedonian government began measured military responses designed to drive out the Albanian rebels. Hundreds of infantry troops backed by tanks and helicopter gun ships were deployed into the hills above Tetovo, forcing the rebels to retreat further into the mountains. The government has sought to keep its ethnic Albanian coalition partner, the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), within the government while the operation is completed; the government then hopes to start broad talks on constitutional and political issues. The leader of the DPA, Arben Xhaferi, and other ethnic Albanian activists have made clear that swift and visible movement of a variety of issues is necessary to ensure their continued cooperation.

Ethnic Albanians want a revision of the constitution in order to remove what they see as exclusionary references to the country as a state of Macedonians or Slavs, the majority ethnic group; a commitment to official bilingualism; greater employment of ethnic Albanians in state organizations, including security agencies; and the decentralization of power. The Macedonian government counters that the ethnic Albanian minority has full political rights and that its political parties are members of a coalition government.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Resident Representative Placement

Allan Green, a former professional staff member with the Connecticut General Assembly, joined NDI's staff in March for six weeks as a temporary resident representative for the Parliamentary Development Program. Green will work on nonpartisan professional staff development as part of the Assembly's transition to a full-time institution, as well as on the program's information technology and ethics components.

Political Party Assessment Mission

NDI's Director for Political Party Programs, Ivan Doherty, Program Officer Aimee Breslow, external consultant Stefan Krause and NDI/Macedonia Resident Representative Victoria Ayer conducted a political party assessment in Macedonia from March 12 to 16, 2001. The objectives of the mission were to assess the feasibility of instituting a political party development program that addresses NDI's and USAID's identified needs in Macedonia and to recommend a concrete course of action for its development and implementation.

Prior to the political party assessment team's arrival, each NDI/Macedonia staff member tracked the developments of a particular political party, developed ties with party members, and gathered basic information about the parties using a political party assessment questionnaire. This data was combined to provide the assessment team with an overall view of the situation, as well as specifics about each political party. With this information, NDI staff also determined the most appropriate persons for the assessment team to meet.

NDI/Washington also met at length with representatives of the USAID/Washington assessment mission, which completed a comprehensive review of democracy programs in Macedonia in Autumn 2000. The USAID assessment mission's recommendations placed a strong emphasis on the need to reform political parties: USAID concluded that political parties in Macedonia have an unequal share of power, and that checks and balances did not exist to curb the parties' influence. USAID advised NDI to concentrate on finding "disaffected" party members, meaning people who were frustrated by the current state of affairs and interested in change. The USAID mission believed that a substantial number of disaffected party members existed in mid-level political positions in both federal and municipal strata of government, and that a program could be developed to reform parties with this group in mind.

Meetings were scheduled with the Democratic Alternative (DA), the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the Liberal Party (LP), the Party of Democratic Prosperity (PDP), the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – True Macedonian Reformist Option (VMRO-VMRO). Since the assessment mission took place as the latest crisis in Macedonia was unfolding, the mission was not able to meet with all of the scheduled participants. Regrettably, all meetings with representatives of the DPA were cancelled, as was the only meeting scheduled with DA. Meetings were held both at the national and municipal levels, and took place in Skopje, Tetovo, Strumica and Veles. In addition to speaking with party officials, MPs, and representatives of political youth and women's unions, NDI's Skopje office organized a roundtable with representatives of Macedonian NGOs to solicit the civil sector's perspective of political parties and how they operate.

NDI/Macedonia and the mission team observed that, although political parties are brimming with structure, rules, and regulations, very few of these procedures are followed. Although all parties claim to have a well-defined place along the political spectrum and to subscribe to a particular ideology, the NDI mission found that power and patronage played a far greater role than ideology, and that parties revolve around the personalities of their leaders. A small cadre at the top of each party decides who will serve in certain positions within the party or the government, determines policy, and develops party platforms. The assessment revealed that political parties are highly centralized, information is rarely communicated downwards, not even to party members, and that true competition for voters does not exist. Most citizens view political parties as organizations aimed at obtaining or maintaining power so that the party leaders and their faithful can reap both political and economic rewards. Consequently, public esteem for political parties is very low.

Specifically, the assessment mission observed the following points:

- Although disaffected people do exist in both mid-level and high-level positions in the parties, those openly critical of the system have already been so marginalized that they no longer are able to be agents for change.

- Those party members expressing openness to change are not concentrated in any specific strata, such as youth or women; rather they are dispersed. This has potential implications for future programming.
- No one with whom the team met was able to differentiate between problems facing the parties and problems facing the country.
- Parties and individuals have skewed views of what a party's function should be; i.e., that it serves as an employment agency.
- There seems to be no one at any level open enough to take on the work of changing by-laws or the decision-making process.
- Women and youth organizations/unions are clones of the central party, and have only a token presence in the leadership, with no real authority.

The assessment clarified NDI's understanding that internal political party reform is greatly needed in order for the parties to be considered democratic. It was recognized that the challenge, which had already been recognized and accommodated into programmatic plans, is actually more severe than originally thought. Therefore, although NDI's rationale for political party work remains the same, the challenge is so great that the Institute is reexamining its proposed activities. Under present consideration are programs aimed at emerging leaders, targeted municipalities, and party leadership. NDI will keep USAID updated on the specifics of these programs as the activities take on a more concrete form.

Parliamentary Development Program

Ethics Consultations

In the last quarter of 2000, a bill on the status of MPs was submitted to President Trajkovski for his signature. The bill covers the various rights and responsibilities that MPs would claim both during their employment and in retirement. Noting the bill's provision of a virtual job for life in an economy with 40 percent official unemployment, President Trajkovski refused to sign the law in January 2001. Instead, the bill was sent back to the parliament for review. The Assembly has six months from the date of the bill's rejection to vote again. Should the bill then pass the Assembly by a simple majority, the president must sign it.

In rejecting the legislation, President Trajkovski criticized the inclusion of many perks without any accompanying duties. Neither the Assembly nor individual MPs had even attempted to build public support for the legislation – Deputy Danevski, the bill's sponsor, did not even speak during the televised parliamentary session when the bill was under consideration.

NDI consulted with each parliamentary group coordinator to gauge his or her interest in ethics consultations. The parliamentary groups indicated varying levels of interest in trying to change the draft. Many were also interested in finding ways to build public support for the legislation. NDI took advantage of this opportunity by bringing Eithne Fitzgerald, former Minister and drafter of the Irish Parliament's ethics legislation, to Macedonia from March 17 to March 23, in order to consult with each of the parliamentary group coordinators on the law on the status of MPs.

During the meetings, Fitzgerald consistently emphasized that all countries have experienced problems where some MPs fail to live up to the high standards expected from those who hold public office. To minimize this problem and to ensure that the actions of a few do not damage public trust in parliament as a whole, Fitzgerald said, it is important that broad ethical codes are backed up by clear rules, and that those rules be enforced.

The establishment of public trust in parliament and its deputies relies on several key elements:

- Commitment to public service
- A code of practice adhered to by its members
- Transparency in the operation of parliament
- Public disclosure of deputies' private interests
- Mechanisms to avoid conflicts of interest
- Procedures for investigating alleged breaches of the law, the code of conduct, or the rules on conflicts of interest
- Appropriate sanctions for breaches of the rules
- Legislators uphold the laws they make
- Freedom from bribery and corruption
- No immunity from investigating alleged bribery and corruption
- Pay and expenses to be seen as fair, reasonable and not excessive; deputies' incomes should be set at a level that allows MPs to be full-time and free from financial pressures, which might tempt them to seek illegal payments or preferential treatment in public contracts.

Although a great deal of inner turmoil was occurring in the country, the window of opportunity for these discussions was critical: the six-month deadline to pass the bill; the MPs' desire to receive the benefits in the bill; the MPs' desire to become "professional" before the 2002 parliamentary elections; and the MPs' realization that this bill should be deliberated all served to create an atmosphere of willingness to consider outside suggestions about ethics provisions. The effectiveness of the consultations hinged on Fitzgerald's expertise. Having recently been through this experience in the Irish parliament, Fitzgerald provided a welcome and informed perspective.

Follow-Up to Ethics Consultations

NDI held a number of meetings with parliamentary group coordinators to revisit ethics issues. The most fruitful of these was with Deputy Kraljevski, coordinator for VMRO-DPMNE, who was interested in having NDI provide technical assistance to the parliamentary ethics working group. Deputy Kraljevski pledged to ask the Assembly's president to activate the working group on the law on the status of MPs.

Deputy Kraljevski also brought in the Parliament's secretary general-designate, Jovan Josifovski, and indicated a clear desire to work closely with NDI on its parliamentary development program.

Information Technology Assistance

During this quarter, NDI has been working to implement recommendations made in its assessment report entitled "*Macedonia Parliament: IT Program Report and Recommendations Assessment Report on Work To-Date and Proposal for Future Activity,*" which was submitted to USAID on February 8, 2001.

This quarter, NDI made progress on the following tasks:

- NDI arranged for two parliamentary IT staff members to visit the Parliament of Estonia, but the political changes within Macedonia caused the visit to be delayed. NDI will re-schedule the visit once the position of head of the information technology sector is filled, or sooner if circumstances permit.
- Marina Ivanovska, chief of the Computer Center, and Mane Necev, Systems Engineer, attended the first of several networking classes in March to help them learn how to manage the network software purchased by the parliament.
- NDI evaluated responses to its request for quotations (RFQ) for networking services, and selected NEOCOM to provide network installation and consultation. NEOCOM was selected based on its corporate capabilities, ability to perform the work, cost, and non-partisan reputation. The parliament has been asked to approve NEOCOM as a computer-services provider. NEOCOM will report directly to NDI and will be paid through NDI, not through the parliament.

Constituent Relations

Third Group of Members of Parliament

This quarter, NDI began its third round of constituent relations consultations with a new group of MPs. To ensure diversity, participants were selected from each parliamentary caucus, different geographic locations, and diverse ethnic groups. As with the previous two groups, NDI will have one-on-one sessions to discuss such topics as casework, office hours, newsletters, working with the media, and strategic planning.

Workshop in Republika Srpska

On February 22, NDI/Macedonia Resident Representative Victoria Ayer presented information about constituent relations at the NDI/Republika Srpska (RS) orientation for new members of the RS Assembly. The orientation was an excellent opportunity to create a working framework for constituent relations for newly elected members. Members were presented a full

range of ideas on the importance of constituent relations work and also participated in a practical exercise to encourage them to think creatively about conducting casework.

Public Advocacy vis-à-vis Parliament

For MPs to work well with their constituencies, there must be commensurate interest and effort by their constituents. To ensure that MPs and the public can have a constructive dialogue, NDI will bring together a select group of NGOs and MPs to discuss the mutual benefits of working together and ways to strengthen their relationships. NDI's past interaction with NGOs has shown that certain NGOs are primed and ready to lobby the parliament but do not have the skills to do so effectively. This program will teach a select group of NGOs these skills.

During the past three months, NDI assessed the ability of NGO's to participate in the program based on whether they have moved beyond the need for training in basic capacity-building, identified specific public policy or legislative goals, and attempted to engage in an advocacy-promotion activity.

NDI selected a mix of NGOs for participation based on geography and diversity of sectors represented, as well as on a desire for a mix of membership and expertise-based NGOs. Consultations with each NGO will occur in order to tailor the trainings to the needs of the selected NGOs. Training is set to begin in early May.

The following NGOs have been selected to participate:

1. Polio Plus (disability rights)
2. Organization of Macedonian Women
3. Friends of the Forest
4. Civil Society Resource Center
5. Cerna (animal rights)

Parliamentary Internship Program

In January, NDI met with the interns individually and in groups to discuss their work, problems and areas of improvement. Although interns' tasks vary, most have taken on progressively more responsibility during their internships. While interns still perform some clerical assistance, their primary tasks are researching laws and bills, comparative legislative research, reviewing the parliamentary transcripts, media monitoring, speechwriting, corresponding with public officials and institutions, and meeting with foreign delegations. The interns also have a greater presence in the parliamentary commissions' sessions, as well as the before and after activities, such as gathering relevant materials for the MPs and writing reports from the meetings. They are also actively assisting the secretaries and presidents (chairs) of the commissions.

Although public speaking plays an important role in the articulation of public policy, these skills are not taught either at the high school or university levels in Macedonia. A casual

observer of any parliamentary session would see that public speaking skills are also needed by the MPs. In an effort to improve the public speaking skills of the interns – and, by extension, their supervisors –the interns need practice. In January, NDI provided training on the basics of debate, public speaking, and presentation skills. A small number of interns who are experienced public speakers took an active role in the training process. As a practical exercise, the interns applied these new skills in a debate tournament in February, selecting from the following debate topics:

- Euthanasia should be legal.
- Globalization is essential to economic progress.
- To save the environment, we should all become vegetarians

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective: Members of parliament employ constituent relations techniques that contribute to parliamentary accountability and citizen representation.

Result: Through consultations with the Constituent Relations program, Zamir Dika, Parliamentary Group Coordinator for DPA, has begun to hold office hours in his constituency. Deputy Dika has also begun scheduling his time and is working on a strategic plan.

Objective: Members of parliament and non-governmental organizations strengthen their interaction on legislation.

Result: After a seminar on NGO advocacy with NDI, Polio Plus, a disability rights NGO, began a public relations campaign to raise awareness regarding accessibility issues. Polio Plus' access campaign placed wheelchairs and flyers in front of inaccessible public buildings, such as the base of the steps to the law school, in conjunction with National Disability Day.

Objective: Members of parliament and parliamentary staff have skills with which to conduct legislative affairs through expanded information technology.

Result: All parliamentary groups now have computers in their coordinators' offices.

Objective: An expanded group of parliamentary interns increases legislative research skills and begins to work outside the party caucus groups in other parliamentary domains, such as commissions.

Result: After training with NDI, the parliamentary interns successfully completed three rounds of Lincoln-Douglas-style debate, gaining valuable public policy and public speaking skills in the process.

Objective: A professional nonpartisan staff is created or is in the process of creation.

Result: As a result of consultations with NDI's expert, the drafter and opponents to the Law on the Status of MPs, were afforded the opportunity to discuss possible changes to bring the legislation in line with international best practices.

Objective: Parliamentary commissions conduct public hearings to incorporate citizen input into legislation and strengthen legislative deliberation and oversight.

Result: Deputy Danevski, the architect of the Status of MPs bill, has agreed that the working group should hold a public hearing on the bill. This is the first time in 10 years that any parliamentarian has shown willingness to make a piece of legislation available for public comment.

IV. EVALUATION

Political Party Assessment Mission

The political party assessment mission was an extremely valuable activity for the Institute. Prior to the trip, certain assumptions had already been made about the direction of political party programming. The NDI teams in Skopje and Washington had already begun to create activities and target possible groups and participants for the program. The assessment was originally seen as a vehicle to confirm basic assumptions and update current knowledge, and to fine-tune a program already in creation.

However, the assessment team found that the lack of internal democracy and the high degree of centralization in political parties was far more severe than first realized. By the end of the week in Macedonia, the team unanimously agreed that the original program proposed would not be sufficient to bring about change, and that an entirely different approach would be necessary. The knowledge gained by the team will allow NDI to launch a far more effective program.

Information Technology

Due both to recent political problems within Macedonia and to various maneuverings within the parliament's administrative staff, little work has been completed for Phase One of the IT program. While the parliament's staff has now been trained in basic keyboarding techniques and commonly used computer programs, the MPs have yet to receive any training. The single biggest problem has been that Goran Stanoevski, the current head of the Information Technology Sector, stands to lose his position with the appointment of a new secretary general of the parliament. As a result, Stanoevski has consistently failed to show up for work in the parliament. Although Stanoevski is still technically working, his inability to get anything done has brought the computer networking to a standstill. One advantage to this development, though, is that NDI has been able to reiterate the need for parliament to hire professional, nonpartisan staff.

Parliamentary Internship Program

The Institute has initiated a discussion both internally and with USAID about designing a sustainability plan for the parliamentary internship program. NDI will consult with its resident representative in Slovakia, who has just completed a transition plan for the Slovak internship program, and with Macedonian members of parliament, NGOs and faculty advisors at the University of St. Cyril and Methodius.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Political Party Assessment

The political party assessment mission report will be submitted next quarter along with recommendations on how to proceed with a future political party program.

Constituent Relations

Consultations will continue with the third group of MPs. The constituent relations handbook will be presented at a seminar for all current and previous participants in the program. This seminar will also focus on the importance of door-to-door canvassing in constituent work and will include practical tips and training.

Parliamentary Institution-Building

Consultations will continue with members of parliament to focus on the Law on the Status of MPs. NDI will follow up on last year's proposal that the parliament develop an oversight committee. Once the new secretary general has been selected, a study mission to a European Parliament is also anticipated in order to provide training. Finally, once Stanoevski's status in the parliament solidifies, select IT staff will travel to the Estonian Parliament for a study mission.

Parliamentary Internship

The interns will learn several more components of being a legislator: drafting legislation and supporting memoranda, holding public hearings, and working in committees. This will culminate in a two-day mock parliament session.

NDI will take a select group of parliamentary interns on a study mission to Slovakia. This visit will provide an opportunity to exchange experiences between the interns working in the Slovakian and Macedonian programs and increase each group's specific knowledge regarding the other's parliamentary internship program.

Once in Bratislava, the Macedonian interns will meet with their Slovakian counterparts and shadow them for a day as they go about their committee work. The mission will also include official visits to the Parliament of Slovakia, meetings with parliamentary officials, and visits to institutions and NGOs. Another component of the mission will be to examine the strategies that

NDI/Slovakia used to begin the transition of the internship program to the parliament. Since NDI/Macedonia's mandate is to develop a similar exit strategy, such an exchange of knowledge will be invaluable.

NGO Training

Training sessions in May will focus on the following topics: internal and external communication, event and message development, advocacy, coalition building, strategic planning, and evaluation.