



Quarterly Report
FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:
POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00
April 1 to June 30, 2001

I. SUMMARY

The ongoing conflict between Macedonian forces and ethnic Albanian insurgents in the northern part of the country hampered implementation of all elements of programmatic activity. Despite these obstacles, some progress was made with the parliamentary information technology component and through the parliamentary internship program. However, in June, USAID requested the removal of short-term staff and the temporary relocation of NDI's full-time resident representative.

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 objectives in Macedonia that include the creation of a professional nonpartisan staff, skills transfer to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff enabling them to conduct legislative affairs using information technology, and strengthened interaction between nongovernmental organizations and parliament on legislative and policy concerns. Additionally, NDI continues to actively develop constituent relations techniques contributing to parliamentary accountability and citizen involvement in government.

II. BACKGROUND

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 worked to increase the capacity of members of parliament (MPs) in their roles as legislators and elected political representatives. Such capacity building is achieved through training MPs and their staff on caucus operations, commission functions, and constituent relations. Considerable progress has been achieved in the transfer of political and legislative skills to individual members of parliament, and promising institutional developments have occurred through NDI's program. Still, inter-ethnic political conflict bordering on open

and prolonged warfare has impeded NDI's program implementation and has revealed important, persistent challenges to the country's democratization process.

Until recently, Macedonia alone had avoided the inter-ethnic violence that characterized conflicts elsewhere following the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. This distinction ended in February, when violent clashes erupted between Macedonian forces and armed ethnic Albanian insurgents of the National Liberation Army (NLA). A series of scattered and intense conflicts followed predominantly throughout northwestern Macedonia, where the majority of Macedonia's ethnic Albanian population resides.

The stated goal of the NLA is to strengthen political and economic rights for ethnic Albanians, who comprise an estimated 25 to 30 percent of the country's two million inhabitants. The insurgent's demands include: amendments to the constitution that would guarantee equal standing for ethnic Macedonians and Albanians; a commitment to official bilingualism; increased presence of ethnic Albanians in state organizations, including security agencies; and the decentralization of power. For its part, the Macedonian government has countered that the ethnic Albanian minority already possesses sufficient political rights, as evidenced by the multi-ethnic composition of the coalition government and the upcoming opening of a private, Albanian-language university in the country's second largest city, Tetovo. In addition, the government has accused the insurgents of wanting to split the country apart along ethnic lines.

The crisis in Macedonia reached a critical level over the weekend of June 22 to 24, when the Macedonian army launched an attack on Aracinovo, a village roughly 10km outside of Skopje that had been under NLA control since June 9. On June 25, NATO and EU representatives brokered a deal between the NLA and the Macedonian government that allowed the NLA to leave Aracinovo and return to its home territory without having to relinquish its weapons. This move, viewed by ethnic Macedonians as giving in to pro-Albanian, Western pressure, sparked a demonstration in Skopje that resulted in the storming of the parliament by ethnic Macedonians.

On June 12, the increased level of violence and anti-Western sentiment prompted USAID to remove NDI's short-term staff from the region. After the storming of the parliament on June 25, USAID ordered the relocation of NDI's full-time resident representative, Victoria Ayer, as well as the closing of the field office until further notice. Although the NDI office is closed, local staff continue to work on program activities in whatever capacity they can.

Macedonia's ability to find a political solution to the conflict depends greatly on the parliament's ability to acquit itself of its political role. With a unity government in place, it is hoped the parliament will become the center of much-needed political dialogue and will be tested in its ability to operate in fulfillment of a key democratic premise: parliament as the principal representative political body of citizens. As the only place where political parties can discuss public policy issues across ethnic lines, the parliament is the only political institution in Macedonia that can serve as a conflict prevention mechanism. Therefore, the legislature should be viewed as a conflict prevention institution. If parliament fails to fulfill its special role, that failure will further contribute to ethnic discord.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Parliamentary Development Program

Parliament's inability to convene has postponed confirmation of a new secretary general. This has hampered NDI's ability to implement large sections of its parliamentary development program. Secretary General-designate Jovan Josifovski continues to enjoy wide support amongst parliamentarians, despite his inability to take office. Josifovski has articulated his wholehearted support for NDI and wishes to work closely with the organization as soon as is possible.

Nonpartisan Staff Development

In this quarter, NDI consulted with the secretary general-designate to gauge his interest in various elements of nonpartisan staff development. The secretary identified staff reorganization and reclassification as his most important and immediate task. The secretary strongly acknowledged the need for reform of the parliamentary staff structure and was open to NDI's help and suggestions.

Following consultations with coordinators and the secretary general-designate, NDI prepared a draft manual on recruitment and selection procedures for the creation of a nonpartisan, effective and merit-based civil service. Reclassification and reorganization of the staff structure will center on the following areas:

- Technical services for members
- Plenary services
- Commission services
- Special research services
- International relations

The reclassification and reorganization of staff cannot begin, however, until the cessation of hostilities and the confirmation of the Secretary General-designate.

Commission Staff Training

A draft of the training program for commission staff has been produced. Implementation of this program is on hold until the appointment of the secretary general-designate. Future activities of the training program have been discussed with the secretary general-designate, and he is supportive of the program and considers it one of his top three priorities.

Member Code of Conduct

During this quarter, NDI met with various deputies to establish a working group on ethics that would consider the Status of MPs Bill, which addresses MPs privileges and responsibilities. At the time of the relocation of the Skopje office, June 28, the deputies remained broadly supportive of NDI's involvement in this area, keen to receive the organization's stamp of

approval. The president of the parliament activated the working group, which included all the parliamentary group coordinators, as well as deputies Kraljevski and Andonovski of Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE). The bill, sponsored by Deputy Slobodan Danevski of the Liberal Democratic party, has not yet come up for a vote because of the suspension of parliamentary sessions and will now be heard during the same session as the election of a new secretary general. The bill includes the following characteristics:

- Requires deputies to report annually on their assets (according to Irish model)
- Establishes a commission to receive financial returns
- Strengthens the restrictions on absences from parliament

Information Technology

During this quarter, NDI continued progress on the implementation of a working network for the parliament, while simultaneously providing technical training for the commission staff. By the end of the quarter, NDI had conducted training with all commission staff, with the exception of the secretary and the deputy secretary. However, NDI faced continued obstacles to a full network access due to the continued procrastination of the director of parliamentary information technology.

Information Technology (IT) Director Stephen Jarrett based in Washington D.C., and Allan Green, temporary resident representative in Skopje, were unable to impel the director of parliamentary IT into action. To address this problem, Jarrett traveled to Skopje on June 1 to resolve this impasse. During the trip, he consulted with USAID and senior staff from NEOCOM, NDI's partner IT contractor, in order to discuss the future and implementation.

Over eight days, Jarrett succeeded in installing a functioning network with shared printers, shared directories, a new web site, a firewall and Internet access. Windows 2000 was installed in 50 workstations. In addition, Jarrett contracted to purchase approximately \$100,000 worth of computer software, hardware and licenses. In collaboration with USAID, it was decided that delivery of this equipment should be deferred until the improvement of the security situation.

In consultation with USAID, Stephen Jarrett proposed that the future funding of Phases II and III (for details of Phases II and III, please see Macedonia Parliament Program: IT Report and Recommendations) be contingent on the following stipulations:

- Parliament develops a professional, dedicated and nonpartisan IT staff;
- Such a staff adheres to a strict, pre-arranged budget; and
- Parliament adopts legislation stipulating procedural standards so that IT equipment may serve as an effective tool of governance.

If the aforementioned conditions were met, IT funding would continue through 2003. If, however, the above conditions were not met, NDI and USAID would discontinue the

parliamentary IT program. In addition, Jarrett recommended that the existing Parliament Intern program be expanded to include two computer interns.

Constituent Relations

Individual Consultations with Members of Parliament

Efforts to conduct the Constituent Relations program were considerably hindered by the on-going conflict throughout this quarter. NDI Resident Representative Victoria Ayer continued her work with the third group of MPs selected to receive training since the inception of the program in 1999. Although initial consultations with the third group did in fact begin in February, further consultations have been postponed as MPs themselves have suspended communication with their own constituents. Attendance at parliament is extremely low and parliamentary sessions are rare. The most recent NDI discussions with MPs have focused exclusively on the conflict and related issues.

Public Advocacy vis-à-vis Parliament

A meaningful constituent relations program involves dialogue between MPs and citizens. In order for MPs to work successfully with their constituencies, there must be commensurate interest and effort on the part of the constituents themselves. To foster constructive dialogue between MPs and the public, NDI plans to bring together a select group of NGOs and MPs to discuss the mutual benefits of working together and ways to strengthen their relationships. Earlier this year, NDI selected a geographically diverse group of NGOs, which had identified specific public policy or legislative goals and made at least some effort to advocate on behalf of those goals.

The following NGOs have been selected to participate:

- Polio Plus (disability rights)
- Organization of Macedonian Women
- Friends of the Forest
- Civil Society Resource Center
- Cerna (animal rights)

In this quarter, NDI held meetings and consultations with each of the five selected partner organizations, but the mood of uncertainty and concern affected their focus as well and limited their ability to perform “regular” work. Advocacy remains impossible in the current climate, as there is no one to whom they might advocate.

Elections

From May 26 to 31, with funding provided by USAID through another cooperative agreement (AEP-A-00-95-00038-00), NDI was a partial sponsor and participant in a conference organized by the Macedonian domestic election monitoring coalition, Citizens for Citizens (C4C). The conference was attended by nearly every domestic monitoring NGO in the region,

many of whom have been NDI partners or received NDI training in the past, such as Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (GONG), Civic Eye and the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID). The gathering provided a forum to discuss lessons learned from their collective experiences. C4C used the conference to develop a strategic plan for possible early elections in January 2002.

Assistance to Political Parties/Partnership with Nansen Dialogue Center

In recent years, electoral competition in Macedonia has become increasingly marred by instances of violence, fraud and intimidation. Even before the recent outbreak of violence, tension among the political parties had been running high. In an attempt to lessen such tensions, NDI and the Nansen Dialogue Center (NDC) agreed to conduct a series of seminars providing practical advice on conducting ethical and professional campaigns. NDC will provide instruction in conflict management techniques and interpersonal/interparty negotiation skills. To this effect, a memorandum of understanding between NDI-Macedonia and NDC has been drafted and is under review. The workshops are tentatively scheduled to begin in September, but will depend on the future political situation.

Parliamentary Internship Program

Legislative Drafting Training

The 30 university students currently serving as parliamentary interns have found their roles and responsibilities consistently expanded over the course of the program, and this quarter saw a continuation of that trend. (Please see Attachment B for a list of interns and their annotated biographies). Recent NDI training focused specifically on the legislative process; interns concentrated on learning how to draft legislation. Such skill-building training was of particular import during the past quarter because the interns had greater than anticipated freedom to develop their personal capacity. The fact that parliament met infrequently due to the political crisis enabled NDI and the interns to focus more intently on legislative drafting procedures than might otherwise have been possible.

The legislative drafting training was followed by several small, NDI-guided sessions, which provided an opportunity for peer review and constructive criticism of their colleagues' drafts. Upon completion of the critique period, the interns were divided into "committees" where their legislation was discussed and debated using the current Macedonian Rules of Procedure for Committees. This activity was in preparation for a mock parliament, initially planned for late July.

Slovakia Study Mission

Accompanied by NDI's Macedonia resident representative and NDI's internship program coordinator, the interns traveled to Bratislava, Slovakia, from April 6 to 13 to meet with their Slovak counterparts. The visit provided an opportunity for the interns to exchange experiences and to expand each groups' specific knowledge with regards to their respective internship program. Both groups of interns attended briefings with parliamentary staff and young MPs,

followed by a day in which the Macedonian interns “shadowed” their Slovak colleagues during committee work. Also included in the mission were visits to various NGOs, which had successfully lobbied for legislative changes.

An additional component of the study mission was an examination of the strategies that NDI-Slovakia used to begin the transition of the management of internship program to the parliament. NDI-Macedonia is in the process of developing a similar transition strategy, and the exchange of knowledge was highly beneficial in the formulation of a similar plan.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The postponement of the secretary general-designate’s appointment and the outbreak of conflict impeded NDI in implementing most aspects of its parliamentary development program. However, progress on program objectives has been made:

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

- All parliamentarians and their staffs now have access to networked workstations; all commission staff, with the exception of the secretary and the deputy secretary, have received IT training.

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.

- After training with NDI, the parliamentary interns successfully completed and defended their own draft pieces of legislation.

One unanticipated result of NDI’s parliamentary internship program has been the selection of one of the interns for a four-month internship with the European Parliament. She will receive not only an internship, but also a law school scholarship (at a law school in Brussels) for that time period as well. This is the first time that a Macedonian citizen has been chosen. The intern’s application focused on her experiences as an intern in the Macedonian parliament and the skills and knowledge she gained there.

V. EVALUATION

As noted above, the level of hostilities and the political environment in Macedonia severely hindered program activities and accomplishments this quarter. The removal of short-term staff, the relocation of NDI’s Resident Representative Victoria Ayer at the request of USAID, and the political environment following the storming of the parliament brought program activity to a standstill.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

NDI will continue to evaluate political circumstances and, in consultation with USAID, will make decisions about future activity in Macedonia as events continue to unfold.

ATTACHMENTS

I. Macedonia Parliamentary Development Program: Assessment and Recommendations by Allen Green

**Macedonia Parliament Development Program:
Assessment and Recommendations
By Allan Green
March to May 2001**

You asked me to meet four objectives in working with the Parliament during my stay in Macedonia. These relate to (1) nonpartisan staff development, (2) staff training, (3) information technology, and (4) member code of conduct.

My report describes progress in each of these areas. I take particular satisfaction in the support for NDI seeing to the installation of a network for the Parliament's computers. That the members addressed their Status of MPs bill and a top leader credited NDI with suggesting changes, is also a matter of some satisfaction.

Most important is the relationship developed with the Secretary General-designate, Jovan Josifovski. In a staff development program, the Secretary General's support can be critical. In this case, NDI has an opportunity to help the Secretary General-designate get started with his most important task, reclassifying the Parliament's employees.

There is a risk of being too closely identified with one leader in a parliamentary program. But in this case, the Secretary General-designate is a long time parliamentary employee, has the support of the opposition and minority parties, and is open to working with NDI. He has readily developed a good relationship with Sashka Cvetkovska, which gives us good access to him. I strongly recommend that NDI take advantage of this opportunity.

Because of the crisis at the end of my stay, I was unable to have a last meeting with the Secretary General-designate. But he called Sashka with his regrets. She, in turn, told him that NDI hopes to have a person in country very soon to work with him.

Nonpartisan Staff Development

My assessment of a year ago called for an oversight committee to make sure the Secretary General conducts himself or herself in a nonpartisan manner, a beefed up and trained research staff, and political staff for the parliamentary groups. Since then, the governing coalition has changed and the Secretary General resigned. A new Secretary General, one of three current Deputy Secretaries General, will be named at a forthcoming session.

In interviews with all of the parliamentary group coordinators, the consensus seems to be that the Deputies are glad that there will be a new Secretary General, particularly because he comes from the existing staff, and they are willing to give him support. None of the parliamentary group coordinators called for any of the recommendations they had sought a year ago. Their lack of interest may be due to the country's political and military crisis and the fact that they are looking to new elections and are not eager to make structural changes at this point.

From my meeting with the Secretary General-designate, it is evident that he is not interested in the research staff. He said that research is a newer staff office and he has not decided where he

will put it in the staff reorganization. He was with the commission (committee) staff for 16 years and is particularly proud of his work with the Legislative and Legal Commission—by far the most active of the commissions.

The Secretary General-designate expressed interest in three areas for NDI assistance: commission staff training, staff reorganization, and the plenary. Commission staff training is addressed in the next section of this report.

The Secretary General-designate views staff reorganization and reclassification as his most important and most immediate task. Parliament has passed a law providing for the reclassification of all public employees and it has been implemented for those working for the Government. The prior Secretary General worked on the regulations to implement this law for the Parliament, but never completed the task. Now, the Secretary General-designate believes the law needs changes for parliamentary staff and wants to propose amendments to the Parliament. But he also wants to start right away on staff reclassifications.

I propose that NDI bring an expert to work with the Secretary General-designate on this task. The Secretary General-designate has expressed his confidence in the expertise of NDI and I believe he would welcome an expert who could help him make revisions in job descriptions and duties and the administrative structure. Such a person would also provide credibility to a new classification scheme—important to the staff's acceptance of a new plan. In my opinion this is a significant opportunity for NDI.

As for the plenary, I think it would be ideal for Don Schneider, Secretary of the Wisconsin State Senate, or Pat Flahaven, his counterpart in Minnesota, to come here in August, when the Parliament is quiet, and spend time with the Secretary General-designate. They could advise him on calendars, recording votes, and the like.

In my meetings with the Secretary General-designate, I told him that I was recommending that NDI provide him with almost immediate assistance in his task of reclassifying employees and that the training program for commission secretaries (below) should be completed by the end of this year. He responded by saying that this is what he likes about NDI: the programs we offer are concrete and timely.

Parliamentary Staff Training

You asked me to develop a plan for parliamentary staff training and, if possible, conduct a first training session. You specified that this program should be based on consultations with the Parliament.

As noted above, the Secretary General-designate identified training of commission secretaries as one of his three priorities for NDI. The Coordinator of the Commission Sector agreed that the secretaries should be trained. The issue is whether the training for commission secretaries should be in their administrative role or in their role as policy researchers. I am recommending a training program (attached) that is a combination of both.

The staff needs assistance in two areas. First, they need training in how to conduct policy research. This training should range from how to take a request to how to write a report. A critical component would be research methods, Internet training, and use of policy options. Second, they need training in proper conduct of legislative staff. We were repeatedly told that the staff are hired because of political or personal contacts and they lack credibility with the Deputies. A training program should emphasize what kinds of activities are improper for legislative staff and how staff can present themselves to the Deputies as neutral experts.

As part of this activity, I believe the commission secretaries should develop a handbook on their duties (from reading the bills to providing expert research on a timely basis) and their conduct (e.g., keeping working hours, helping their colleagues, and avoiding partisan political activity).

Appended to this report is a proposed training program for the commission secretaries. I was not able to begin the training program because the Secretary General was not confirmed by the Parliament by the time I left Macedonia. With only an Acting Secretary General in office and the country in a crisis, it would have been unwise to have started a training program.

Information Technology

You asked me to oversee progress of the information technology component of the NDI program, working closely with Steven Jarrett. Specifically, you asked me to clear up political obstacles to implementation of the computer network and to have NEOCOM provide a status report on installation. Finally, you asked me to oversee training for Deputies.

In meetings with the Parliamentary Group Coordinators, we heard a number of concerns about the status of the computer operations. First, Deputies expressed frustration that their computers were not networked and that they had to put a document on a floppy disk and take it to their secretary in order to print. Second, some Deputies said that they had prepared the list of MPs from their group to be trained and the members were asking for training, yet they had heard nothing. Third, one coordinator explained that he was a commission president as well as coordinator and still he had no computer. He noted that the computers were becoming outdated while they sat in the box.

One of the Parliamentary Group Coordinators suggested that the Parliament should establish an oversight committee on IT. He also advised us that any outside group brought into the Parliament to assist with computer operations would be suspect to the Deputies. The MPs are very concerned about secrecy and security of their information and would need strong assurance that an outside group could be trusted.

Next, we met with the head of the computer operations. It was quickly evident that he no longer had an interest in his job. He said that more than half of the PCs had not been installed, but it would be a problem to put them on desks when the staff might be reclassified. He noted that the Deputies had not been trained, but it was a problem to do so because they have complex schedules and many do not live in Skopje. He said the President had not yet approved the Internet connection, so MPs and staff had deal with a very slow system. As for the party coordinator/commission president, he said that the commissions were not being given computers

yet and that that the Deputy had given his computer to his secretary so he was not entitled to another. Further, there are wiring limitations in the Deputy's office.

I met with the Acting Secretary General and asked her to urge the head of computer operations to begin member training and to install the remaining computers. Further, I wrote to the Parliament's President and all of the parliamentary group coordinators expressing NDI's concern that the computer network was not yet operational and asking their approval for NDI to bring in NEOCOM to make an assessment of what needs to be done.

I sent a copy of the letter to NEOCOM and advised them that they need to carefully prepare a plan to the Parliament, which shows how they can protect the Deputies' secrecy and security from other Deputies, and from an outside group like NEOCOM.

The President approved the NDI request for the assessment of network needs and we told NEOCOM to prepare this assessment as soon as possible. Further, the head of computer operations suddenly took a new interest in his job and set about installing the computers.

Member Code of Conduct

You asked me to follow up on NDI's ethics consultations concerning the Status of MPs bill. In meetings with all the Parliamentary Group Coordinators, I offered NDI's assistance to the working group which was named by the Parliament's President to consider what, if any, changes should be made after the Macedonian President refused to sign the original bill. I also told them that I would contact Eithne Fitzgerald for her comments on changes.

Most of the parliamentary group coordinators indicated that they would defer to Deputy Slobodan Danevski, the sponsor of the original bill. But when we met with Deputy Chedomir Kraljevski, the VMRO-DPMNE parliamentary group head, he pledged to write to the Parliament's President asking that he activate the working group and he called in Deputy Kiril Andonovski, his appointee to the working group. Deputy Andonovski told us that he had asked for the notes prepared by his son from Eithne Fitzgerald's session with the Interns. He said he would present these notes to the working group and ask NDI to review a revised version of the bill.

Subsequently, the President activated the working group on the bill. When we met with Deputy Danevski, the bill's sponsor, he suggested a public hearing on the bill. Our next notice of it, however, was a newspaper article stating that a revised version of the bill had been again placed on the Parliament's agenda, with 48 signatures. In the article, Deputy Karljevski stating that "We consulted experts from the National Democratic Institute, above all with Allan Green, as well as with a Euro-parliamentarian from Ireland. We did a comparison of our proposed law with regulations in the countries of the European Union. The law will have its original form, but with amendments that have been suggested."

We have not seen a revised version of the bill but have been told that at least two improvements have been made in it. Most important, it follows the Irish example and requires deputies to

report annually on their assets and sets up a commission to receive these filings. Second, it strengthens the language on absences from parliamentary work.

The law apparently does not incorporate suggested language on ethics. But this is a bill on status of MPs, and not on ethics. The government has yet to propose a law on ethics for government employees, but such a law should cover Deputies. This legislation could provide several opportunities for NDI involvement.

From the experience of this bill, several observations come to mind. First, the Deputies were receptive to comments by Eithne Fitzgerald, in part because she comes from a country in the European Union. As they focus on harmonizing their laws with the EU, I believe they will continue to carefully listen to representatives from those countries. Second, the deputies are open to changes but the changes must be within what they find politically acceptable. Thus, while the pension provisions in the bill were more generous than an outside observer would find defensible, the Deputies feel very strongly on this matter and are not open to being swayed. Finally, the Deputies respect NDI and are eager to put the stamp of NDI approval on a product. In this instance, they did not ask for NDI approval, but were quick to point out NDI involvement.

Other Activities

In meetings with the Secretary General-designate and Commission Sector Coordinator, I learned of their strong support for the Intern program. I arranged for Lidija Stojkova to join Sashka and I in a meeting with the Secretary General-designate. At that meeting Lidija explained the program to him and he expressed his interest in integrating the Interns into the permanent staff. He is particularly interested in the Interns working with the commissions. He sees the Interns as future employees of the Parliament.

The Secretary General-designate's support for the Interns is important for two reasons. First, it can lead the way to the Parliament taking over the program at some point in the future. Second, if Interns become an important part of the recruitment base for the Parliament's staff, it could break the tradition of hiring staff for personal or political reasons.

In an unrelated matter, I noticed that an English-language web site carried a banner with the statement that "The Answers by the President of the Macedonian Parliament to Your Questions." By clicking on the banner one was led to about 12 questions submitted by e-mail with remarkably candid responses from the President Androv.

I learned that this format was employed by a respected Macedonian journal and, in effect, reprinted here. It is an excellent example of transparency. After consultations with the Washington staff, I drafted a letter for NDI's President to commend President Androv for his openness and to encourage him to make a practice of regularly communicating with the public in such a manner.

Finally, at the invitation of Deputy Andonovski and the Secretary General-designate, Sashka, Lidija and I were invited to attend a meeting of the Legal and Legislative Commission. We observed the commission performing the roles of committees in many parliaments. They

discussed the agenda and removed some items, the Government's representatives explained bills, the President made detailed suggestions for changes, and they voted.

The Legal and Legislative Commission is the most active of the Parliament's commissions. Other commissions may provide opportunities for NDI assistance. In particular, Deputy Nikola Jovanov, President of the Health Commission and Parliamentary Group Coordinator for DA, may be open to assistance with making his commission more transparent and more effective.

