



Quarterly Report
CROATIA: POLITICAL PARTY BUILDING AND PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM
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July 1 to September 30, 2001

I. SUMMARY

In this quarter Croatia grappled with an unusually active political scene. Normally a calmer period, the country experienced political shocks stemming from the announcement of indictments from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This sparked a crisis within the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLS), a member of the ruling coalition government, which eventually forced the government to call a vote of confidence. In the end, the HSLS parliamentary caucus broke ranks with its president, and the government survived the vote of confidence, emerging even stronger. Croatia also continued to hold various local by-elections to ensure minority proportional representation, pending official release of census results.

In this political environment, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) continued its political party and parliamentary development programs. The political party program is working with political parties to strengthen their organizational infrastructure and develop relationships with other community groups; enlist more women and youth into party leadership and engage them in activities at all levels; link branch offices, elected officials and government representatives to voters; and assist members of parliament (MPs) and branch offices in undertaking coordinated voter outreach activities. At the same time, the parliamentary program is working with MPs and the parliamentary administration to strengthen the functioning of parliamentary committees; assist MPs as they develop strategies to increase their effectiveness, become increasingly responsive to constituents, and engage in the work of their political parties; and strengthen the organizational development of party caucuses.

During this quarter, NDI's activities focused on consultations with political parties, members of parliament and committees, the development of future program workshops and seminars, and the drafting of training materials (manuals and other aids). The Croatian NGO Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (GONG) hosted 13 Citizens' Hour events this quarter and began consultations for placing interns in newly constituted local governments.

NDI observed the following results this quarter:

- In order to increase government transparency, the Committee for Information and Media began developing legislation on increased access to information as well as a process for conducting public consultations on this issue.
- Several MPs created web pages that provide voters with information about their work and links to other sources of governmental information.
- The Croatian People's Party (HNS) organized its campaign for local elections in Dubrovnik using strategies and manuals supplied by NDI. In addition to traditional press conferences and presentations, the party branch's election strategies consisted of different types of direct contact with voters, including open-air coffee breaks and live radio shows.

II. BACKGROUND

In July, the ICTY announced that indictments had been filed against two Croatian generals for their actions in "Operation Storm," a military action executed by the Croatian army in August 1995 to liberate the Serb-occupied territories of Croatia. In response, four HSLs ministers resigned in protest, creating a crisis within the government and within the party, which, prior to the May elections, was number two in the governing coalition. An extraordinary session of parliament was convened to debate the matter and a vote of confidence was called. The parliamentary caucus of HSLs broke ranks with its president, Drazen Budisa, over this issue, forcing him to resign as president of the party to avoid a party split. This allowed the government to win a strong vote of confidence in the parliament, with 96 votes in favor and only 36 against. In terms of serving the indictments, General Ademi, an ethnic Albanian, voluntarily surrendered himself to The Hague while General Gotovina, an ethnic Croat, went into hiding.

August was dominated by the staging of Alka, a traditional folk equestrian event in which the winner historically receives gifts from the presiding ruler. In years past this included Emperor Franz Josef, King Alexander, Ante Pavelic, President Tito and President Tudjman. The event organizers now identify themselves mainly with the extreme right wing, and the current right-wing party leadership has tried to use the event as an avenue for rallying support against the government and President Mesic. During this year's event, event organizers prevented the president's envoy from awarding the normal ceremonial presidential gifts to the winner. A senior army officer, Staff Brigadier Ante Kotromanovic, used the event to make a strong speech against both the government and President Mesic. Mesic reacted immediately, dismissing the brigadier and requiring that his military rank and privileges be reviewed by the minister of defense, and the winner of the event made a point of distancing himself from the organizers.

Although the local elections were held in May, by-elections continued and will continue, pending official release of the census, in order to ensure proportional minority representation. On September 16, local elections in Dubrovnik were repeated because the governing coalition partners in the city council – SDP, HSS, HSLs and HSU – were unable to agree on a mayoral candidate. Voter turnout was predictably low, with voters and non-voters clearly frustrated by

the failure of the governing parties to resolve this issue in May. The voters rewarded HDZ with 34.66 percent of the vote (10 seats), which represented a significant increase from the 22.81 percent (8 seats) the party had received in May. SDP fared better with 25.95 percent (7 seats), which was an increase from the 18.81 percent (6 seats) it had received in May. Since the original impasse had been created by HSS, the voters clearly expressed their displeasure by giving the coalition of HSS-HSLS-HSU, the so-called "Dubrovnik Agreement," only 16.93 percent (5 seats), down from 23.28 percent (7 seats) received in May. Ironically, the Independent list of Kljunak (former HSS member), which received 8.01 percent (2 seats), and the Democratic Center (DC), which received 6.04 percent (1 seat), will determine who will be the new city mayor as well as the composition of the new local government. Neither HDZ nor SDP can form a new government without their votes. This is a scene likely to be repeated throughout the end of 2001 and early 2002, as by-elections are held and councils are forced to reconstitute themselves.

Greater responsiveness by governing institutions, particularly parliament, and by political parties to public concerns and a greater ability to represent public interests will enable Croatia to consolidate democratic political institutions over the next few years. NDI supports this process by assisting parliament and political parties in reaching out to constituencies such that citizens view government as more open, representative, and participatory. The political party program is working with political parties to strengthen their organizational infrastructure and develop relationships with other community groups; enlist more women and youth into party leadership and engage them in activities at all levels; link branch offices, elected officials and government representatives to voters; and assist members of parliament (MPs) and branch offices in undertaking coordinated voter outreach activities. At the same time, the parliamentary program is working with MPs and parliamentary administration to strengthen the functioning of parliamentary committees; assist MPs as they develop strategies to increase their effectiveness, become increasingly responsive to constituents, and engage in the work of their political parties; and strengthen the organizational development of party caucuses.

In this context, NDI continued this quarter to work with political parties and parliamentary MPs and leaders. NDI reviewed the results of the elections with political party leaders and worked with them on evaluating their voter outreach strategies, which will be of extreme importance during the by-elections. At the same time, NDI continued to work with parliamentary leaders, MPs and committee members, calling on experts to work with committees on drafting legislation and conducting public hearings, while working to normalize the administration of parliament. Finally, in light of the results of the local elections and progress in the decentralization process, NDI began working with political parties to identify ways in which representatives at all levels could be strengthened and better connected to their respective political parties.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Parliamentary Development Program

Meeting with Vilim Herman, Chair of the Committee for Elections, Appointments and Administrative Affairs

On September 12, NDI met with Vilim Herman (HSLs), chair of the Committee for Elections, Appointments, and Administrative Affairs, to discuss the committee's plans for the upcoming parliamentary season, the obstacles and problems the committee faces, and the ways that NDI could provide assistance. This committee is responsible for the internal workings of parliament and discussions centered on parliamentary administrative reform.

Unlike in other parliaments, in Croatia the secretary general reports to the speaker of the parliament and not to the committee. NDI presented an alternative, the Canadian model of the Committee for Internal Economy, which is chaired by the parliamentary speaker and also involves the parliamentary clerk. NDI offered to help organize committee consultations with an MP from the Canadian Committee for Internal Economy and the Canadian parliament's Office of the Clerk.

Expert Consultations Conducted by John Reid, Information Commissioner of Canada

Access to and transparency of parliamentary information is accomplished only through the presence of the media at parliamentary sessions. The Sabor currently lacks the legislation and public outreach that would provide citizens with the opportunity to access information. John Reid, information commissioner from Canada and one of the Canadian MPs responsible for the implementation of the Canada Access to Information Act, was in Zagreb from September 23 to 29 to work with the Committee for Information and Media and the Constitutional Committee on drafting public access to information legislation and developing a committee public hearing process.

Reid also met with members of the Constitutional Court and the Ministry of Justice to discuss freedom of information and right to privacy legislation, explaining that the purpose of access to information legislation is to facilitate democracy. Reid met with GONG parliamentary interns and, in addition to covering access to information issues, he spoke about the role of interns and how they could best assist their members. Lastly, Reid spoke with a group of young parliamentarians. Elected as the youngest member of the Canadian House of Commons in 1965, Reid discussed issues related to being young members, such as credibility and promoting issues important to youth.

Quarterly Meeting of Women MPs

The regular quarterly meeting for women MPs was held on September 27 with John Reid as the guest speaker. MPs discussed the fact that they would like to make another study visit to Canada, as they feel that their increased experience in the Sabor would allow them to take greater advantage of the parliamentary resources there.

Creation of Materials

In this quarter, NDI began the production of a manual detailing how to hold a public hearing in parliament.

Political Party Development Program

Meetings with Political Party Secretaries General

NDI met with the secretaries general of the political parties with which NDI works to apprise them of the institute's upcoming work and to review the results of a poll conducted by Media Metar that profiled voting abstentions.

Meeting with SDP Secretary General Igor Dragutan, August 27

SDP is currently organizing a gathering of all new mayors, county prefects, city council presidents, and county party presidents to meet in Zagreb with the party's members of government and MPs in order to brief the newly elected officials on the government's agenda. As a result of the local elections in May, SDP has 1,311 new elected councilors across Croatia who must be trained on their roles and responsibilities. In terms of the party's relationship with MPs, there are essentially no links between MPs and party headquarters; the party headquarters have offices and computers that MPs could use but the party has not offered its services to the MPs. NDI will conduct a workshop with SDP MPs, followed by a regional multiparty workshop with elected officials, in order to help develop an understanding of their roles and responsibilities and ways they could help each other across party lines.

Meeting with HSLs Secretary General Dorica Nikolic, August 29

This meeting, as with all other meetings with political party leaders, had a common theme – the lack of communication and links between party members, MPs, local councilors and ministers. NDI agreed to work with the HSLs to organize four regional events/seminars that would bring together HSLs MPs, ministers, local councilors and mayors from major cities and discuss practical ways of building links among them and the party, and delivering a consistent message to voters and the public. HSLs will identify two priority regions, and NDI will evaluate the success of the seminars before repeating the events in other regions.

Meeting with HNS Spokesperson Boris Blazekovic, August 29

During this meeting, NDI and HNS discussed the form of their future cooperation. NDI will organize a seminar and develop a manual outlining the roles and responsibilities of local officials, which will then be distributed to HNS representatives. Blazekovic expressed an interest in reviewing different models of campaign finance, which NDI will provide.

Meeting with HSS Secretary General Stanko Grcic, August 30

NDI met with HSS Secretary General Stanko Grcic, International Secretary Darko Till and Secretary of the Expert Council Emil Tuk to discuss the party's plans and projects for the immediate future. The headquarters of HSS is in the process of establishing a public relations office within the party, as public relations has been a weakness of the party in the past. HSS would like to include young people and women in trainings on public presentation, image

development and public speeches. Relationships between party branches and party headquarters need to be improved, especially in terms of message development and communication.

HSS organized a pilot seminar for a group of new councilors from Zagrebacka County to identify the needs of councilors, party branch offices and council clubs. During the seminar a questionnaire was distributed to party members in order to identify the most important party issues. The HSS will use the results of the questionnaire to create a regional-based training program, in which NDI will take part.

Meeting with LS International Secretary Andrea Feldman, September 13

NDI met with LS International Secretary Andrea Feldman to discuss future cooperation. As part of NDI/Croatia's continuing branch office development project, the institute will work with party branch offices in two regions identified by LS.

Creation of Materials and Future Program Development

During this quarter, NDI worked on preparations for the fourth quarter's activities, including the production of new training manuals and materials.

Youth in Politics

NDI is currently developing new dimensions of its Youth in Politics program. The program will use the Internet and new technologies to promote youth in political parties and society in general. One proposed name for this initiative is, "Youth Politics Online." NDI is consulting with other youth parties in the region, in particular the Slovenian Youth Party, about cooperation with Croatian youth members. NDI will also access other youth resources to support this work, as outlined in the Future Activities section.

Local Councilors' Seminar

In this quarter, NDI developed a seminar entitled "Your Place in the Council, Among the People and the Party," to accommodate the multitude of newly elected local councilors. The seminar will focus on cooperating with the party on strengthening the newly elected representatives in their roles as local representatives, party representatives and representatives of the voters. Planning has also begun on such future seminars as: how the budget process works; how to work with voters; how to make the most out of question time; how to communicate the party's message in the council and on the street; and how to work with a branch office.

New Training Materials

Local Councilors' Guide: This manual is designed as an interactive workbook to complement NDI's seminars. It contains numerous exercises and humorous depictions of how new local councilors would engage in their work. The manual describes how local councils can be more open and accessible for citizen participation, how councilors can be more active in building a better community and how to use their resources most effectively. There is a section

on the role of local councilors vis-à-vis their political parties and how to facilitate that relationship. Lastly, the manual contains an individual action plan to help new councilors plan their activities.

The Power of Working Together: NDI is producing a practical guide on how to facilitate working in a group setting.

New Campaign Materials: NDI is developing a new series of short campaign manuals for easy access to the following topics: *Tips for Candidates*, *Tips for Campaign Advisors*, *Tips for Campaign Managers*, and *General Campaign Advice*. This material is based on a translation of “Joseph Napolitan’s Greatest Hints” and other information NDI acquired at the Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University’s course, *Political Campaigns, Internet and Democracies*, in Amsterdam.

Local Staff Development

Summer School

From July 26 to 29 Political Party Coordinator Alan Sisinacki participated in the course *Political Campaigns, Internet and Democracies*, which was organized by the Amsterdam Maastricht Summer University in Amsterdam. The course focused on campaign strategies and organization, and included training on ways to use information technology as a tool for political change.

NDI Slovakia Training

Natalija Bukovec worked with the NDI Slovakia team from September 6 to 10 as part of a two-day training session for young Slovak women in politics. Bukovec shared her political experience as an active and successful member of the SDP in Croatia, and conducted a workshop on how to run a campaign, from volunteer management to voter contact.

Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (GONG)

Citizens’ Hours

During this quarter, GONG organized 13 Citizens’ Hours events, including radio talk shows, meetings and panel discussions. The events were organized by GONG’s regional offices and took place throughout Croatia, had specific topical agendas and were attended by MPs and local government officials.

Internship Program

GONG met with municipal and county mayors in Slavonski Brod, Zadar, Zagreb and Rijeka to discuss the possibilities for placing interns in local governments. Some expressed an interest in taking on interns in the fall, and GONG will begin preparing and training regional staff and interns.

IV. RESULTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Parliamentary Development Program

Objective: Parliamentary committees are strengthened to review legislation, provide oversight of the executive branch, and involve the public and stakeholders in hearings on policy proposals and draft legislation.

- The Committee for Information and Media began developing legislation on increased public access to government information as well as a process for conducting public consultations on this issue;
- The Croatian Law Center agreed to provide technical support to the Committee for Information and Media as it develops access to information legislation;
- A debate began among parliament, media, and the general public about parliament's role and function in the development of policy. Deputy Speaker Arlovic is currently involved in a public debate with Prime Minister Racan (both members of SDP) to increase parliament's leverage in drafting legislation and building its institutional capacity. It has been repeatedly stated in this debate that committees are viewed as the tool to achieve these goals; and
- Three parliamentary committees (Information and Media, Gender, and Tourism), in cooperation with NDI, have committed themselves to the creation of a parliamentary public hearing manual. They also committed to introducing oversight mechanisms and a public input process in the parliament.

Objective: Members of parliament develop strategies to strengthen their effectiveness, become increasingly responsive to constituents, and engage in the work of their respective political parties.

- Several MPs created web pages that provide voters with information about their work and links to other sources of governmental information; and
- The Committee for Appointments, Elections and Administrative Affairs, chaired by MP Vilim Herman, is has begun to improve logistical assistance to MPs and caucus groups.

Objective: Parliamentary party caucuses develop organizational structures that meet the needs of members and provide an opportunity for all MPs to offer input on public policy issues or legislation.

- The SDP and HSLS caucuses began presenting themselves as "political units" to the press and public. Examples of such actions are SDP caucus press conferences on specific issues (veterans, social issues, privatization), which give the SDP caucus an autonomous voice in government and party communication; and
- Because of their organizational and advocacy skills, the HSLS and SDP caucuses acquired more space in the parliament building, providing them with opportunities to intensify communication and coordination.

Political Party Development Program

Objective: MPs and branch offices undertake coordinated voter outreach activities in targeted election districts.

Objective: Political parties evaluate their strategic, organizational and political performances and determine actions that optimize their strengths and minimize weaknesses. Parties link branch offices, elected officials and government representatives to the voters.

- The HNS organized its campaign for local elections in Dubrovnik using strategies and manuals supplied by NDI. In addition to traditional press conferences and presentations, the party branch's election strategies consisted of different types of direct contact with voters, including open-air coffee hours and live radio shows;
- As part of its effort to strengthen and unify the party, the HNS brought together, for the first time, 100 newly elected local officials to discuss party strategy, policy coordination and positioning;
- Wanting to change the 'old-fashioned' image of the party, the HSS decided to create a media and public relations department within the party. A group of youth and women party members were selected to work on this initiative; and
- During July and August, HSS began an educational training program for its newly elected officials at local and county levels. At the request of HSS, NDI will assist in the design and implementation of the program.

Objective: Competitive multiparty systems develop in identified war-affected regions.

- In Vojnic, a town in an identified war-affected region, the majority of seats in the municipal council was held by the HDZ prior to the May elections but now rests with the SDP. Recently the SDP-controlled council signed an 800,000 USD aid package with USAID for infrastructure development.

Objective: Parties enlist more women and youth into party leadership and engage them in activities at the local, county and national levels.

- The appointment of Ingrid Anticevic-Marinovic as the new Minister of Justice was confirmed by parliament. Anticevic-Marinovic was a participant in NDI's women leadership program in 1999 and has since moved rapidly through the party hierarchy.

Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (GONG):

Objective: GONG develops and implements a legislative internship program.

- In addition to the 10 parliamentary interns that began in the spring of this year, GONG will be supplying an additional five interns to the parliament. These additional interns have the approval and support of the parliamentary leadership,

which has come about as a result of a group of MPs advocating in favor of the internship program.

Objective: GONG increases citizen participation in the parliament through its 'Open Parliament' program.

- In seeking increased access to government information, GONG persuaded parliament to make current Croatian legislation more readily available through the internet. GONG had been using its paid subscription to post legislative information on its web page. This compelled the parliamentary administration to provide the information itself, free of charge.

V. EVALUATION

Political Party Program

It has become more evident since the local elections that party national headquarters and branches are more capable of working together to steer their parties. During negotiations for the formation of local and county majority coalitions, the coordination of coalition partner choices generally followed the party line. Secondly, a new form of party branch leadership has emerged, as many branch leaders have taken up positions as elected representatives. These leaders are now facing a new challenge to develop their parties as independently sustainable bodies at a time when elected representatives and executive officials have gained substantial leverage. Encouraging continued openness toward new members and permanent voter outreach activities is a must for the time being. It is encouraging that party headquarters have shown maturity in this major democratic transition, as exemplified through the party initiatives taken and requests given to NDI for training newly elected representatives.

Through conversations with political party leaders, international organizations and USAID during this quarter, it was agreed that the proposed program to work with local councilors, to begin during the fall of 2001, would not be a program separate from NDI's parliamentary and political party development programs; rather, it would be crafted as an integrated component of the political party development program. This component would be conducted with regionally based elected representatives, on the basis of party caucuses, party nominations and NDI selection, and would work with parties and their elected councilors in the context of three different political models: governing, opposition and not represented in government.

Administrative and Staff Issues

In August, Resident Representative Sarah Jenkins was taken ill and required major surgery in the United States. Jenkins will be on short-term disability through the remainder of 2001. However, NDI was fortunate enough to quickly retain Johan Hamels as a temporary replacement for Jenkins, and NDI activity has continued without interruption. Jenkins' absence will impact events of next quarter, however, in terms of work with women's leadership development. The focus in the fourth quarter will be on youth leadership development instead of

both women and youth. NDI plans to resume its concentrated work with women in political parties in 2002.

NDI is currently in discussions with USAID regarding a no-cost extension through January 2002 to complete activities.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Parliamentary Development Program

- NDI will continue ongoing consultations with parliamentary committees, specifically on setting up a framework for public hearings. Targeted committees are as follows: the Committee for Gender Equality; the Committee for Tourism, and potentially the Committee for Information, IT and Media.
- NDI plans to work with the Committee for Elections, Appointments and Administrative Affairs to continue strengthening the institution of parliament. The Institute will also consult with the Committee for Internal Economy and a representative from the clerk's office.
- NDI will continue computer training for parliamentary staff.
- NDI will continue ongoing consultations with the secretary general of the parliament and the parliamentary staff.

Political Party Program

- In the next quarter, NDI will hold workshops/seminars for the orientation of newly elected local officials. NDI currently has seminars planned with SDP, HSS, HNS, HSLS, LS, SDSS and the SBHS.
- In November, NDI will conduct a seminar for youth elected to local council positions. This seminar will focus on training young people working in council caucuses on communicating with youth in other organizations and the community at large, how to function as a governing representative or a minority representative and how to prepare youth councilors for council sessions.
- NDI will hold a series of workshops with representatives from party headquarters, including secretaries general and members of parliamentary caucuses, to assess their current strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.
- NDI will continue its ongoing regional training, on a single party basis, with elected officials and local party leadership. The Institute will also identify party activists to serve as volunteers in the field.
- NDI will work with parties to incorporate computers as an organizing tool – demonstrating how to use computers for membership/voters lists.