International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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PROJECT ACTIVITY REPORT

REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

ELECTION OF DEPUTIES TO THE OLIY MAJLISI AND REGIONAL AND LOCAL COUNCILS OF PEOPLES' DEPUTIES

December 25, 1994

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This report is a synthesis of the observations and recommendations of the individual participants in this project.

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PROJECT BACKGROUND: PRE-PROPOSAL MEETINGS

In late October 1994, IFES consultant Linda Edgeworth, met with John Scales, Democratization Officer, USAID, Almaty to discuss plans for upcoming IFES work in Central Asia. During the meeting, IFES was informed that USAID had received a cable regarding a request from Ambassador Henry L. Clarke in Tashkent, Uzbekistan that IFES provide technical assistance for the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for Christmas Day. Ambassador Clarke's cable indicated that he had managed to solicit an official invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for IFES to work in Uzbekistan.

At that time IFES was preparing for its follow-up visit to Tajikistan to assess the Referendum and Presidential election scheduled for November 6. In response to the request from Ambassador Clarke, USAID in Almaty suggested that it might be opportune if the IFES team could arrange to meet with the Embassy in Tashkent on its return trip from Dushanbe to Almaty. Travel between the two capitals requires a layover in Tashkent which created an opportunity to initiate contacts with officials in Uzbekistan.

Following further negotiations between IFES, AID Washington and USAID Almaty, it was decided that the Tajikistan/Uzbekistan team would include Scott Lansell, IFES Program Officer, Gwenn Hoffman, Regional Project Manager/Almaty, and Linda Edgeworth, an election consultant who was already working in Kazakstan and who had been a member of the Pre-Election Assessment Team in Tajikistan in September/October. Joining the team would be Zara Dashtamirova, local staff facilitator and interpreter from IFES's Almaty Office. Through the introductory meetings in Tashkent, IFES hoped to assess Uzbekistan's level of interest in technical assistance, and the nature of the support which might be possible if an appropriate and timely project was ultimately approved in time for the elections approximately 7 weeks away.

Briefings:

On the afternoon of November 8, the team was briefed by Ambassador Clarke, Sharon White, Deputy Chief of Mission, and Andrew Craft, Third Secretary at the Embassy. Three fundamental areas were covered: Ambassador Clarke's interest in meaningful NGO support for democratization programs in Uzbekistan; the general status of preparations and political environment for the elections; and, the current attitude of the Uzbek government about US technical assistance.

Ambassador Clarke related to the team that when he was assigned to Uzbekistan, one of his major priorities was to focus on democratization issues. Ambassador Clarke emphasized the critical importance of timely US technical assistance in view of the pressure which had been applied by the mission with regard to human rights and democratization. The team tried to be just as candid about the limitations in the time available for the development of a proposal which could be submitted through appropriate channels, and receive required approval and funding in time to be meaningful for the upcoming election.

In terms of the types of assistance to be considered, the Ambassador cautioned the team that, quite frankly, the government would not be receptive to another "assessment." Nor would they be interested in having their new law and administrative plan or the elections criticized at this point. He related that there had already been a number of "assessments" done, not only on democratization issues, but on other matters as well, and that recent history had proved them to be open-ended without meaningful follow-up. He candidly expressed his interest in receiving a firm commitment from IFES to follow through with a purposeful and viable program.

Embassy staff then gave the team a brief overview of the status of the election process. The key issue which was discussed related to the undemocratic political environment in which the elections would take place. Specifically, the government's hostile attitude toward any opposition has stifled the development of a meaningful multi-partyism system. Virtually all emerging opposition parties have been eliminated through deregistration and intimidation or imprisonment of their leaders. It is generally understood that the two remaining parties are both sympathetic to and sanctioned by the current president. Under these circumstances, it would be impossible to characterize any elections held in Uzbekistan as free and fair by international standards. However, from an administrative standpoint, the Embassy staff believed that the government was prepared to conduct a relatively organized and efficient election. We also discussed the president's publicly expressed attitude about democratization which he has consistently indicated would take a very long time and would be dependent on a long term re-education of the public.

Finally, the Ambassador advised the team that for months he had tried to bring influence to bear with the government of Uzbekistan on human rights issues. In response, government officials prodded the Ambassador to provide U.S. technical assistance. However, according to Ambassador Clarke, he was not able to get support from U.S. based NGOs. With regard to IFES, he was apparently advised that IFES prefers to have an invitation from the hosting government before working in a country. Therefore, he repeatedly requested such an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Finally the invitation came as requested. The Ambassador expressed his concern that the ball had now been passed to IFES and that failure to produce would create an embarrassing situation for the mission.

Preliminary Meeting with Government Officials

Armed with the insights shared by the Embassy, the IFES team tried to develop a strategy for the meeting with government officials scheduled for November 9. It was decided that the team would divide its presentation into three sections. Scott Lansell from the IFES Washington office would take the lead and introduce the IFES organization. Gwenn Hofmann would then generally describe the types of programs IFES offers and the manner in which IFES works. During her presentation she emphasized the importance of a pre-election analysis of strengths and weakness of the system in preparation for developing a meaningful program. She also attempted to make clear IFES's administrative requirements in getting the appropriate approval and funding for a program and the amount of time it would take to achieve that end. Linda Edgeworth was to follow up with talking points specifically related to Uzbekistan and its current needs.

Throughout the meeting the IFES team tried to keep focus on the issues and sentiments which had been brought to light at the briefing. There was a concerted effort to be sensitive to the objectives of the Ambassador and the obviously cautious receptivity of the Uzbeks officials. At the same time the team wanted to be realistic about the logistics involved in designing an appropriate proposal and soliciting approval and funding in time for the elections.

The team was accompanied by Sharon White and Andrew Craft. At the meeting were Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, several members of his agency, and Mr. Erkin Abdullaev, Deputy Chairman of the Central Election Commission. Through the course of the meeting, it seemed that while the Minister of Foreign Affairs had made an open concession to be receptive to US assistance, the CEC delegate was more reserved in his acceptance of IFES presence.

It was difficult to wrest from the group any open exchange as to the kind of assistance they believed would be most meaningful within the time frame available. It was clear from the discussion that the CEC representative had no immediate suggestions. During the presentation several attempts were made to encourage discussion about any specific problem which the CEC was encountering, or any deficiency in the new law which may have made itself evident from an administrative point of view. As might have been expected, officials indicated that they had no problems and that the law was very comprehensive.

The only opening that presented itself within the context of the meeting was that the Election Committee wanted it understood that this election would be very different from past elections. With that understanding, and based on what the team had learned about the president's public statements regarding the importance of educating the public to a new mind-set before democratization could be fully achieved, the team asked what steps had been taken in the area of voter education for the upcoming election. In particular, the group was asked if any innovations were planned to give the upcoming election a "new look" to illustrate its departure from past elections. Based on entrenched Soviet experience, the team anticipated that the voter education plan would adhere to traditional practices and involve the dry and technical institutional publication of the law, locations of polling sites and election officials' names.

The team pursued this course and openly asked if this might be an area in which IFES assistance might be useful, if it proved possible to secure approval and funding in time. Frankly, this was the only suggestion which garnered any notable spark of interest. Given the immediacy with which any proposal would have to be initiated, emphasis on this type of assistance met other objectives which could benefit future IFES work in Uzbekistan. First, by narrowing the scope of an outreach program to a condensed, innovative radio and print campaign, it was a project that might be reasonably achieved in the time period available, and with a minimal budget. It was also a project which would be "non-threatening" in view of the current attitude of government officials, leaving the door open for more substantive technical assistance in the future. And, even if somewhat limited, it could have an immediate and positive affect, while leaving a tangible deliverable that could be copied and institutionalized in the future.

The IFES team closed its presentation by reiterating the logistics involved in fielding a project

in such a short time frame but assured the group that IFES would initiate the appropriate steps.

Pre-Project Concerns

Upon its return to Almaty, the team had a follow-up meeting with the Democratization Officer at USAID. We learned that Ambassador Clarke had once again expressed his concern that IFES had not spend adequate time in Uzbekistan. However, given the initiatory nature of the visit the team believed that these meetings were sufficient to assess Uzbekistan's level of interest, and the nature of the support that might be possible. Also, additional time spent in Uzbekistan at this juncture would only have contributed to a delay in IFES developing a proposal and initiating the appropriate submission, review and approval process.

While IFES was eager to be responsive to the Ambassador's request, optimism regarding programming in Uzbekistan was guarded for several reasons. First, even though the team had managed to elicit a spark of interest in IFES assistance in the area of voter education, the degree to which Uzbekistan officials would actually commit themselves to IFES recommendations and facilitation of an IFES generated program was not easily determined. Their cooperation would be critical if IFES was to succeed, and IFES would have to rely on their preparedness to facilitate appropriate arrangements on the project team's behalf.

The team members were also concerned about the potential effectiveness of implementing a meaningful program in such a limited time frame. With the most rapid administrative approval and funding processing, it was unlikely that a team could actually be in the field before the middle of December, just 2 weeks before the election. Even under the most experienced management, time would be necessary for the IFES representative to absorb adequate information, become familiar with the CEC's own plans, design an appropriate message and media strategy and oversee actual production of materials before they could be utilized, assuming he got full cooperation from the Uzbekistan authorities. Ideally, a voter education program should be initiated much earlier. The team was also concerned that the upon its arrival, key officials with whom the team would be working would be focussed on other election issues making significant demands on their time immediately before the elections. Some of these issues could be ameliorated through a concentration on pre-planning before the team's arrival in Uzbekistan and a careful design and limitation of program parameters. IFES made a concerted effort to take the necessary steps to provide appropriate briefings and facilitate pre-arrival preparations so that IFES consultant could hit the ground running upon his arrival.

IFES also considered the general environment in which it would be working. Uzbekistan's level of commitment to achieving democracy has been stilted at best. The restrictive political environment which has severely thwarted all meaningful opposition in recent years prompts legitimate questions about the degree of freedom and fairness of the upcoming elections. The less than stellar recent record on human rights, inhibitions on journalistic freedoms and rights of association, and general intolerance of political diversity are not conducive to the conduct of an election which can reasonably be evaluated by inte'rnationally accepted standards. This circumstance poses significant questions in terms of tailoring a meaningful project which is

appropriate to the realities of the current status of democratic evolution. The concern is that in identifying priorities, attempts to provide short-term assistance such as the voter education program being proposed may be premature without an adequate foundation; ideal programs would be geared to the building of democratic institutions first.

Finally, in view of the questionable political environment in which these elections would be held and the fundamentally undemocratic conditions which continue to exist, it was important to consider how IFES presence might be misconstrued. In fact, a number of members of the international community and non-governmental organizations decided not to participate as observers during these elections for similar concerns. It could be anticipated that the very presence of IFES during the elections could be utilized by the government of Uzbekistan to "validate" the free and fairness of the elections themselves. Indeed, this issue is discussed later in this report.

In spite of these concerns, weight was given to the interests of the Embassy in view of its efforts to provide NGO support for human rights and democratization programs. The timing was important also in terms of the narrow window of opportunity which was opened when Ambassador Clarke was able to get an invitation from the Foreign Minister for IFES to work in Uzbekistan. Ultimately, IFES was able to field a program which achieved a degree of success and which seemed to generate interest and acceptance from the government of Uzbekistan. Perhaps, with sufficient careful consideration of priorities and thoughtful strategic planning this project will open the door for more substantive work in the future.

BRIEF COUNTRY PROFILE

On August 31, 1991, Uzbekistan gained its independence from the former U.S.S.R. The most populous of the Newly Independent States of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is nestled between Afghanistan to the South, Kazakstan to the north, and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the East. The third largest of the former Soviet Republics, the country has a territory of 177,000 square kilometers, nearly 4/5 of which is desert. With over half of the population below the poverty line, Uzbekistan had been the second poorest of the former Soviet Republics after Tajikistan. Its economy is largely agrarian. However, heavily reliant on cotton production, Uzbekistan remains highly dependent on imported grain and other foodstuffs. Furthermore, the cotton "monoculture" has had insidious side-effects. Both the country's public health and its economy are seriously afflicted by the environmental disaster resulting from the devastation of the Aral Sea which as been polluted over decades by overuse of pesticides, defoliants and agro-chemicals of various sorts.

The Sum, Uzbekistan's currency in use since the spring of 1994, became convertible 20 June 1994.[1] An oil and gas field development agreement reached January 20, 1995 promises to

[1]RFE/RL Daily Report, No. 114, 17 June, and No. 121, June 28, 1994.

increase output by $6 billion.[2] Uzbekistan received $140 million from the IMF on 20 January 1995, in a scheme to assist transition to a market economy. Inflation was down from 1100% in 1993 to 270% in 1994. Subsidies on basic foodstuffs were eliminated and those on utilities were reduced in 1994. All of this contributed to improving the country's economic outlook for 1994-95.[3]

Recent Political History

President Islam Karimov came to power in 1989, when he was elected First Secretary of the Uzbek S.S.R.'s Communist Party Central Committee. Partly free elections to the unicameral Supreme Soviet of 360 members were held in February 1990, with one third of the candidates representing communist-dominated "public associations" running unopposed, and a quarter standing for reserved seats. Later that year, Karimov was elected President by the Supreme Soviet.[4]

From 1988 to 1991, during Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, Uzbekistan saw a relaxing of old soviet practices and a liberalization of the political climate. There was a decrease in the repression of freedom of speech, press, association, assembly and other political rights.

But Uzbek society today remains largely unchanged from soviet days. The government retains control over the media and the courts. In the name of "stability," a tight control over all political opposition is maintained.

Following the August 1991 coup, which Karimov had initially supported, the Communist Party in Uzbekistan broke with the CPSU, changing its name to the People's Democratic Party. The "new" party retained the leadership role.

Uzbekistan declared independence on 31 August 1991. According to one report, about 200 members of the Supreme Soviet expressed no confidence in Karimov's authoritarian leadership. Presidential elections and a referendum on independence were called for December 29. These were the first direct and contested presidential elections in the nation's history and represented a significant step forward.

On December 30, 1991, the Central Electoral Committee announced that the vote on independence had passed with an overwhelming 98.2% of the vote. Karimov won relatively open elections drawing 86% of the vote, with approximately 95% of the eligible voters participating. His principal opponent Muhammed Solikh, Chairman of the opposition Erk Party, gained 12.3%. Abdurrahim Pulatov, leader of the Berlik Popular Movement, was prevented

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[2]Southwest Newswire, 20 January 1994

[3]"Slowly to Market," the Economist, 7 January 1994, p.50.

[4]Helsinki Commission, Patricia Carley, Draft Report, December 1992.

from running by an election law containing provisions requiring the gathering of large numbers of signatures in a short period of time in order to be registered as a candidate. Pulatov claimed that authorities deliberately and arbitrarily prevented him from running, applying the election law to ensure his exclusion. Apparently the Helsinki Commission found evidence supporting his claim.

The opposition charged authorities with questionable election practices, such as handing out multiple ballots, and failing to ask voters for identification. Complaints were also lodged against the incumbent's control over state media, and the apparatus that administered the election laws. Allegations of impropriety surrounded election day activities and the counting of the voted ballots.

It is not likely that even had the most ideal conditions existed, Pulatov or Sadekh would have won. Although there was no proven evidence of coercion in the voting, critics have suggested that the problem stemmed from Karimov's control over the media, and legal restrictions which effectively prevent the opposition from projecting their views. In addition, only those parties which are officially registered are allowed to field candidates.

The renamed communist party did not enjoy widespread support. Pro-democracy rallies in several cities calling for its abolition in the late summer and fall of 1991 were forcibly broken up. Following student demonstrations in January of 1992 during which two demonstrators were shot and killed, President Karimov promised to register all political parties.

Emergence and Status of Political Parties

The New Movement for Democratic Reform in Uzbekistan, presented by the government as an alternative to Muslim-oriented opposition groups, the Social Progress Party of Uzbekistan, lead by Professor Fayzulla Iskhanov, and the Homeland Progress Party, led by Usman Azimov are examples of parties which managed to succeed during this time period. While the Homeland Progress Party has been allowed to register, it is commonly seen as a creation of the government. In addition, several moderate opposition parties were allowed to register.[5] The opposition movements hardly represented western democracy, but rather varying shades of Uzbek nationalism with a liberal patina.

Between 1988 and 1992, the government was relatively tolerant of opposition activities. But, as time wore on, that tolerance seems to have eroded away.

The two main opposition parties were the moderate Erk (Freedom) Party and its progenitor, the more democratic reform-oriented Birlik (Unity) Movement. Birlik was founded in May 1989

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[5]One Nation Becomes Many. p.24; CRS Report for Congress; The Washington Post; the NY times; the Soviet Union at a Crossroads: Facts and Figures on the Soviet Republics; and the Economist.

and called for greater Uzbek ethnic revival. It had strong, grass-root support. The Birlik Movement was allowed to register as a social movement in November 1991, but has not been allowed to register as a party. It was not given the premises it is entitled to under the law. Ultimately, its registration as a social movement was suspended in 1993. Erk, founded in 1990 with a narrow base of support of urban intellectuals, was registered as a political party on 5 September 1991 and given legal status. However, it was eventually evicted from its offices. In March 1993, Erk refused to comply with a new requirement that parties re-register. Ultimately the rule was declared unlawful by the Supreme Court when it was challenged.[6]

The Islamic Rebirth Party held its first congress in June 1990, advocating Islam within a secular constitutional frame work. Its membership, strength and platform was never really established because it was officially banned by the Uzbek government. The Party of Free Peasants, headed by academician Mirazaali Mukhammejanov is thought to have been close to the Erk Party. The Green Party founded in November 1987 and grew out of the Committee to Save the Aral Sea. That same year it succeeded in being officially registered. The Samarkand Movement is a Tajik rights movement. Other parties include the Movement for Democratic Reforms, the Islamic Democratic Party, the Humaneness and Charity Group, the Inter-Union Movement, and the Uzbekistan Movement. However, none of these have been registered.[7]

In July of 1992, Mohammed Saleh, the leader of the Erk Party resigned his seat in the Supreme Soviet after he was prevented from speaking on the political situation in the country. In defiance of the crackdown efforts, Saleh stated that he could no longer work in the "anti-democratic, communist" parliament and pledged to cooperate with Berlik. Within a month the Party's funds were confiscated after a tax inspection showed that the Party owed the government virtually all of the funds left in its accounts. Reportedly, this debt resulted from financing received from abroad, an illegal practice under a decree by President Karimov. The indebtedness was enforced retroactively since the financing to which it applied was obtained before the decree was issued.

Acts of Repression

Freedom of the press has also been curtailed. The government has refused to register the Berlik Movement newspaper and has also shut down the Erk Party newspaper. Official harassment of Erk activists continued in February and March of 1994, as detentions for attempted distribution of their banned newspaper were stepped up. In March of 1992, by special decree, the government shut down Khalk Suzi and Narodnoye Slovo, the officials newspapers of the Uzbek Parliament. In August of 1992, the business paper Tadbikor was shut down for "sowing discontent." Izvestiya and Argumenti y Facty, Russian newspapers, have occasionally been seized. Izvestija, Moscovskie Novisti, Novoye Vremya, Nezavisimaya Gazeta and the television

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[6]William Fierman, "The Communist Paty, 'Erk', and the Changing Uzbek Political Environment," 10.3 Central Asian Survey 55, at 65-6 (1991.)

[7]CRS Report for Congress, Uzbekistan: Basic Facts, 92-117F, Revs'd, February 14, 1992.

news program Vesti were banned. Even Radio Liberty is said to impose a degree of self-screening in order not to be banned.[8] Ostankino TV news and other Russian TV companies have been almost completely interrupted on the basis of alleged financial disputes.[9] A number of journalists, including Russians and Kyrgyzstanis, have been incarcerated or assaulted.[10] A western journalist has recently been banned.[11]

Several opposition activists were detained in May 1994 for their planned participation in a human rights conference in Almaty, Kazakstan. There were also renewed attempts at abductions and arrests outside the country. Some opposition activists were taken from Kazakhstan in May and June for participating in that same conference.

Like most of his Central Asian counterparts, President Karimov is a cautious former communist who has not favored aggressive democratization, and has expressed his relative intolerance of political opposition on a number of occasions. Karimov has stated before the Supreme Soviet that he would "not hesitate to employ any measure in order to prevent destabilization." In July 1992 he is quoted to have said, "if maintaining discipline and order in a society is called dictatorship, then I am a dictator," and that "real democracy" was maintained by the "masses' understanding of what is allowed and what is not."

Karimov continues to maintain strict control over the activities of relevant political personalities. In November 1991, the former Vice President Shukurulla Mirzaidov was removed from office. Three khokims were removed by Karimov in early 1993. On August 19, 1994, the Mayor of Tashkent and two of his deputies were dismissed at Karimov's behest.

Uzbekistan has taken the important steps of adopting relatively progressive legislation reforms and of voicing its commitments to human rights and democracy in the international fora.[12] Still, Uzbekistan's human rights record has been severely criticized. Opposition party members and democratic and human rights activists have regularly been abducted, beaten, arrested, and had their homes searched and arsoned. In addition, opposition groups have been evicted from their headquarters, pro-democracies rallies have been forcibly broken up and demonstrators shot. Helsinki Watch reports that up to 100 opposition activists may have been dismissed from their

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[8]Abdumannob Pulatov, Uzbekistan Human Rights Society Release, 11 June 1993, Washington D.C.

[9]RFE\RL Daily Report, No. 33, 17 February 1994, p.3: No. 166, 1 September 1994, p.3.

[10]Igor Rotar, "Democratci Russia and Birlik Accuse Uzbek Leadership. News Conference Given by Democrats of Russia and Uzbekistan," Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 26 September 1992, p.3.

[11]Abdumannob Pulatov, "Political Prisoners in Uzbekistan..." p.37.

[12]See Thomas L. Friedman, "Uzbek Says Yes to Democracy, of Course," The Washington Post, 18 February 1992. [12]

jobs as a result of their activities. The government of Uzbekistan is reported not to have investigated any of these activities.[13]

Potential Progress

There have been a few signs of potential progress for democracy in Uzbekistan of late. Five of 13 Erk and Birlik activists tried for treason last fall have been pardoned. A Karimov Edict on Amnesty was issued on August 22, 1994, notably to reduce and eliminate sentences against those who have been imprisoned for the first time. In September, the Oliy Majilis adopted the Criminal Code in which crimes punishable by death were reduced from 30 to 12. The maximum prison term was also reduced to 20 years. Expelling a citizen from the country was precluded as a legal punishment.

Karimov has been successful in placating minority religious forces. A number of Uzbekistan's 45,000 Jews generally support Karimov due to the opening of schools and Synagogues, and the support of Rabbis and teachers being brought in from Israel.[14]

A new political party, Istiqla Yoli (Independence Path) was founded in June of 1994. The Central Asian leaders' 11 July 1994 agreement to form a Central Asia Union, with its stated goals including the intention to harmonize laws and to establish free labor mobility, is a source of potential progress. Some credence can probably be given to President Karimov's asserting that Xenophobic, anti-semitic, Zhirinovski-type nationalism will not evolve in Uzbekistan, if his political legacy succeeds in establishing itself.

Uzbekistan may be making an effort at improving its record on human rights issues. On July 26, 1994, President Karimov launched an anti-corruption campaign against judicial and law enforcement officials.

Fatikh Teshabaev, the Uzbekistan Ambassador to the United States, has been maintaining an on

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[13]See CSCE Letters to President Karimov of 12 May and 6 April 1993; CSCE, Human rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States, 211 (January 1993); Union of Councils, "Recent Human Rights Violations in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan," 1 (6 July 1993); Helsinki Watch, "Straightening Out the Minds of One Hundred: Discriminatory Political Dismissals in Uzbekistan," (April 1993); Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Annual Report, 1993, New York; Uzbekistan Human Rights Society, Press Releases of 6 and 14 May 1993; Statement of Abdumannob Pulatov Before the CSCE Hearing on the Situation in Central Asia, 25 March 1993; Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights, "Karimov's Way, March 1994, New York; U.S.D.O.S., Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1992, 1993 at 974; Abdoumannob Polutav, Comments on the 1993 D.O.S. Human Rights Report on the Republic of Uzbekistan.

[14]See Friedman, supra.

going dialogue with Abdumannob Pulatov of the Uzbekistan Human Rights Society since Foreign Minister Kamilov's October 7 visit to Washington. The OSCE was able to host a seminar in Tashkent in September of 1994, demonstrating official tolerance for the international and domestic human rights groups which participated, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Union of Councils, Birlik and the Tajik Society of Samarqand.[15] On January 30, 1995, the National Democratic Institute sponsored a conference on Political Reform in Uzbekistan which assembled leaders of Birlik, Erk, the Uzbekistani Minister of Justice and others.

Mixed reviews were to be expected concerning the December 25 elections. A few days before the elections were called the president reiterated his sentiments regarding his priorities. "Let us remember the change in mentality that began during the perestroika period. At that time, too, we were suffering from an infectious disease.[...] We can still recall the various hopeless, shortsighted efforts [...]carried out under the mask of democracy. We recovered from this disease more easily than some others. The principle that one state is one family has been laid down. [...] In other words, there has been no room for division and disorder in our society. Accord and community of opinion have been established."[16]

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE ELECTION PROCESS

On December 25, 1994, elections were held to the Oliy Majlis (Supreme Assembly) of Uzbekistan. Elections were also held for provincial, district, city and town councils. The major focus of the Central Electoral Committee (CEC) and the media was on the elections to the Oliy Majlis. They are also the focus of remainder of this report.

Uzbekistan has a population of roughly 23 million people. Approximately half the population is eighteen or over, and therefore eligible to vote. On December 29, 1994, Uzbek Radio reported that the number of voters registered on the electoral roll was 11,250,461, and that 93.6% of the electorate had taken part in the election.

Legal Framework

On December 8, 1992, the new constitution was adopted. It appears to enshrine many democratic principles. For example, Article 7 states that the people are the source of the state's power. Legal protection of constitutional rights and freedoms are guaranteed in Article 13. While on its surface the Constitution appears to encompass a number of principles commonly associated with free democracies, a number of provisions illustrate the degree to which the

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[15]"Political Prisoners In Uzbekistan: Five Pardoned, Eight on Trial," Central Asia Monitor, No. 6, 1994, p.34-38.

[16]"Karimov Address to Parliament, 22 September," FBIS-SOV-94-188, 28 September 1994.

foundation law continues to be entrenched in soviet style traditions. Ultimately, the structure of the document provides loopholes whereby freedoms and rights "guaranteed" the citizens may be curtailed or rescinded when it is in the interests of the state. A few examples serve to illustrate the point.

1. Article 28 ensures freedom of speech and belief, however, limitations are identified in subsequent articles. Under these provisions exceptions include prohibitions against "anti-government activities," (Article 62), insulting the President, (Article 191) and, "malicious delinquency" (Article 204.)

2. The right of public assembly is guaranteed in Article 32. However, Articles 56 and 57 limit these rights to select groups, specifically those without a religious or ethnic basis, and those who have achieved official registration with the government.

3. Article 10 states that only the Oliy Majlis and the President may speak on behalf of the people of Uzbekistan, specifically excluding political parties, public associations and individuals from doing so.

4. The constitution specifically allows for curtailing the rights and freedoms on the basis of "legitimate interests" of the state.

Thus the Constitution leaves sufficient vagueness to allow the continuation of a repressive de jure legitimate regime. Furthermore, although it was adopted in December of 1992, the President acknowledged in an interview as late as May 1993, "It cannot be said that all that is in the Constitution is already being realized in reality today."[17]

The full complement of separate laws and decrees reflect other potential impediments to the achievement of true democracy in keeping with traditionally accepted international standards. For example, the law on citizenship provides a zero option which precludes ethnic Russians from dual citizenship. An Ukaz (order) of the presidium of the Oliy Majlis dating back to February 1990 put in place a ban on outdoor public rallies and demonstrations. Uzbekistan enacted a law in late 1990 which protects the President from statements which insult his dignity. A July 1992 law enables the Parliament to curtail the powers of deputies when their conduct "besmirches or discredits the high calling of a people's deputy, or results, among other things, in "destabilizing the socio-political situation."

Laws Relating to Participation by Political Parties

The Law on Public Associations, under which political parties and movements are covered, is

[17] "Uzbekistan: Karimov Defends His Policies Against Accusations of Strong-Arm Tactics," Trud, 26 May 1993, reprinted in BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, 12 June 1993 (NEXIS)

particularly burdensome for groups seeking to organize in the political arena. This law requires that political parties obtain 3,000 members in order to register, and prohibits registration under the same name as a public association. This has prevented Birlik from registering as a political party because of its status as a "movement." Furthermore, registration can only occur after a constituent assembly is held. Such an assembly requires local government approval in advance of the event. Funding of public associations by foreign or religious organizations is prohibited.

Once registered, a political party may not necessarily be eligible to field candidates in an election. The Law on Elections to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan imposes additional requirements. First, in order to qualify, the party must have been registered at least 6 months prior to the election. In addition, in order to be eligible to nominate candidates the party must gather 50,000 signatures on a petition in support of its participation in the election. No more than 10% of the gathered signatures may be acquired in a single territorial administrative area. Signatures may only be collected by persons officially nominated by the election bodies of the political parties who confirm that the signatures they have gathered are genuine by signing the documents. The nomination process falls within the window beginning on the 25th day after the election date has been set, and 45 days before the election. Under the law, if signatures are falsified, the CEC refuses the right of the party to participate. It is not clear as to how the process by which petition verification regarding the validity of signatures is made. Nor are the ground rules by which a decision to exclude the party is formalized. For example, it is not clear if an insignificant number of signatures found to be invalid can be used to automatically nullify the whole petition, even if a sufficient number of valid signatures remain.

The Law on Election to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic

The Law on the Election to the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan that went into effect 10 days after its publication on December 28, 1993, is the principle law governing the election. It provides that the new legislature shall consist of 250 single-member districts whose representatives serve a term of five years.

The law dictates the parameters for the delimitation of constituencies to be formed by the Central Election Commission (CEC) based on presentations by the Chairman of Zhokarghy Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan (an automomous administrative unit within Uzbekistan,) and the Khokims (mayors) of the provinces of the Republic and the city of Tashkent. Under the law the constituencies are to be delimited with due regard for the administrative and territorial divisions, and, "as a general rule" with an equal number of voters. The target number of voters to be included in each constituency is to be specified by the Oliy Majlis.

The law also delineates the administrative structure for the conduct of elections comprising the CEC and a system of subordinate electoral committees at the district level and at the ward or polling site level. The rights and responsibilities of political parties and campaign financing are covered in this law. The law is also fairly specific in its guidance as to election day procedures, design of the ballot and the method by which voters will mark their choices, counting and

reporting election results, adjudicating grievances, determining winners and registering the elected officials.

According to law, citizens who have attained the age of eighteen by election day are eligible to vote. Citizens who are twenty-five by election day may become candidates. The law provides for equal and direct suffrage and a secret ballot. Article 3 dictates that each citizen shall have only one vote. The law guarantees voting rights to all citizens of the Republic regardless of their origin, social and property status, race, nationality, sex, education, language, religion or occupation. Only individuals legally certified as insane or who are imprisoned are precluded from voting.

The Central Electoral Committee

The CEC is the powerful institution that controls the election process in Uzbekistan. Its powers include ensuring uniform application of the law, creating electoral districts, distributing funds to subordinate electoral committees, determining all aspects of election administration, and ensuring equal conditions for all candidates. The Committee is formed by the Oliy Majlis and consists of a Chairman, and at least 14 members representing the Republic of Karakalpakstan, each province in the Republic and the City of Tashkent. The committee structure includes district electoral committees, which are formed by the CEC, and ward (polling site) committees, which are formed by the district committees. The CEC is the final authority with respect to disputed decisions of its subordinate committees. In all, approximately 80,000 individuals are involved in administering the election from the CEC down to the over 7,200 polling stations.

Ballot Access, Candidates and Campaigns

Candidates gain access to the ballot by being nominated by a properly registered and otherwise qualified political party or by the Zhokarghy Kenes (elected representative body) of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, provincial councils and the City of Tashkent. The law provides that each nominated candidate has an equal right to use the mass media, and requires the district committees to arrange meetings for the candidates with voters. Article 25 of the law permits political parties and candidates to advance programs for their future activities. Restrictions apply that programs should not be aimed against the Republic's "sovereignty, integrity, and security, encroach on the health or morality of society, contain propaganda of war, ethnic enmity, racial and religious hostility, or call for changing the constitutional system by force or taking actions infringing on the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens."

With respect to campaign finance, the law provides that the state will pay for all expenditures connected with the election. Private financial or material assistance to candidates is specifically forbidden.

Two political parties nominated candidates for the elections to the Oliy Majlis: the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the successor to the Communist Party of Uzbekistan; and the Homeland Progress Party (Vatan Tarakkieti), which billed itself as a party of new ideas and

entrepreneurial spirit. The third, and ultimately most successful force on the ballot were the candidates nominated by the regional councils. Many of these nominees were, in fact, members of the People's Democratic Party, despite not having been nominated by the party.

The Constitution of Uzbekistan, adopted in December of 1992, provides for regional and local councils whose members are elected. Heads of the local executive bodies are appointed the president providing for the direct involvement of the President in regional and local government.

There were 634 candidates for the 250 seats in the Oliy Majlis: the regional councils fielded a candidate in each of the 250 districts; the PDP in 243 districts; and the Homeland Progress Party in 141 districts. Although only preliminary results were available at the time of IFES's departure from Uzbekistan, it appeared that the khokimiyat candidates had won an overwhelming majority of seats to the new Oliy Majlis. The PDP was a distant second, and Homeland Progress was third. It also appeared that there would have to be run-offs in approximately 40 districts, because no candidate had received the absolute majority required under the law.

VOTER EDUCATION AND IFES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

IFES contracted with Daniel J. Blessington, an attorney specializing in election law, to develop a basic voter education program to reach the population of Uzbekistan with essential information about democracy, voting procedures and election issues which would be facing the voter with respect to the parliamentary elections. Mr. Blessington arrived in Tashkent on December 13, 1994 and left on New Year's Eve.

The Media in Uzbekistan

During the brief duration of IFES's mission there was opportunity to become at least generally familiar with the current status of media in Uzbekistan. Through his own observations and meetings with Uzbekistan media officials, foreign and domestic journalists, the BBC World Service Monitoring group for Central Asia and others, Mr. Blessington was able to get a general sense of how the media operates, and the various types of media outlets which exist.

The media in Uzbekistan is centrally controlled. According to the General Director of the National Information Agency of Uzbekistan, Mamatkul Kharatkulov, his agency distributes most of the news of national significance for publication by Uzbekistan's electronic and print media. Apparently the editors and reporters of the various media outlets themselves have a limited ability to generate news stories of their own.

Although it was not possible to obtain a useful estimate of readership, there are numerous newspapers published in Uzbekistan. They include "Uzbekistan Youth," "The Uzbekistan Teacher," "Business Herald of the East," "Truth of the East," "Tashkentskay Pravda," and "Uzbekistan Obozi." One of the most readily available is "Voice of the People," published in both Russian and Uzbek language versions. This is the paper of the Supreme Council and

Cabinet Ministers of Uzbekistan, and, significantly, it is also the paper of the People's Democratic Party. Over the course of his stay in Uzbekistan, the IFES consultant had an opportunity to review this publication on most of the days it was published and available for purchase. It publishes official information such as visits by foreign dignitaries, and activities and speeches by the president and other top government officials. Since it is also a party publication, it contains articles by PDP leaders. However, its election coverage included information on candidates for the Oliy Majlis who had been nominated by the regional governments, PDP, and Homeland Progress. There was little content which would spark any degree of controversy in its coverage of the election.

There is a State Company for TV and Radio Broadcasting located in Tashkent. Its Chairman is Shavkat G. Yakhyaev. There are three radio stations in the Tashkent area. All provide news, music, advertisements and other programming. According to BBC World Service Monitoring in Tashkent, two of the stations carry national radio programs in the Uzbek language, while the third rebroadcasts Russian language programming from Russia.

There are five television channels available at various times of the day in Tashkent. There is an additional station in Samarkand, about a three hour drive from Tashkent. According to BBC World Service Monitoring, a recent survey disclosed that approximately 83% of the Uzbek public watches television. Television broadcasting is somewhat confusing, since various studios share the same channels. One of the channels includes Russian language news and entertainment programming from Moscow. It operates in the morning and evening, but not during the daytime. On other channels, there is programming in Uzbek and Turkish. At times the BBC and Worldnet news is available.

The BBC World Service Monitoring unit covers Central Asia from offices in Tashkent. Its function is to monitor the mass media, and to provide to subscribers translations of news reports that it determines newsworthy. The FBIS reports on Central Asia are, in fact, the work product of this organization. IFES consultant, Dan Blessington, had the opportunity to meet with Senior Editor and Project Manager Shahrzad Ghorashian, Duty Editor John Mac Leod and Chief-Sub Phil Magorin during which the status of election coverage was specifically discussed. They had translated relatively few items dealing with the election, despite the blanket coverage in the Uzbek press, since they had determined most of the coverage had little news value for subscribers outside of Uzbekistan. They indicated that the election coverage in the Uzbek press was largely devoid of issue discussion, and that matters such as voter education were not the type of information that they would provide to their subscribers.

Voter Education Already Underway

In the absence of a pre-election assessment, there was no way of knowing the extent of voter education efforts that had taken place prior to the arrival of the IFES consultant 12 days before the scheduled elections. In fact, it became quickly evident that there was extensive coverage of the elections on both television and in the print media. Voter education efforts are the responsibility of the CEC and state media officials working together. In the period preceding

the election, they had undertaken a comprehensive plan to provide basic information on general administration of the elections, and to provide coverage of the candidates.

With regard to general election information, for example, articles appeared in newspapers that reported on the preparations for the elections by district and ward election officials. Still others highlighted the views of academics, diplomats and international visitors on the nature of democracy and the elections in Uzbekistan. There was limited voter education on the mechanics of voting, although the print and TV explanations of sample ballots was quite good. Finally, there were some attempts at providing basic non-partisan voter information, such as a radio broadcast informing people that so-called "family voting" would be prohibited. This type of information was to increase as election day drew nearer.

The Uzbekistan election law provides that all candidates have an equal right to use the mass media. Much attention was given to providing "equal time" and space to each candidate. In practice this resulted in "equal time" for candidates to appear on television, and "equal space" for their photographs and biographies to be printed in the newspapers. In addition, television broadcast candidate interviews or "roundtables." There were also newspaper articles describing the backgrounds of candidates and their campaigns. On the television news programs, there was coverage of candidate fora in the districts where voters would sit in a public meeting place and listen to the candidates present themselves.

In addition to the type of election coverage described above, there were other ways in which the CEC and the mass media tried to nurture voter interest in the elections. During a meeting with Shavkat Yakhyaev, the Chairman of the State Company for TV and Radio Broadcasting, Tursun Karabayev, a television political correspondent, and Erkin Abdullaev, the Deputy Chairman of the CEC some of the other ways in which the public was encouraged to take part in the elections were described. For instance, an informal news program called "Good Morning" reportedly used the device of asking people lighthearted questions, such as:

> "Have you bought a new dress for election day?"
>
> "Have you used your gray matter and thought about who to vote for?"
>
> "You're 18 now, so you can vote for the first time."

There was also a TV program in which CEC Deputy Chairman Abdullaev regularly participated. In this program the moderator discussed various items with election officials and viewers were allowed to ask questions.

Mr. Abdullaev also appeared on a taped program broadcast on December 23 and 24, in which he explained the mechanics of voting using a sample ballot. A sample ballot with detailed voting instructions also appeared in the newspapers on December 23 and 24. These were good examples of the type of solid voter information that the CEC and the mass media were able to produce.

While the state-planned publicity campaign surrounding the elections had very positive elements, there were also some notable deficiencies. First, the difference between news coverage and voter education was almost indistinguishable. In addition, the campaigns of the candidates were generally colorless relying heavily on strictly biographical information. Because of the constraints imposed by the law candidates were given very little discretion in establishing their own campaign strategies and priorities. Under the law, they were virtually precluded from discussing substantive issues which could lead to controversy, or worse, their vulnerability to removal from the ballot. As a result, voters may have been deprived of valuable information on which to make informed decisions as they selected their candidate.

Campaigns Devoid of Issues

No discussion of voter education in Uzbekistan would be complete without addressing some fundamental characteristics of the general election environment. The amount of time and space devoted to the elections and the candidates in the mass media was truly impressive. News coverage, however, was superficial, and often intertwined with election promotion.

One way to illustrate "soft" character" of coverage which typified reporting on the election is to summarize the election-related articles which were featured in the December 20th edition, of the "People's Word." This issue was published just 5 days before the election when one would expect election coverage to be peaking. In this issue there were seven items concerning the election. The brief descriptions of the various articles are fairly representative of the superficial handling of news stories related to the campaign period leading up to the election.

1. "Meetings With Voters"

   The longest of the seven, it reported meetings with candidates in several districts. For each meeting, the article reported on the candidates who spoke, their party affiliation, and where the meeting took place. A representative description of what took place at the meetings is as follows: "Candidates informed the voters about their plans and answered numerous questions."

   (On December 17, "The Eastern Truth" had a lengthy article on meetings with candidates to the Oliy Majlis that paralleled the coverage in the "People's Word.")

2. "There are No Small Potatoes In Such an Important Business"

   This was a report on the daily work of the Tashkent City Electoral Committee. It also reported that the Ministry of Internal Affairs was prepared to secure order on the streets and in public places on election day.

3. "Let's Secure an Organized Way to Do It"

Preparations for the elections in the Dzhik Oblast were described. It listed those districts where the election campaign was well organized, noting that the telephones were functioning and that voter registers and candidate information were available. The article also noted several districts where the preparations were not yet complete.

4. "There is a Light In the Window Until Late at Night"

This short article was about Ward 547 indicating that the ward chairman was always available to answer voters' questions, to provide copies of President Karimov's speeches and candidate biographies and programs.

5. Interview with Charge D'Affaires of Egypt

Among other things, the interview indicated that Mr. Abdulghani expressed his opinion that Uzbekistan is a true proponent of democratic values, and announced that the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan had been translated into Arabic.

6. Opinion Piece

In this feature, a Tashkent historian expressed his views about the nature of the parliamentary system. Similar articles appeared in other editions of the newspapers in the pre-election period.

7. Photo and Caption

There was a photo of election workers at a polling station. The caption described the work of the ward committee in the Kashkadarya Oblast.

The campaign coverage simply did not include coverage of issues. The press is strictly controlled, and the candidates themselves are circumscribed in the type of information that can be communicated to the voter. The law governing the elections to the Oliy Majlis provides that all expenses related to the election are to be paid from the state funds of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Article 49 of the Laws on the Election to the Oliy Majlis states that "it is forbidden to finance candidates or to render them any material assistance from any other sources." In practice, this means that the government controls not only the form of political speech, but its content.

During the campaign period a specific incident arose which serves to illustrate the extent to which substantive issues are shortchanged in election coverage. One candidate attempted to raise the issue of dual citizenship in his campaign. He was prevented from doing so in his

state-financed and approved campaign literature. Ultimately, his party, Vatan Tarakkieti (Homeland Progress Party), had the CEC remove his name from the ballot just nine days before the elections.

The candidate's removal from the ballot was attributed to his violation of Article 25. This Article is an extremely broad provision. It proscribes party and candidate programs "aimed against the Republic's sovereignty, integrity or security, encroach on the health and morality of the nation, contain propaganda of war, ethnic enmity, or racial and religious hostility, or call for changing the constitutional system by force or taking actions infringing on the constitutional rights and freedoms of the citizens."

Significantly, newspaper reports were devoid of specifics, and did not mention that violation involved the candidate's attempt to raise the issue of dual citizenship. "Pravda Vostaka" ("The Eastern Truth)" report of the incident appeared in an article entitled "In the Central Electoral Committee" on December 17, 1994. The report indicated that the Homeland Progress Party had asked the CEC to abrogate the nomination of one of its candidates for the Oliy Majlis. The candidate, Roustam Usmanov, was reported to have violated Article 25 of the election law by publishing and distributing posters infringing upon constitutional rights and people's freedom.

Acting upon the request of the party, the report stated, the CEC stripped Mr. Usmanov of his candidate status. The report's implication was that Mr. Usmanov had published and distributed campaign literature without the approval of the district electoral committee, and that the content of the campaign literature violated the law in some unspecified way. Beyond this, there was no indication in the report of why Mr. Usmanov was denied the ability to continue his campaign. From the report, one could only speculate as to what Mr. Usmanov had actually done.

Although the official press never reported it, the issue behind the incident was that Mr. Usmanov had called for dual citizenship, a position that was apparently too specific and too controversial to be permitted in the campaign for the Oliy Majlis. These grounds for cancellation of his candidacy were confirmed, however, during an IFES meeting with the General Director of the National Information Agency several days later. The article itself, however, quoted no one and was a thoroughly inadequate treatment of an action depriving the voters of a chance to vote for someone just nine days before the elections. In a campaign seemingly without issues, one almost emerged. The press, however, failed to discuss it.

IFES consultant, Dan Blessington, repeatedly raised his concerns regarding the lack of campaign coverage or media discussion of substantive issues during numerous meetings with members of the press and others in the days leading up to the December 25 elections. All available evidence indicates that the lack of this type of coverage was not simply a problem of the press not reporting such discussions. Rather the campaign itself was devoid of issues.

In one such meeting a leader of the PDP, himself a candidate for the Oliy Majlis, offered his views on this point. Present at the meeting were Abdulhafiz Jalolov, First Secretary of the Central Council of the PDP, his associates Mr. Jumaniyazov and Mr. Avezov, and Andrew

Craft of the United States Embassy. Mr. Jalolov was dynamic and forthcoming. He acknowledged that Uzbekistan was inexperienced in running democratic elections, but expressed his belief that the country was on the right path. He stated that political ignorance is the worst enemy, and that his party was trying to educate the voters in the context of the campaign. When the discussion turned to campaign issues, he observed that the voters were more interested in the fundamental concerns of daily life. How could their neighborhoods be improved? When would gas and central heating come to their homes? These were the real concerns of the people, not whether or not a candidate proposed specific legislation.

Restrictions and state control over the issues raised by candidates, as well as the superficial reporting on the involuntary removal of a candidate from the ballot, are important considerations when evaluating general efforts at voter education. Without oversimplifying the problem, there is a clear need to have a free and open discussion of issues and actions in the context of a campaign for legislative office. The CEC and the mass media deserve praise for the amount of coverage allocated for the campaign. However, the government would be well-advised to diminish its role in controlling the content of campaign speech, and concentrate on the issues of election administration. To fully inform the voter, serious actions such as the forced removal of a candidate from the ballot should be reported in detail.

IFES On-Site Technical Assistance: Proposed Strategies

As he was still learning about the nature and extent of election coverage in the media, Mr. Blessington sought to introduce some basic democratic concepts into the existing coverage of the campaign in a way that would be the most helpful to the voter. On December 15, he met with Erkin Abdullaev, the Deputy Chairman of the CEC. It was recommended that some short public service messages on key points involving democracy and the elections would be helpful in educating the voters. It was also recommended that these short announcements be aired repeatedly in the time remaining before the elections. Mr. Abdullaev was receptive to the IFES suggestions, and it was agreed that the two of them would go to the television studio the following week to put something together. On December 20, Mr. Blessington and Mr. Abdullaev met with Shavkat Yakhyaev, the Chairman of the State Company for TV and Radio Broadcasting. Also present was Mr. Tursun Karabayev, a political correspondent for State TV. Mr. Blessington presented written scripts of proposed voter education announcements in Russian.

The proposed plan consisted of a series of spots each with a brief introduction followed by questions and answers. It was intended to introduce or reinforce some basic democratic concepts in the minds of the voters, who would be able to choose a member of parliament from as many as three candidates for the first time in their history. The introduction described the elections that would be held on December 25, and noted that the voters may have some questions. Five questions and answers were proposed, and are set forth below.

1. Q. *Why should I bother to vote?*

   A. Of course, you are not required to vote, but we urge you to do so. It is

important for our nation that you take this early step towards achieving a modern democratic state.

2. Q. *Will my vote make a difference?*

   A. Yes. In other countries, winners and losers have been decided by only a handful of votes. Moreover, an election is considered a failure if less than half the voters cast votes in a particular district. Also, in order to win, a candidate must receive more than half the votes cast.

3. Q. *I think I'll just let my wife (husband) vote. Is this legal?*

   A. No. "Family" voting is not permissible. It is essential in a democracy to ensure that the will of each voter is reflected in his or her vote. No one may control another person's vote, even if that person is a family member.

4. Q. *I'm confined to my home due to an illness. Will I still be able to vote?*

   A. Yes. The ward committee, in such a circumstance, will permit a voter to vote from his or her home.

5. Q. *My son works for one of the candidates, but I like another candidate more. Will my vote be subject to public scrutiny?*

   A. No. Your vote is your secret. There is no need to fear retaliation or disapproval for how you vote. No one has a right to know.

The officials were advised that the scripts were just suggestions, but that these basic points should be covered. Mr.Blessington offered to roll up his sleeves and get to work to help produce whatever materials that would most help the voter. Both Mr. Yakhyaev and Mr. Abdullaev reacted enthusiastically to the script, and said that the questions would be used.

Ultimately, the officials used the material, but adapted them to fit the style of State TV. Instead of presenting them straight forwardly as public service spots, the questions were used as "man in the street" interviews as part of television news broadcasts of the campaign. In subsequent conversations both Mr. Yakhyaev and Mr. Abdullaev reported that they were very happy with how the spots turned out.

An attempt to replicate this type of information in the print media was not successful. On

December 21, a meeting was held with Mamatkul Khazratkulov, the General Director of the National Information Agency of Uzbekistan. Also present were Mr. Kulman Ochilov, the Deputy General Director, and Mr. Gulom Mirzaev, the Deputy Editor-in-Chief. Through the course of the meeting, it was learned that virtually all of the significant national news that enters the Russian and Uzbek language press in the country is provided by this agency. This accounts for the phenomenon that the same stories can be found in several different newspapers over a two or three day period.

Copies of the proposed voter education announcements was provided to these gentlemen along with an offer to actually sit down and work with them in adapting the messages for the Uzbek public. Ultimately, the announcements were not used, nor was the proffer of assistance acted upon. Subsequent to the election, the IFES consultant was able to meet with Mr. Mirzaev to express his disappointment that the agency had chosen not to use any of the material in the print media. Mr. Mirzaev had been present when production and strategy were discussed. Mr. Mirzaev was genuinely apologetic. He indicated that the proposed voter education announcements came at an extraordinarily busy time for them, that other campaign coverage had already been planned and took up space in the newspapers (many newspapers are four pages in length), and that there simply had been insufficient time to incorporate the announcements in the releases from his agency. He said he hoped to use this material in the future, and said that he realized that Uzbekistan needed help in this area since democratic elections were so new to them.

Given the nature of Uzbekistan's media and its political culture, election coverage and voter education efforts were impressive overall. A real effort was made to provide equal coverage to all candidates, and the press and election officials were aware of the need to educate the voter. There was also a receptivity to new ideas in educating the voter regarding basic democratic concepts. With sufficient time, a comprehensive program would be possible to develop.

However, it is equally clear that there are more fundamental problems that must be corrected if voter education efforts are to bear real fruit. The press must cover issues, and the government must get out of the business of regulating campaign speech.

OBSERVATIONS ON ELECTION DAY

In addition to the voter education program, IFES was asked to participate in election day observations. IFES Consultant, Dan Blessington, and Gwenn Hofmann, Regional Project Manager were on hand to watch voting activities and to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of election day procedures. Mr. Blessington teamed with Jacques Roussellier of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to observe polling stations both in Tashkent and in some of the rural areas outside the city. Ms. Hofmann joined two delegates from the International Republican Institute for visits to eight polling sites and three district elections offices in an around the city of Tashkent.

According to Uzbek Radio in a broadcast on December 29, there were 68 observers from 30 countries that took part in observing the elections. Other reports put the number at 100. Ten representatives of the international press were also reported to have observed the elections. International observation of the elections was fairly unstructured and did not come together until the eve of the elections.

Many observers were, in fact, members of the diplomatic community in Tashkent; the United States Embassy was particularly well represented. In the main, most of the observers had little or no previous experience in election observation. One of the more diverting aspects of the observation exercise was the focus on which observers were "official." While the question was never fully resolved, nearly all the observers were accorded official status by the government and were provided with badges supplied by the CEC.

Preparation and Coordination

On December 21, Jacques Roussellier of the OSCE met with staff at the United States Embassy. Present for the Embassy were Dorothy Anne Delahanty, Chief of the Political - Economic Section, Andrew Craft and Jim Martin. Mr. Blessington had also been invited to the meeting, and was in attendance. The discussion focused on who would observe, and in what capacity. Part of the discussion focussed on the fact that some countries and international organizations had purposely decided not to send observers. Most likely the diminished size of the international presence was also a result of the fact that the elections had been scheduled for Christmas Day.

The following day another meeting was held at the United Nations in Tashkent presided over by the U.N.'s Permanent Representative to Uzbekistan, Khalid Malik. About forty people attended, including numerous ambassadors and other diplomats based in Tashkent. Although neither Italy nor Great Britain intended to take part in the observation mission on an official basis, both their ambassadors were in attendance as were the Ukrainian and Russian Ambassadors. The United States Embassy was represented by several individuals. The meeting was fairly informal, and numerous practical questions were addressed. Mr. Malik explained that the United Nations had been asked by the government of Uzbekistan to take part as official observers, but that the U.N. had insufficient time to respond. Instead, the Secretary-General had asked Mr. Malik to follow the elections closely, and provide him with a report. Mr. Malik indicated that, technically, he was not an official observer.

Although the meeting was somewhat unfocussed, three principle concerns emerged: the status of the observers; the number of participants; and logistics

1. The Status of the Observers: As noted, there was real uncertainty over the official nature of the observation in the minds of many. The U.S. Embassy was actively involved, as was the OSCE. Just how to coordinate a group of "official," "quasi-official," and "non-official" observers was discussed. A specific concern centered on how to deal with the press. Mr. Roussellier, an experienced international observer, advised that no one make judgmental

comments to the press on the day of the election, as circumstances can change during the day and can differ from one polling place to the next. Mr. Malik invited all observers to attend a debriefing on the Monday following the elections to share their experiences and conclusions, and to see if there was general agreement as to the conduct of the elections.

2. The Number of Participants: There appeared to be a great deal of speculation as to who would actually be arriving in Tashkent over the next two days to observe the elections. With the exception of Mr. Roussellier of the OSCE, the IFES delegate and two or three others, most of the would-be observers in the room were diplomats already stationed in Tashkent. Mr. Roussellier expected one or two observers under the auspices of the OSCE, and there was some discussion over the size of the delegation that would be sent by Russia.

3. Logistics: Although the observers were largely an ad hoc group, there was a need for some minimal coordination to effect the broadest possible coverage with whatever number observers would ultimately participate. In addition, there seemed to be some concensus that a general briefing for observers about Uzbekistan's existing electoral system and polling procedures would be helpful, as would some instruction about monitoring techniques which should be applied. Jacques Roussellier addressed this concern, and the U.S. Embassy invited the participants to a briefing the next day that would provide more detail.

Gwenn Hofmann, the IFES Project Manager had been scheduled to provide a briefing on the basics of election observation to interested observers at the meeting scheduled for December 23 at the U. S. Embassy. However, her arrival from Almaty was delayed because of bad weather. Instead, Jacques Roussellier handed out election observation checklists, and discussed various techniques for observing elections. Mr. Blessington handed out sample ballots, and explained the mechanics of voting. The size of the group had diminished from the number who had attended the previous day's briefing at the U.N., although a number of diplomats from Tashkent were in attendance.

On the eve of the election two follow up meetings were held. At the U. S. Embassy a meeting had been arranged to coordinate polling station coverage throughout the country. An attempt was made to maximize the impact of the relatively small number of observers. Many of the diplomatic observers chose to stay within the environs of Tashkent. U.S. Embassy observers, however, decided to cover some of the more remote areas of the country.

Later that day the Central Electoral Committee hosted its own briefing for the international observers at its headquarters. Chairman Akhemedov gave a detailed overview of the elections, the electorate, the candidates, and the preparations of the CEC and its subordinate committees. Officials from the Foreign Ministry were also on hand. An offer of transportation and other logistical assistance was made, and the observers were invited to ask specific questions. Most questions addressed the mechanics of the election process, such as the chain of custody of the

ballots, and when to expect an announcement of the results.

A member of the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, Mr. Shingisov, harangued the Chairman for the Uzbekistan government's purported failure to extend him appropriate courtesies and logistical support. He also criticized the CEC for removing Mr. Usmanov's name from the ballot for the Oliy Majlis the previous week. A Foreign Ministry spokesman responded to the question of logistical support, and Chairman Akhemedov stated that the candidate's name was removed from the ballot at the request of his party. He referred questions on Mr. Usmanov's "character" to the candidate himself and to the leader of the Homeland Progress Party. It was a moment of some tension.

Election Day Observations

Based upon the debriefing for observers at U.N. headquarters on the day after the election, it became clear that the election day experiences of the IFES observers were representative of the observations that had occurred throughout the country. A few key points characterized the findings of virtually all other delegations with whom the IFES team conferred. What follows is a brief summary of some of those findings.

The first polling station visited by the IFES/OSCE team was on a collective farm outside the city of Tashkent where eligible voters numbered 1,752. Outside a flag-draped building, there was a carnival atmosphere with crowds of people, music blaring, food being cooked, items for sale, and a cacophony of voices. This atmosphere also prevailed inside the building.

In the polling room, voters signed the registers, went into one of three voting booths, cast their ballots, and emerged to deposit their ballots into the ballot box. Upon entering the polling station, voters showed paper "invitations" to vote that had been distributed by election officials to voters whose names appeared on the voter lists after the voter registers had been compiled. Often the invitations were accepted in lieu of other identification. Upon presentation of this invitation, or perhaps some additional identification, a voter signed the register and received three ballots: one contained the names of the candidates for the Oliy Majlis and the others contained the names of candidates for local offices.

The IFES/IRI team noted that there were many incidents of multiple voters in the voting booth at one time. The law is quite clear that "no other person except the voter shall be present during the filling in of a ballot paper." An exception is made for persons who cannot fill in the ballot by himself. In these instances the voter may choose someone to assist him as long as the assistant is not a member of the electoral committee. However, in practice, voters were frequently seen to have others in the polling booth as they marked their ballots. Some poll workers explained it as a form of voter assistance, some said it was a traditional practice, and some ignored it as just a family wanting to be together. No attempt was made to inquire as to the voter's actual need for assistance or to determine what kind of influences may be being brought to bear as the voter cast his or her vote.

It was observed that frequently there was no evidence of any official guarding the ballot box, although the box was properly sealed. Moreover, there was no evidence that the relatively lax security for guarding the ballot box resulted in any tampering. Despite the rather chaotic nature of the voting, there was no indication of any intimidation by election officials, nor discernible evidence of any attempt to unduly influence individual voters.

There seemed to be a general enthusiasm among the voters. The people genuinely appeared to be enjoying themselves in a type of civic celebration. Everyone seemed to know one another and were engaged in enthusiastic conversations. Crowds gathered around the observers as they spoke with the election officials, feeling free to interject themselves into the conversations. The election officials were clearly of the community, and were extremely hospitable and helpful to the observers. These were decent people performing their jobs within their abilities and their understanding.

Family Voting

One apparent violation made itself evident in virtually every polling site. It was observed that numerous voters were allowed to present multiple invitations, sign on behalf of several voters on the voter list, and receive and cast multiple sets of ballots. Not only was this evident from reviewing the handwriting in the voter registers, the actual process occurred in the full view of the observers. It should also be pointed out that the practice did not just involve "family voting." In discussions with close working Uzbek colleagues, drivers, and interpreters, it was learned that "family voting" is commonly extended to voting for friends and neighbors, and any other person who might find it difficult to come to the polls.

The election code provides that each person is "shall only have one vote." There are no provisions which suggest that any type of "proxy" voting is permissible. In fact, the pre-election publicity spoke directly to the issue advising the public that family voting would not be allowed. The IFES voter information and education program reinforced the one voter, one vote principal. Because of the advance publicity regarding the restriction, the international community was particularly interested to see how well these instructions would be carried out at the local level. As observers were to learn, the problem was widespread throughout the country, both in urban and rural areas.

It was equally clear neither the voters nor the election officials took the prohibition seriously. When poll workers were questioned about the legality of the practice, they acknowledged their awareness that it was not permitted. However, they also seem to understand that there were no consequences for breaking the rules. They reasoned that because it was a long standing soviet tradition, it would be better to allow it than to discourage voting and reduce the high percentage of voter turnout. The IFES/IRI team also questioned District Commissioners about this issue. They also acknowledged that there was a full understanding that the practice was not permitted. However, they also suggested that there were no serious consequences. The candidate representatives who observed election day activities were not likely to file complaints about it

and there was little concern that the election would be voided or nullified on the basis of family voting violations.

Some polling places were generally more efficient than others; some were more subdued; and some had better ballot box security. In virtually all, however, family voting was part of the process. The problem is, of course, that even though the practice is rooted in long standing soviet tradition, it has far-reaching implications in a democratic election context. It points to a lack of understanding on the part of the population as to the importance of their individual right to make a choice. It diminishes the reliability of the election as an actual reflection of people's will in that the intent of individual voters may not truly be known. The practice provides fertile ground for the buying, selling and bartering of votes, and there is no way to monitor what intimidation factors may be at play.

As lawmakers and election officials look to move their election system forward, consideration should be given to finding improved ways to ensure compliance with the established rule. If, on the other hand, the practice is going to be allowed, the law should be modified accordingly to accommodate the tradition in a way that provides the ground rules for "proxy voting" which safeguard the security and the integrity of the process.

Military Voting

The only polling place where the observers did not find evidence of family voting was at a military barracks on the outskirts of Tashkent. Military bases had polling places for servicemen living on such bases. At the CEC briefing on December 24, Chairman Akhemedov confirmed that military bases would be accessible to the international observers. This proved to be true at the base approached by the IFES/OSCE team.

Upon arriving unannounced at the front gate, they explained their presence. The young soldier was polite, if puzzled, and immediately retreated to the guardhouse to make a phone call. After a delay of 10 or so minutes, the soldier unlocked the gate and directed the observers to the polling station. It was about 10:30 a.m., and the voting had already taken place in the drafty auditorium that served as the polling place. A small group of officers and soldiers were in the room to greet the observers, and others continued to arrive during the time the observers were present. The soldiers had voted early, and the polling station had been closed (permissible under applicable law). Nonetheless, the person who functioned as the local election official explained how the voting had been conducted. He seemed efficient, and was extremely cooperative. The group of servicemen standing around felt free to interject themselves into the conversations, sometimes all talking simultaneously with no concern for rank.

Clearly, the presence of international visitors was an occasion to ask questions about elections and the role of the military in the West, and particularly in the United States. The openness was both unexpected and impressive.

Observations at the Counting of Ballots

After observing a total of eleven polling places throughout the day, the IFES/OSCE team to the first stop to observe the counting of the ballots. The ballot box was unsealed, and the ballots were dumped onto a rickety table barely adequate to the task. About eight individuals first separated the ballots by category (Oliy Majlis and two local offices). They then proceeded to count the ballots for each candidate. Questions as to how to handle some of the individual ballots were resolved by discussions among the electoral committee members themselves. A number of mistakes were observed, such as putting some ballots into the wrong pile. These mistakes seemed largely due to human error, cramped conditions, and a less than ideal way of conducting the vote count.

The IFES/IRI team was also able to observe the counting process. At the site they observed, the count was chaotic at best. It appeared that there were no formalized standards or outline of step by step procedures available for reference by the election officials. It also became evident that validation or verification methods were virtually non-existent and that only a marginal audit trail is created under the existing system. As the election process in Uzbekistan continues to evolve in Uzbekistan attention should be paid to creating uniform and consistent procedures for the counting of votes

Post-Election Activity

On the afternoon following the elections a debriefing was held for observers at U.N. Headquarters in Tashkent. Mr. Malik of the U.N. presided. The observers shared their experiences. The experiences of all the observers seemed to be consistent with those of the IFES teams. The consensus of the group was that family voting was widespread, and that there were some inefficiencies at the polling places. However, no one encountered any evidence of fraud. A few reported that the presence of government officials, on hand to assist them, may have been an inhibiting factor in their observations. The majority of the observers, however, did not face this problem. Mr. Blessington and Mr. Roussellier, for instance, had politely declined the assistance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on election day and encountered uniform cooperation from local officials when they arrived unexpectedly at each polling station. Overall, the experiences of all the observers was largely positive.

On December 26, the observers were invited to the Foreign Ministry's reception at U.N. Headquarters. Chairman Akhemedov of the CEC expressed his thanks to the observers and noted that the CEC's preliminary estimates were that 92% of eligible voters had participated in the elections. Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov attended. In addition to Ambassador Clarkee of the United States, there were a number of other ambassadors and foreign diplomats who were present At the conclusion of Mr. Akhemedov's remarks, a television news crew interviewed Ambassador Clarkee, Ambassador Guan Henguan of China, and Ambassador Sidorskiy of Russia. Several others were interviewed, as was Mr. Blessington. These interviews were broadcast at various times that evening and on the following day. Most of the

footage contained positive remarks of those interviewed. Mr. Blessington's remarks, including his statements critical of the family voting he had witnessed, were also aired. A videotape of this material is available for viewing in the F. Clifton White Resource Center at IFES in Washington.

The remainder of the reception was relaxed, and included an opportunity to meet one another and chat informally. The IFES team had the opportunity to thank Foreign Minister Komilov for his assistance and that of his staff. A follow up meeting with Deputy Chairman Abdullaev of the CEC was also arranged.

On December 27, Mr. Blessington and Ms. Hoffman attended a debriefing at the United States Embassy in Tashkent. Present on behalf of the Embassy were Sharon White, Deputy Chief of Mission and Dorothy Anne Delahanty, Chief of the Political-Economic Section. The discussion focused on what IFES had concluded from its recent experience in Tashkent, and what role did it see in any further technical assistance projects.

MEDIA ATTENTION ON IFES

The focus of the press on international guests proved to be a complicating factor in trying to provide effective assistance in voter education efforts. From the beginning, there had been concern that IFES presence in Uzbekistan would be utilized to validate the freeness and fairness of the elections themselves. To some degree IFES concern proved to be warranted.

Despite Mr. Blessington's attempt to avoid press interviews, his visit was covered extensively on both television and in the newspapers. Even some of the work session meetings between IFES and government officials involved the press. One of the first meetings with the Chairman of the CEC, which was very formal in nature, was covered by the media. A formal press conference was successfully avoided, although Mr. Blessington agreed to meet informally with representatives of the press at the conclusion of his meeting. Subsequent television news broadcasts showed footage of the meeting. The basic thrust of the coverage as reported was that the presence of a representative of a respected international organization demonstrated both the importance of the elections to the Oliy Majlis and that the elections would be held on a free and fair democratic basis.

A similar circumstance occurred at the conclusion of a meeting with the General Director of the National Information Agency of Uzbekistan, in which the IFES proposal for a print voter education campaign was discussed. Mr. Blessington again agreed to be interviewed. This led to the publication of an interview in several newspapers that tended to overstate the positive impressions Mr. Blessington had actually expressed. In particular, the published interview had reported that Mr. Blessington was impressed by the great interest of the public in the elections. Mr. Blessington had indeed stated that he was impressed by the preparations for the elections by the CEC, and the amount of time and space devoted to election coverage in the press. However, he was unable to discern much interest in the elections by the general public, and did

not express any opinion on that issue during the interview. The translation from English into Russian and Uzbek and back into English might have contributed to the misimpression. It is likely, however, that the press took some liberties in making the remarks appear more positive than they were.

Publication of this interview also illustrates the manner in which interest in IFES presence overshadowed some of the primary project objectives. In explaining why the IFES recommendations had not actually been produced and published in the newspapers, officials indicated that there simply was insufficient time or to incorporate the materials. He also said that because of the coverage which had already been planned there simply was not adequate space in the papers to add the proposed advertisements. However, it was pointed out that the agency had made a judgment to publish the interview Mr. Blessington had given following the meeting in which the voter education proposals were made. Versions of the interview were published in several papers in both Uzbek and Russian. While the official acknowledged that his judgment may have been wrong, he said that he had concluded that the interview was more important to publish than the voter education announcements.

Interestingly, Mr. Shingisov, a member of the Kazakstan Supreme Soviet who had come to observe the elections, sought out the IFES consultant to discuss the latter's interview. It was Mr. Shingisov's opinion that the remarks presented by IFES were too laudatory. Mr. Blessington told him that his actual remarks were more balanced that what appeared in the newspaper and that he was unable to control the content of what had been published.

Over the next several days, Mr. Blessington was able to deflect most of the additional requests for interviews. He was, however, interviewed on television on the day following the elections at a reception for international observers. Mr. Blessington's criticisms of the widespread "family voting" he observed were aired, an apparently rare example of critical comments being made public.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the impressions of the IFES delegates were positive, but there were some negative ones as well. With respect to voter education efforts, the press and the CEC had done a credible job of informing voters given the limitations imposed by the political environment. Moreover, the IFES consultant received excellent cooperation from most of the officials with whom he had come in contact. The limitations, however, were a matter of serious concern.

It will be difficult for Uzbekistan's election process to be measured favorably against internationally accepted standards as long as the political opposition is suppressed. Political speech remains is controlled in a variety of ways, and voter education efforts will continue to suffer as long as that situation exists. The removal of a candidate from the ballot for raising an legitimate issue affecting his constituents was particularly distasteful. Although there seemed to be at least some acknowledgement of these circumstances, authorities seem to adhere to the

common line that democratization will take time. Officials point to various "forces" in Uzbekistan society; some want reform more than others.

Based on IFES's observations and experiences in Uzbekistan during the elections in December, a few conclusions were drawn.

1. The IFES voter education program was a partial success. Before the arrival of IFES, the CEC and the press had undertaken an impressive effort to inform the voter of the elections in terms of time and space in the mass media. IFES was able to develop a good working relationship with a number of individuals responsible for voter education and general news coverage of the campaign. The CEC and the electronic media were particularly receptive to the suggestions made by IFES, and incorporated them into the existing coverage of the elections. A system was in place to develop and implement a comprehensive approach more accessible to the voter. With a longer lead time, even more could have been accomplished.

   The limited time frame was insufficient to develop a comprehensive program that would have included the print and electronic media, and an educational program for the schools. In developing such a program, it is essential to evaluate existing voter education efforts and to develop a working relationship with the individuals responsible for such efforts. Obtaining and synthesizing the requisite information, as well as identifying and contacting the key players, proved difficult during this extraordinarily busy time for the responsible individuals in the CEC and the press.

2. Voter education does not exist in a vacuum. It is an integral part of the political environment. At this stage of its political development, Uzbekistan is not sufficiently committed to the free flow of ideas that must be a part of a political campaign in a democracy. There are too many strictures on the candidates' ability to raise issues they feel are important to the voters. When controversies do arise, the press treats them superficially or not at all. True voter education encompasses the dissemination of information on matters of political significance. It permits candidates to raise issues. Without a commitment to open up the process, voter education can never be fully successful.

3. While the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CEC and others was superb, the courtesies extended added to the time necessary to accomplish the central goal of the IFES mission. The formal introductory meetings delayed initiation of the actual work IFES was assigned to accomplish, diminishing the opportunity for the voter education plan to be put into affect.

4. The presence of IFES, as a respected international organization, became a part of the government's efforts to support and validate the elections themselves. The

very fact that IFES was present in Uzbekistan on the eve of the elections had the effect of diluting the central reason for its presence, i.e. developing a voter education program.

5. Despite the impediments, IFES was able to make a significant contribution to voter education efforts in Uzbekistan. Not only did State Television air some spots containing the basic voter information proposed by IFES, key individuals in the CEC and the press were convinced the approach suggested by IFES was sound and could be utilized in the future.

6. Although there are some serious shortcomings in the current election process in Uzbekistan, there are indications that the political environment may be slowly opening. For the first time in its history, Uzbekistan presented its voters with a choice of candidates for its new national legislature. While legitimate concerns have been raised with respect to the ability of real opposition parties to register and nominate candidates for the ballot, they are beyond the scope of this report. Nonetheless, there was a degree of choice that did not exist until the elections of December 25, 1994.

7. The elections themselves, while far from ideal, were held in an atmosphere of openness. Observers were permitted to enter polling stations at will, and received the cooperation of election officials. The voters themselves seemed at ease, and there was no indication of intimidation. The conduct of voting was not always efficient, and family voting is a serious problem that goes to essence of the vote's integrity.

In spite of these challenges and fundamental weaknesses the elections were generally managed in an orderly way. Overall, the administrative procedures are adequate to support a creditable, accountable and accurate election. Voter participation was high. What may be most important is the fact that the elections seemed to have had the general support of the population. At this point in history perhaps the current circumstances reflect an environment in which the paramount issue on the minds of the average Uzbek citizen is maintaining stability. In Uzbekistan the path toward true democracy as it is understood by the west will more than likely be a long one.

The real question is how to encourage the positive forces without legitimizing the negative ones. This was why some countries decided not to participate in the election observation, others agonized over whether or not their status was "official, " and others just participated.

Recommendations:

In considering any future work in Uzbekistan it will be important to consider strategies that focus on programs that nurture the building of democratic institutions, rather than "drop-in," "band-aid" projects. A review of the legal frame work would be beneficial. It is clear that much work needs to be done to refine the restrictive laws which inhibit meaningful political

opposition. The Law on Public Associations under which political parties are registered currently gives the state undue authority to control, limit or shut down their activities. Technical assistance would be beneficial in helping to alleviate problems with regard to campaign financing and state control over the content of candidate campaigns and coverage by the media.
Another area in which reforms are necessary relates to the building an improved process for adjudication of grievances. Based on progress in these elements, an on going civic education program could be pursued.

In the interim IFES hopes to involve Uzbekistan officials in some regional meetings and seminars planned for the balance of 1996 which will be administered out of IFES office in Almaty.

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