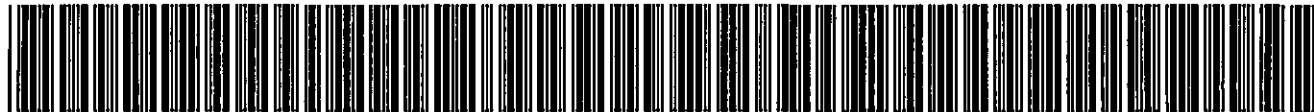


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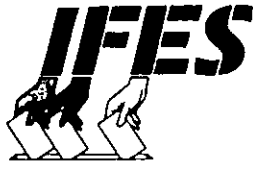
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GEORGIA

IFES On-Site Technical Election Assistance Project

August 10 - October 24, 1992

Susan J. Atwood, Project Manager, Washington, D.C.
Clive Kimber, Project Manager, Georgia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 1992, U.S.A.I.D awarded a grant to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to carry out a technical election assistance project for Georgia. With parliamentary elections scheduled for October 11, 1992, IFES sent a pre-election assessment team to Tbilisi from July 28 - August 3 to carry out an analysis of the state of preparations for the forthcoming elections. Copies of the team's report are available from IFES.

One member of the pre-election team, Clive Kimber, a Chief Electoral Officer from the United Kingdom, remained in Georgia after the departure of the other members of the team to work with the Central Electoral Commission on all aspects of election administration. This report covers the work that Clive Kimber carried out with the Central Election Commission for the October 11, 1992 elections.

Following recommendations made by the IFES pre-election assessment team, Mr. Kimber concentrated on specific aspects of the electoral process. These included the voter registration process, training of election officials, distribution of election commodities, the ballot counting process and voter education.

At the end of the project, the IFES Georgia project manager made a series of recommendations concerning the improvement of election administrative procedures for the future. These recommendations included the establishment of a permanently staffed Central Election Commission. Such a Commission should occupy itself between elections primarily with the establishment and maintenance of a permanent voter registry, the design of an election officials' manual and of a voter education program.

Other recommendations concerned the training of all election

officials before every election and the provision of more voting booths, or the reduction of the number of voters at each polling station, to speed up the voting process. The counting of the ballots under the complicated Georgian election system took up to ten days and IFES recommends a review of the election system prior to the next elections, or, if the system is retained, the design of counting sheets to assist officials with the process.

On October 11, 1992, Georgians went to the polls and participated in large and peaceful numbers in an election in which the main interest of election officials, political parties and voters was to give Eduard Shevardnadze, former Soviet foreign minister, an irrefutable democratic mandate. By giving him this mandate, the Georgian people firmly expect him to act as the national saviour, restoring peace and prosperity to the country overnight.

The main task of the newly elected Parliament, where 24 political parties with little in their party programs to distinguish one from another are represented, will be to adopt a constitution under which the next elections in Georgia are scheduled to take place in three years time.

IFES was impressed by the efficiency and enthusiasm of the Georgian election officials, operating under circumstances which the majority of their western colleagues could not begin to imagine. IFES expects that the next elections will take place under more auspicious national circumstances, with greater voter awareness and political party activity.

This election has given Georgia a legitimately elected government once more, after a period of eight months of administration by an appointed State Council. International election observers, including three IFES representatives saw no evidence of, or indeed interest in, the perpetration of fraud in these elections which were mainly perceived as a referendum on Shevardnadze.

However, it is clear that as competition between different political parties increases, unless the technical procedures are tightened up for future elections, the possibility of fraud exists. The IFES recommendations at the end of this report are therefore submitted with the aim of ensuring greater awareness of election procedures by both election officials and voters alike.

BACKGROUND

In January 1992, President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, elected with 87% of the vote in May 1991, was ousted by military force. From then until the October 11, 1992 parliamentary elections, Georgia was administered by an appointed State Council consisting of representatives of most of the political parties as well as prominent individuals in the cultural life of the country.

The State Council was headed by a four man Presidium, consisting of Eduard Shevardnadze, former Soviet Foreign Minister; Tengiz Sigua, former Prime Minister under Gamsakhurdia; Dzhaba Ioselani, Leader of the Mkhedrioni (horsemen) and Tengiz Kitovani, leader of the National Guard.

Reportedly, the day after the ouster of Gamsakhurdia, Tengiz Sigua requested political parties to start work on drafting a new electoral law, with a view to holding elections as early as May 1992. However, the lack of effective political control in many regions and the consequent unrest, in particular initially in South Ossetia, led to the elections being delayed until October 1992.

The basis for the administration of the elections were the Georgian election regulations. The initial election regulations adopted on May 21, 1992 by the State Council, were replaced by new regulations on August 4, 1992 and amended on August 31 to allow the national election of a chairman of the Parliament. These regulations

foresaw the election of 235 deputies to a single chamber Parliament.

Three separate ballots provided for the election by proportional representation of 150 deputies from party lists in ten districts, for 84 deputies to be elected by majority vote and for one deputy, the Chairman of the Parliament, to be elected by national majority vote. In an additional complication, the law provided for up to three parties to be marked in order of preference by the voter on the party list ballot.

As the IFES team noted in its pre-election assessment report, the system was designed to address the short term political concerns of the members of the State Council. The first concern was that a large number of parties should be represented in the new Parliament to avoid the situation that arose in 1990 when the majority of parties failed to win seats in Parliament. This led to the domination of the Parliament by Gamsakhurdia's Round Table - Free Georgia bloc, to his subsequent popular election as President and, many thought, to the increasingly dictatorial path he pursued which led to his ouster in January 1992.

The second concern was to ensure that the Parliament contained representatives from all over the country and was not dominated by Tbilisi 'intellectuals'. The State Council was anxious to encourage a high voter turnout by ensuring that 84 deputies would be elected from around the country and thus represent local concerns.

The final concern, addressed in the August 31 amendment to the election regulations, was that Shevardnadze's decision to stand on the Peace Bloc list would distort the election results in favor of that bloc. The State Council therefore voted to create the special position of a nationally elected chairman of the Parliament. When registration closed, Shevardnadze was the only candidate for this

position.

Clive Kimber worked on a daily basis with the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) officials during his two and half months stay in Georgia. A number of difficulties faced the CEC in the preparation of this election. These included the fundamental changes in the election regulations, originally adopted in May 1992, to allow specific political concerns to be addressed. In the last week of July, with registration of parties already underway as foreseen by the May election regulations, the CEC was forced to suspend all election preparations for one week while the State Council adopted a new set of election regulations. At the end of August the amendment of the regulations to allow the national election of a chairman of the Parliament, resulted in the CEC having to print three, instead of two different ballots.

These technical difficulties were compounded by the escalating violence in the autonomous region of Abkhazia in the north west of the country and the threats by supporters of former President Zviad Gamsakhurdia to disrupt the elections by violence.

The CEC was therefore faced with formidable challenges in carrying out its work. The escalation of violence meant that travel around the country was hazardous and the training of election officials consequently suffered. The security problems of travel were compounded by the economic problems, most notably the absence of fuel. As election day neared, the CEC had to make special voting arrangements for the refugees fleeing the violence in Abkhazia.

Despite these immense difficulties, the elections took place in a peaceful and enthusiastic atmosphere on October 11, 1992. Three additional IFES representatives joined Clive Kimber to observe these elections - Darrell Slider, Professor of Soviet Studies, US; Michael Meadowcroft, election expert and former MP, UK and Susan Atwood, IFES Senior Program Officer.

SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work for the IFES On-Site Technical Assistance project manager was defined as follows:

- A. On-site technical assistance and/or training for the committee for election planning;
- B. Preparation of a comprehensive needs analysis that will focus on organization, training, need for voter registration development, and distribution of resources;
- C. Review of logistical plans such as transportation of election materials and personnel, voter registration, design of ballot to accommodate literacy problems and language diversity, operation of voting tables, selection of election officials, role of political party observers, role of international observers, vote counting, and security on election day;
- D. Assistance in the development of a voter education component disseminated through an independent media to instruct and motivate the electorate on the process of registration and voting; and
- E. Assistance in the development of an election training manual for poll workers on poll station administrative procedures.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

From August 4, 1992, when the IFES pre-election assessment team left Tbilisi, until October 24 when project manager, Clive Kimber returned to the UK, he worked with the Central Electoral Commission on a daily basis on all aspects of election administration. (Annex 1 contains weekly reports from the project manager).

A. Organization, Preparation and Training

Three levels of election commission were appointed to administer the elections :

- the Central Electoral Commission consists of a Chairman, deputy chairman, secretary and at least 20 members. The Chairman and 4 members are appointed by the State Council. In addition, registered political parties have the right to nominate one representative each to the Commission.
- District Electoral Commissions consist of a chairman, deputy chairman, secretary and no less than 4 members, appointed by the Central Electoral Commission. Parties again have the right to nominate representatives.
- Precinct Electoral Commissions consist of a chairman, deputy chairman, a secretary and at least 2 members, appointed by the District Electoral Commission. Parties also have the right to nominate representatives.

The powers and responsibilities of the commissions are laid down in detail in the electoral regulations, Articles 22-26. The IFES pre-election assessment team made special mention of the impressive detail contained in the electoral regulations concerning all aspects of election administration. These details included specifications concerning campaign financing and media access, aspects which are often dealt with under separate laws in the Central and East Europe region, or indeed, in some cases not addressed at all.

The Georgian electoral regulations were drafted primarily by members of "Democratic Choice for Georgia" (DASi). These individuals had an impressive knowledge of comparative election

systems. In addition, they demonstrated a clear understanding that free and fair elections do not just depend on the voting process, but also on the possibilities of all competing parties to have access, specified by electoral law, to media and financing during the campaign.

The organization of, and preparation for, the elections in Georgia were carried out against a background of local violence throughout the whole of the Republic, but more particularly in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia, where war eventually broke out shortly before the elections; in South Ossetia; and in the western region of the country, Mingrelia, where the ousted President, Zviad Gamsakhurdia still retained many supporters.

Despite these inauspicious conditions, elections took place on October 11 in all but 10 precincts, with the result that some 9% of the population was unable to vote in the precinct where they resided. However, the CEC made special provisions for many refugees to vote in other areas, notably in the Hotel Iveria in Tbilisi or in neighboring precincts.

The prevailing unrest and the fear of many of the local people about travelling too far out from Tbilisi itself prevented the IFES project manager from travelling extensively throughout Georgia, as originally planned, in order to meet with the District Electoral Commissions. An additional problem was the shortage of fuel which meant that supplies needed to be conserved in order to be able to get around the city center where the government and Central Electoral Commission (CEC) offices were situated. It was also inadvisable to be out of Tbilisi after dark and even within the city sporadic gunfire could be heard most evenings.

However, the project manager was able to visit the District Electoral Commission in Telavi, to the east of Tbilisi, where the situation was found to be very much under control with the

Commission extremely well organized. The District Commission in this case held regular meetings itself and conducted regular meetings with the Precinct Electoral Commissions in the district. Similar situations existed in Tbilisi. Whenever possible, those persons who had been members of similar commissions at previous elections had again been appointed to serve on the Commissions on this occasion, and this helped greatly with the organization. It was therefore assumed that the need for training such persons in the organization and preparation of these elections was virtually non-existent. This premise however, given the complicated new election system, requiring three ballots, proved from observations on election day to be misplaced (see recommendation 6 on page 24).

In early September the project manager reported little enthusiasm prior to the elections on the part of the members of the District Electoral Commissions, for an IFES sponsored training seminar. This was borne out by the limited participation of members of the commissions and political parties at a seminar organized by the representatives of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) at the end of September. The CEC did, however, hold regular meetings with the Chairmen, Deputy Chairmen, and Secretaries of the District Electoral Commissions in the Tbilisi area and the project manager was given opportunities to address these gatherings.

B. Voter Registration

While all the election processes were completed as required by the election law, the time spent on many tasks could have been reduced if more of the staff employed by the CEC had had previous experience in this work. The IFES Pre-Election Assessment report recommended that the new government should consider the establishment of a permanently staffed Central Electoral Commission. This need was reaffirmed by the observations of the project manager and is, perhaps, the strongest of our

recommendations. This would enable the election officials to be trained to a high standard so that organizational problems could be reduced in number, and those that did arise could be solved more easily and more speedily.

Voter registration, which was the responsibility of the Precinct Electoral Commission, left much to be desired. The voter registers were prepared from details supplied by the local authorities with whom local residents were required to register for, among other things, housing ownership and tenancies. The chairmen of the Precinct Electoral Commissions with whom we discussed this problem suggested that they were not absolutely satisfied that the lists which had been prepared in their precincts were complete and accurate. This was evidenced by the IFES interpreter who could not find her family's names registered for either of the two addresses where they could have been expected to be registered.

There also appeared to be very little interest on the part of the voters in the registration process as we were told that few people had checked the lists since they had been made available for inspection on October 1. At the time of our visit to the precincts we were informed that the Precinct Electoral Commissions would now start to check the lists again and make any necessary amendments in order to correct them where appropriate and then issue the voter cards in time for the election. The inaccuracy of the voter rolls became obvious on polling day with the supplementary voter rolls in some precincts becoming quite lengthy. These supplementary lists resulted in the turnout in some precincts being reported as over 100% which made interesting reading for those analyzing the results.

IFES recommends that the Precinct Electoral Commissions, should begin this process earlier and should rely less on the records maintained by local authorities. While these could form the basis of the rolls, consideration should be given to carrying out a

canvass of all properties to ensure that all who are eligible to vote are included in the voter rolls. This process should begin at least six weeks before the election to give all voters an opportunity to see that their names have been included. Much more publicity should also be given about the process to encourage voters to check the voters' lists early and not leave this until the last minute when problems could arise. The political parties should also play a greater voter education in this respect as well as the CEC. The size of the supplementary voter lists which had to be prepared on the day of the election itself would be reduced, thus shortening the amount of time voters spent in the polling places.

C. Election Commodities - design and distribution

a) Ballot design

The CEC originally intended to print the ballots on paper of three different colors, but could not obtain the necessary supplies within Georgia. IFES was asked if it could help in this matter and eventually funding was approved. However, despite every effort to get the necessary quantity of paper to Tbilisi, this could not be arranged in time for all the printing to be completed and for the ballots to be distributed in time for the election. Fortunately the CEC was able to implement a contingency plan to print all the ballots on white paper with different colored inks (see Annex 3 for sample ballots) - blue for the chairman of the Parliament, red for the party lists and black for the majority seats.

b) Language diversity

The vast majority of the population speaks either Georgian, Russian, or Abkhaz. The ballots and other relevant documents and notices were printed in these three languages and distributed accordingly. We heard of no area where there were problems in this particular respect.

c) Review of logistics (see Annex 2 for election timetable)

As a whole, the distribution of the necessary resources was carried out with insignificant problems apart from that of the allocation of fuel for the parties and candidates. This, however, was not due to any transportation problems but was mostly attributable to the extreme shortage of fuel throughout the entire country.

This affected not only road transport but also air travel and one could not be certain that any particular domestic flight out of and returning to Tbilisi would take off. On occasion, members of certain delegations coming to Tbilisi in advance of the election had to cut short or prolong their stay because the flights in and out of Tbilisi were delayed by two or three days. Fuel deliveries were often held up due to railway bridges having been attacked and damaged in the western parts of the country. To be certain that international observers were able to come to Georgia for the election, the government arranged for a special flight to and from Frankfurt.

Regarding other commodities, those Precinct Electoral Commissions which were visited during the few days before the election reported that they had received all the necessary supplies to enable them to hold the election and they did not foresee any real problems.

d) Election commodities

IFES was, however, able to supply the CEC with certain vital computer parts that could not be obtained locally and which were instrumental in enabling the Commission to use their computers to their full potential. Consequently, the results of the counting of the ballots were available sooner than they would otherwise have been - the counting still took over ten days (see p.17 for details of counting process). In all, nine computers were used to count

votes, mainly for the party lists, and to calculate the number of mandates to be allocated to each party. The German government, the only country other than the US with an Ambassador in Tbilisi, was requested to assist by supplying photocopying and fax equipment. However, despite approval of the funding for this equipment, time ran out and it could not be delivered in time for the election.

D. Voter Education

Voter education by the CEC was conducted through state newspapers and television. Whenever necessary, the newspapers published voter information statements issued by the CEC, as required by the electoral regulations. The proceedings of the meetings of the CEC were frequently reported, sometimes live, on television. Special articles were also prepared for publication in the newspapers from time to time. These included an explanation of the voting system for the election of deputies from the party lists by the proportional system and an explanation of the way in which all the ballots should be marked. These articles were followed up by a short television advertisement which again explained and showed voters how the ballots should be marked.

Unfortunately, technical problems with printing prevented the production of public notices explaining the voting procedures and these, therefore, were not on display in the polling places. If there could be any criticism at all about voter education, this should be levelled at the political parties who, with a few exceptions, did not mobilize to call on voters to explain their views, to seek the voters support or to explain the voting procedures. This was a result of Georgian political parties being in the very early stages of party development and is almost certain to evolve before future elections.

All the political parties had equal time on television to publicize their election platforms in the three weeks leading up to the

elections. This time was used more imaginatively by some parties than others. For example, a few of the larger parties and blocs reached an agreement whereby they shared TV time and did hold public debates between themselves on various issues. The majority of the parties, however, confined themselves to direct appeals to the voters, on the basis of personalities rather than programs.

E. Election Officials' Training Manual

One important task which any future Electoral Commission should seriously consider, based on the experience of this election, would be for a manual or manuals to be prepared well in advance for issue to members of election commissions at all levels. These manuals should detail the powers, duties and responsibilities of the commissions at different levels, common practices and methods, and a full copy of the election law, so that all persons connected with the election process throughout the country would execute their duties in the same way. These manuals should also be issued to the various political parties so that they are aware of which commission is responsible for the various aspects of the election preparations.

For this election, once the election regulations had been finally approved, the IFES Project Manager prepared an instruction book for election officials (see Annex 4). This book included, among other things, instructions on the preparation and setting out of the polling places, the opening of the poll, who was eligible to vote, the issuing of the ballots, the closing of the poll, and the counting of the votes. It also included guidance on which ballots should be considered valid or null and void, and contained relevant sections of the election law. Copies were supplied for all the District and Precinct Electoral Commissions a few days before polling day.

It was hoped that this instruction book would ensure common

practice and procedure throughout the whole of the country, and so reduce the risk of any procedures in any precinct being called into question. It was interesting to hear from the election observers that this instruction book was being used extensively during vote counting and to see well-used copies in the polling stations visited by international observers.

The issuance of this instruction book was a great improvement on former practice when election commission chairmen received no guidelines and were obliged to try to work only with the obscure legal language of the electoral law itself. However, a major criticism at this election was that there appeared to be a lack of copies of the election law itself available to the political parties and the District Electoral Commissions. Most people, including the members of the CEC, were working with copies of the law which had been printed in the local newspapers.

IFES therefore recommends that it should become standard practice for the CEC to issue a manual containing guidelines cross referenced to articles in the law contained in the same manual. This manual should be widely distributed well in advance of election day, thus greatly facilitating the administration on the elections.

F. Election Day

i) Election Day Procedures

Election day dawned with bright sunshine which lasted throughout the day in complete contrast to the previous day which had been cold, wet, and windy. Most of the polling places visited appeared to be well organized with members of the Precinct Electoral Commission manning the tables at which the ballots were issued after the voters had signed the voter's roll to acknowledge receipt of their ballots. This signature also provided added security against persons voting more than once. At the busy times of the

day, principally during the morning, lines formed at the polling places and voters had to wait up to half an hour in order to cast their votes. This was due in part to the lack of polling booths.

At the polling places, minor violations of the regulations were noted, the majority of which were judged by observers to be taking place quite innocently with no intention of fraud. These included people helping each other to vote, more than one person at a time in the polling booth, voters marking ballots outside the booths in full view of other voters, and police presence inside the polling place. Nevertheless, we did not witness any incident that could have been classified as intimidation or voter interference.

At the hospital we visited, we found a polling place set up on the ground floor to serve the resident staff and those patients who were able to walk. This was operating in the same way as other polling places. For those patients who were confined to bed or who were unable to get to the ground floor to vote, members of the hospital staff were distributing the ballots to patients in their rooms and the marked ballots were then placed in the small portable ballot box provided for this purpose. Where necessary, the hospital staff were assisting those patients who required help. Here too, as at all the polling stations, we found that those patients who were able felt they had to do their duty and cast their votes.

Another interesting aspect of the voting procedure were the arrangements made for those elderly and sick people confined to their homes who were unable to go in person to the polling place. Providing the necessary request was made to the Precinct Electoral Commission before noon on polling day, at least two members of the Commission took the necessary ballots to those people to enable them to mark their ballots at home. These ballots were then placed in a small portable ballot box. This box was opened at the same time as the main ballot box when counting of the votes commenced.

Apart from one precinct we visited, all the voters told us that it was their duty to vote and perhaps their last opportunity to democratically elect a new and legitimate government which they hoped would lead them out of their present difficult times. This was emphasized strongly at one polling place visited where we found quite a long line of voters. When being questioned as to how long they had been waiting, one group of ladies said they had been in the line for 1 1/2 hours and would continue to wait until they could vote, they were so determined not to pass up this opportunity. This determination led to an almost carnival atmosphere at most polling places.

However, at one polling place visited, this happy atmosphere was noticeable by its absence. While there was no concrete or physical evidence of intimidation of voters, one could sense an extremely tense atmosphere especially when talking to the Precinct Electoral Commission. The IFES observers were not encouraged to talk to voters or party observers; indeed, one party observer who sought to bring a problem to our attention was moved away by election officials. This polling station was in the district where Dzhaba Ioselani, leader of the Mkhedrioni, was standing as an independent candidate. The concern often expressed to the IFES pre-election assessment team about 'local mafia' controlling certain areas appeared to be true in this case.

Observers all over the country noted that many voters were confused about the balloting with three different ballots to mark in three different ways, particularly the ballot for the party lists on which voters could number up to three parties in order of preference.

ii) Security

Security in general in the last two weeks preceding the election

had been stepped up considerably in view of the threats which had been made to disrupt the elections. All police leave had been cancelled from October 1 and all strategic buildings, including the offices of the Electoral Commissions, were provided with a 24 hour guard.

The CEC announced a few days before the election that voting would not take place in 10 precincts as a result of security concerns. This affected approximately 9% of the population. However the CEC made special arrangements for refugees to be added to lists in existing or special polling stations, such as the one in the Hotel Iveria in Tbilisi. Voters remaining in areas where no polling was taking place were encouraged to go to neighboring precincts to add their name to supplementary lists.

Security at all precincts varied from just one police officer present outside the polling place to others where police had been invited into the polling place by the Chairman of the Precinct Electoral Commissions. The reason for this, we learned, was to give the voters more sense of security. At the counting of the votes, police were again present both inside and outside the polling places and they were available to escort all the ballots and other documents to the offices of the District Electoral Commissions. At the end of the day, however, we heard no reports of polling disruption.

iii) Counting of the Ballots

The counting of the votes took place immediately after the closing of the polls in all the precincts. No problems were experienced with the counting of the votes for the Chairman of the Parliament or the local candidates but it was obvious from reports that the methods of counting the party choices varied from precinct to precinct. In some places, election officials improvised counting sheets in order to avoid counting the party list ballots three

times.

The counting of the votes is another area where further consideration should be given to determining a standard procedure for future elections. Much time could have been saved had the CEC for example decided to accept the proposal of the IFES Project Manager that official counting sheets be provided to facilitate the complicated counting procedures for the party list ballots. As it was, some election officials improvised counting sheets on back of used paper in order to avoid counting the party list ballots three times as indicated in Article 52.8) of the electoral regulations.

At the completion of the counts in the precincts, the Precinct Electoral Commission chairmen were required to fill in forms noting full details of the electorate and the number of votes or choices on each of the three ballots. Copies of these three reports were made available to the representatives of all the candidates and parties as well as to the District and Central Electoral Commissions. The reports for the District and Central Electoral Commissions had to be delivered to the District Electoral Commission as quickly as possible after completion. The District Electoral Commissions were then required to pass to the CEC all the necessary reports relating to the ballots for the Chairman of the Parliament and the party lists for counting at the central level. The District Election Commissions were themselves responsible for totalling up the votes for the local candidates and for declaring these results.

At the CEC, arrangements had been made to use nine computers to count the votes for both the Chairman of the Parliament and the party lists to determine the number of mandates to be allocated to each party or bloc. This process was, however, unfortunately delayed because of the lack of details from some areas. Because of the nature of the country, both the District and Central

Electoral Commissions were still awaiting the details from ten of the more mountainous regions four days after the election. The longer the delay and the longer it took for the CEC to declare the final results, the more likelihood there was that the results would be questioned.

The CEC received a considerable number of complaints of violations of the regulations. These included instances of more than one set of ballots being issued to voters, discrepancies in the reports received from some Precinct Electoral Commissions, and inconsistencies in counting practices. After their deliberations, however, the ballot process was declared null and void in only five precincts, 3 in the Chugureti district of Tbilisi (District 2), and 2 in the Lagodekhi region of District 3. In each case, repeat elections for the local candidates only will be held in these precincts.

At the CEC itself, while members were aware of what was required to be done, they appeared at times to be somewhat disorganized. There also appeared to be a lack of control over reports received from the Precinct and District Electoral Commissions which could also potentially give rise to the questioning of the election results. The CEC was obviously under extreme pressure from a number of quarters to report the results as quickly as possible and the apparent lack of organization was due in part to this pressure and in part to the lack of experience in this field. This is, therefore, another area which should be looked at both by the new government and the CEC for future elections.

iv) Voter turnout

A great concern prior to the election had been that voter turnout would be low, thus giving Gamsakhurdia supporters the opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of the election. Prior claims had indicated that some Gamsakhurdia supporters expected a turnout as

low as 12%, reflecting the 87% support received by Gamsakhurdia in the 1991 Presidential elections. However voter turnout was over 80%, in the view of observers giving the new government a legitimate democratic mandate.

v) Election observers

In light of the political and military tensions surrounding this election, the IFES pre-election assessment team had stressed the importance of a sizeable presence by international observers as a source of reassurance to the Georgian voters. Their presence was of particular importance in the absence of domestic observers or of trained party observers.

For the October 11 elections, international observers were present from many countries, mainly from North America and Western Europe. They deployed to all parts of the country in order to see for themselves what was happening at the polls not only in the towns and cities, but also in the rural and mountainous areas. In our talks with representatives of the government and the political parties, they all welcomed the presence of these delegations, which they hoped would guarantee free and fair elections. It was pointed out, however, that only the Georgian people themselves, with the cooperation of the political parties, could ultimately provide these guarantees.

The three IFES observers were integrated into the delegation of observers from the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Members of the NDI delegation visited polling stations in all areas of the country where voting was taking place. There was also a large contingent of press and TV reporters who visited many parts of the country to record and report upon what they witnessed. Many of the arrangements for the coordination of the observers and the press were left until the last minute. These should have been in place much earlier in the process, especially as it was known that

the observers would be coming to witness these elections. It was only in the last ten days that the government established a special committee, comprising representatives of the various appropriate government ministries, to attend to these details.

vi) Results

The results of the election for the party lists showed that 24 out of the 36 parties/blocs would be represented in the new Parliament. At the final count, the Peace Bloc obtained 29 mandates, 11th October Bloc obtained 18, Unity Bloc 14, National Democratic Party 13, Green Party 11, Democratic Party 10, with the remaining 55 mandates being distributed among 18 smaller parties. It appeared that the leaders of the Peace Bloc were disappointed in not having obtained more mandates than they did but the other parties appeared satisfied with the results which were accepted peacefully.

The effect of each voter casting his/her vote for up to three parties resulted in very few seats being allocated according to the district lists. The votes were spread so thinly between so many different parties that, in many cases no party in a district received the electoral quota needed to obtain a seat. In fact, only 71 seats were allocated according to the regional lists, with the remaining 79 being allocated from the national compensatory lists (see Annex 6 for results).

Comment should be made about the vote for the Chairman of the Parliament. Even after only preliminary results were available, it was obvious that Eduard Shevardnadze had received massive support, over 95%, from the Georgian people giving him a significant democratic mandate to lead the country for the next three years. The big question remains, however, as to whether or not he can bring about significant improvements in the economy of the country to satisfy the people and maintain this support.

OUTPUTS

The outputs of the IFES on-site technical assistance project were:

- Design and publication of a handbook containing guidelines for election officials.
- Provision of day to day advice to the Central Election Commission by experienced UK election official, resulting in a technically successful election.
- Provision of computer hardware to speed up the counting of ballots at the central level; and
- Publication of a comprehensive report, including detailed recommendations for future elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IFES would like to make the following recommendations which should improve the electoral process and enhance the meaningful participation of voters. IFES urges the new government and the existing Central Electoral Commission, to consider these recommendations with a view to their implementation as soon as possible. While it is understood that the implementation of these recommendations will require additional financial resources, IFES believes that these recommendations will considerably enhance the organization and administration of future elections in Georgia.

1. The creation of a permanently staffed Central Electoral Commission to advise the government on electoral practices and procedures. The existence of such a body would improve the administration of future elections in such areas as voter registration and ensure that the lessons learned from one election are not lost before another one takes place.

2. The preparation of **instruction manuals**, setting out full details of the powers, duties and responsibilities of each of the Central, District and Precinct Electoral Commissions. These manuals should include a copy of the election law. Copies of these manuals should also be made available to all political parties.
3. The **revision of the election system** so that voters are not faced with three different ballots to complete in three different ways. Although the choice of an election system is political not technical, IFES believes that the political needs of this particular election will not be replicated in future elections in Georgia.
4. The establishment of an **effective and standardized counting procedure** for the counting of votes accorded under the party list system to avoid the long delays in the process witnessed at these elections.
5. The **improvement of the voter registration system**. Voter registration should be undertaken well before each election, allowing authorities the time to conduct house to house registration rather than relying on existing, out of date records. The political parties should also be encouraged to participate in this process.
6. The **training of election officials** at all levels should be systematically undertaken before every election. Such training will ensure that standard practices are implemented throughout the country and so lessen potential problems for election officials on election day in the future.
7. The **provision of more polling booths** at all precincts in order to reduce the time spent by voters lining up outside

and in the polling station itself. Lack of polling booths led in many cases to voters marking their ballot in public. Alternatively, the maximum number of voters at each polling station should be reduced.

8. The provision of a more comprehensive voter education program, both by the CEC and by political parties.
9. The arrangements for international observers (provided for under Article 31 of the Electoral Law), to attend future elections should be undertaken earlier. This time, without the urging of the IFES pre-election assessment team in August, it is unlikely that any invitations would have been issued until the last minute. However, even after the expedition of invitations, arrangements for observers, including travel, accommodation and accreditation were left until the last minute. No provision was made for domestic observers in this election and no group mobilized to carry out this task. However, in the future provision should be made for domestic observers and for their accreditation.
10. The timely submission of requests for technical assistance. Both IFES and the German government were ready to respond to requests for election commodities for the CEC. However, given the difficulties of transport, these requests were received too late for delivery to be effected before the election.

CONCLUSION

The Georgian election system used in the October 1992 elections was specifically designed to ensure that a large number of parties were represented in Parliament, that the voter turnout was encouraged by the provision of 84 seats to ensure representation of the all the districts and that Eduard Shevardnadze could win a national mandate without being attached to a party list and

therefore distorting the party results. All these aims were achieved. However, it is the opinion of IFES that, as the unique combination of political circumstances surrounding this election are unlikely to be replicated in the future, the election system should be reviewed before new elections take place.

In fact this debate has already begun. The Academy of Sciences of Georgia organized a seminar on "Democracy and Elections", on October 13, 1992, only two days after the election. Two of the IFES representatives, Darrell Slider and Micheal Meadowcroft, were invited to address this seminar on the topics of "Pre-term elections and Democratization in the former Soviet Union" and "The Political Implications of Election Systems". The organization of such a seminar so soon after the elections is a very hopeful indication of the interest in Georgia to continue to seek to learn more about the inexact science of elections and democracy.

Despite the recommendations set out in this report which are intended only to be of assistance for future elections, the Central Electoral Commssion is to be congratulated on the way in which the election was organized under extremely difficult circumstances. The war raging in Abkhazia caused large numbers of Georgian refugees to flee to other parts of the country, including a large number to Tbilisi, and the CEC had to make last minute arrangements to allow them to vote. The difficult economic situation resulted in shortages of resources, especially fuel, making distribution of election commodities a logistical nightmare. Last but not least, the two major changes in the election law, at the beginning and end of August, meant that the CEC could not go ahead with preparations as originally foreseen by the election timetable.

Congratulations should also go to the Georgian people for the peaceful and enthusiastic way in which they participated in the election. Those who witnessed the election are of the opinion that it will confer democratic legitimacy on the new government. The

transparency of the entire election process was assisted by the extensive and detailed negotiations in the State Council concerning the adoption of election regulations. The result was the creation of conditions which encouraged the voters to exercise their right to vote and this was reflected in the 80% voter turnout.

Although an election has taken place, many questions remain unanswered in Georgia. Among the questions that demand urgent answers, is the type of political system that Georgia intends to adopt - parliamentary or presidential. Therefore, one of the most important tasks facing the new Parliament is the adoption of a new constitution under which such important constitutional questions can be settled prior to the next election.

It can only be hoped that the results of this election will provide Georgia with a new government which will have the support of the people over the next three years during which time a start can be made on stabilizing the country, improving the economy and the living standards of the people.

During his three month stay in Georgia, the IFES Project Manager had the pleasure to work closely with a variety of election officials, government officials, members of the State Council and representatives of the local media. To these persons, IFES wishes to express its grateful thanks and appreciation for their cooperation. Our warmest thanks and appreciation go to Dr. Merab Alexidze, Chairman of the Central Electoral Commission and the Deputy Chairman, Giorgi Zasashvili, and all other members of the CEC for their willingness to provide the necessary information at all times to enable our project manager to carry out his tasks and to give the Commission the most appropriate advice and help. (Annex 7 - letter of appreciation from CEC to IFES).

Last, but by no means least, our deepest and most sincere thanks and appreciation must go to the skill, help and friendship of the

IFES interpreter, Marina Maisuradze, who made the task of the project manager much easier and his stay in Georgia that much more enjoyable.