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Elections in Russia: A Technical Assessment

November 10, 1993

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

On September 21, 1993 President of Russia Boris Yeltsin announced the dissolution of the Soviet-era Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation. Though this move was opposed by the hard-line legislature, President Yeltsin prevailed in this power struggle. National elections for the new bi-cameral Federal Assembly and the referendum on the new constitution have been scheduled for December 12, 1993. Presidential elections expected on June 12, 1994, are now rescheduled for 1996.

In June of 1993 an eight-member IFES team visited Russia. The purpose of the team's visit was threefold: (1) to examine the present Russian electoral system in the wake of the April referendum; (2) to assess current efforts to reform the Russian electoral system in anticipation of parliamentary elections in the fall of 1993 or spring of 1994; and, (3) to propose opportunities for collaboration with Russian election officials and civic organizations.

The IFES team, upon its arrival in Russia, divided into three regional groups. One group remained in Moscow, the second travelled to Novosibirsk in Siberia, and the third to Voronezh in the central "black earth" region. The teams held meetings with members of parliament, members of regional councils, members of the Presidential Council, regional presidential representatives, participants in the parliamentary Constitutional Committee and Presidential Constitutional Assembly, academics, and members of various emerging political parties and civic movements.

The findings and recommendations of the IFES team are contained in this assessment report. In summary, the IFES team departed Russia with concerns about several aspects of the electoral process, including:

1.   Ballot security;

2.   Voting, tabulation, reporting, and grievance procedures;

3.   Poll worker diversity and training;

4.   Non-partisan voter education; and

5.   Electoral technologies.

In order to address some of the needs of the electoral process the team recommends that IFES pursue avenues by which technical services might be shared with either the Central Election Commission, District Election Commissions or with civic organizations. The establishment of a short-term IFES office in Moscow could facilitate the delivery of these technical services.

Proposals for such collaboration could include:

1. Production of a video training series devoted to election preparation and administration. Initial installments of the series would include videos on: (a) duties and responsibilities of poll workers, (b) the role and work of domestic poll monitors, and (c) initiating voter education and non-partisan get-out-the vote projects;

2. Development of comprehensive training manuals with visual aid packets to accompany each installment in the video training series;

3. Implementation of a non-partisan domestic poll monitor training program to be supplemented by the creation and distribution of an election-day checklist to be used by domestic monitors as a tool in recording, in a more consistent and formal manner, their observations on election day;

4. Implementation of a non-partisan, broad-based voter education program accompanied by highly focussed training for certain target groups which demonstrated low voter turn-out, such as young people, and low political awareness, for example women in rural areas, during the April referendum;

5. Collaboration with the U.S. political party institutes on a model election district project;

6. Provision of assistance, in target communities, in the development of accurate voter registration lists with potential introduction of automated registries;

7. Introduction of election information technologies to assist election commissions in the administration of elections and education/research groups in monitoring and tracking of election-related activities as well as to support the automation of other aspects of the electoral process.

I. INTRODUCTION

In June 1993, IFES sent an eight-member team with expertise in Russian area studies, technical assistance, and public administration to assess the evolving electoral process in Russia. The purpose of the team's visit was threefold: (1) to examine the present Russian electoral system in the wake of the April referendum; (2) to assess current efforts to reform the Russian electoral system in anticipation of parliamentary elections in the fall of 1993 or spring of 1994; and, (3) to propose opportunities for collaboration with Russian electoral officials and civic organizations.

A.   Team profile.

The IFES project team consisted of the following members:

Team Leader:

> Jeff Fischer, IFES Chief of Staff. Mr. Fischer has served as an election official on the local and state level and has field-managed IFES projects in Haiti and Guyana. In his capacity as Chief of Staff Mr. Fischer serves as the deputy director for IFES programs and operations.

Team Members:

> Paul DeGregorio, Director of Elections, St. Louis County, Clayton, Missouri. Mr. DeGregrorio is the Director of Elections in St. Louis County and has extensive experience in the administration of elections.

> Joshua L. Dorosin. Currently a third-year student at the University of Michigan Law School, Mr. Dorosin worked in the United States Embassy in Moscow as a political officer in 1990-91, and served as a long-term consultant to IFES for projects in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989-90. Mr. Dorosin has implemented technical assistance projects and/or participated in election observer missions in Russia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria and Poland. He speaks Russian.

> Joseph Johnson, independent political consultant. Mr. Johnson is an expert in political message development and media relations.

> Thomas Kahn, Chief Counsel for the Commerce, Consumer, and Monetary Affairs Subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Operations. Mr. Kahn has acted as a consultant in electoral matters for both the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. He has observed elections in El Salvador, Bulgaria, Honduras, and Guatemala. Mr. Kahn attended university in Russia and speaks Russian.

Christopher S. Siddall, IFES Senior Program Officer for East-Central Europe and former Soviet Union. As an IFES staff member for the past three years, Mr. Siddall has implemented civic education and technical assistance projects throughout the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Mr. Siddall also has served as a consultant on former Soviet Union issues to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and World Learning. He is a member of the American Bar Association/CEELI Election Law Working Group and speaks Russian.

Darrell Slider, Professor of Political Science, University of Southern Florida. Dr. Slider is a Professor of Eurasian studies at South Florida University. He has extensive experience in Soviet political studies and has served as a team member for the IFES pre-election assessment and election observation projects in Georgia in 1992. He speaks Russian.

Paige Sullivan, Research Associate for Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. While at CSIS, Ms. Sullivan has researched the economic transition in the Soviet successor states. She speaks Russian.

B. Approach to Mission and Report Structure

The IFES team held meetings with members of parliament, members of the Presidential Council, participants in the parliamentary Constitutional Committee and Presidential Constitutional Assembly, and members of various emerging political parties and civic movements. A list of those interviewed by IFES is attached.

Information regarding the formal electoral process was obtained from the team's discussion with Vasiliy Kazakov, Chairman of the Central Election Commission. The practical mechanics of the system were discussed in meetings with leaders of political parties and others involved in the electoral process. The team focused primarily on the conduct of balloting during the April 25, 1993, referendum. However, interlocutors also discussed problems that occurred in past nationwide elections, and these comments have been incorporated into the team report. The team also had access to evolving drafts of the electoral law, and conducted in-depth discussions about these drafts with individuals participating in each of the various presidential and parliamentary groups charged with developing a new electoral law.

This report focuses on two primary areas. Section II provides an overview and analysis of efforts by the various groups to develop a new electoral law. Specifically, this section discusses the representational schemes considered at the time of the team's visit both in the parliament and within the presidential working group, as well as the ways in which various drafts treat such issues as campaign finance and participation of political parties.

Section III assesses the current electoral system, and discusses ways in which this system could

be modified by the new electoral law or accompanying regulations.

Finally, Section IV provides an analysis of some areas deserving additional attention in the area of electoral reform, while Section V complements it with appropriate recommendations.

II. THE DRAFT ELECTORAL LAW

A. Internal Political Climate

Despite Russian President Boris Yeltsin's measured victory in the April 25, 1993 referendum, political forces remained gridlocked in their attempts to guide Russia out of its political, economic and social crisis. President Yeltsin was unable to garner the parliamentary support necessary to back his reform proposals. In fact, the conservative-dominated Congress of People's Deputies stymied reform by consistently blocking Yeltsin's program. Though Yeltsin had gained momentum after his victory in the referendum, his success was not translated into control over the Congress. Little, if anything, was done to resolve the problem of political maneuvering in Moscow or the questions of a federal governing structure. Increasing nationalism within and between Russia's 88 constituent subjects of the federation as well as the desire of local elites for greater independence from Moscow hindered cooperation and progress on reforms.

Constitutional reform was at the center of the political debate, both in Moscow and in the subjects of the federation. Two groups emerged as the leaders in the present constitutional debate, the Special Constitutional Committee of the Russian Congress of People's Deputies and the Constitutional Assembly. The first was established in 1990 and tasked with drafting a new constitution to replace the Brezhnev-era document. Disagreements over the distribution of powers between the legislative and executive branches as well as between the center and the periphery remained unresolved throughout 1991 and into 1992.

Resistance to a new constitution from communists and separatists and political maneuvering further served to slow the pace of constitutional reform efforts. In April 1992, a draft, which proposed the abolition of the congress and the establishment of a smaller two-chamber parliament, was approved "in concept" by the deputies. Objections to the document were voiced both by Russia's republics, which noted that it did not take into account the new rights they had been accorded under the Federation Treaty, and the executive branch, which felt too many powers had been given to the parliament.

The inability of the legislature and Yeltsin's government to attain a solution led to the decision, reached during the Seventh Congress of People's Deputies in December 1992, to hold a national referendum on the main constitutional principles. This decision, however, was rescinded at

the Ninth Congress in March 1993. A referendum would be held, but only on the issues of

public support for Yeltsin, his reforms, and early elections for each branch of government.

The second player in the debate on constitutional reform, the Constitutional Assembly, was formed only after the referendum. President Yeltsin had become increasingly dissatisfied with the proposals of the parliamentary committee and their unwillingness to consider the presidential draft. The presidential draft called for the abolishment of the post of the vice-president and the Congress of People's Deputies and significantly increased the rights granted to the president relative to parliament. The parliamentary committee, on the other hand, sought to maintain stronger separation of powers and independence between the executive and legislative branches. Attempting to use his referendum victory to his advantage and in response to pressures from the republics, President Yeltsin convened the Constitutional Assembly in June to discuss and draft the final text of a new constitution.

The Assembly was comprised of government officials, members of parliament, representatives of the republics, and legal experts. Following several days of deliberations, it became clear that the delegates wanted to discuss both the parliamentary and presidential proposals. Throughout the course of the constitutional debate, the major sticking points remained the power of the presidency and the relationship between the central government and regional authorities. By mid-June, a document combining both drafts was beginning to take shape, although the working groups failed to agree on a final draft.

In the midst of the constitutional debate, the development of a new electoral law, followed by parliamentary elections, was viewed by political forces in Russia as an integral step in the resolution of the political crisis. Both the Russian parliament and the Constitutional Assembly established working groups to develop a new electoral law.

B. The Draft Electoral Laws

In the context of the long-term constitutional crisis between the various branches of government, elections came to the forefront of political deliberations as a possible means of breaking the deadlock. The convening by President Yeltsin of a Constitutional Assembly in May 1993 provided a friendly forum for discussing various drafts of a new law, elements of which presumed the acceptance of some of the basic elements of a new constitution. At the same time, the fundamental question of who would have the authority to call new elections was unresolved. The results of the April 25 referendum, while showing significant support for dissolving the Congress of People's Deputies and electing a new parliament. But the turnout was inadequate for the results to be binding on the legislature. Consequently, the Supreme Soviet largely ignored the work of the Constitutional Assembly and continued to put forward its own draft constitution.

The circumstances of the recent violent conflict between conservative forces in Parliament and troops loyal to President Yeltsin are well known and will not be covered in this report.

1.   The Balala Draft

One of the first drafts of a law on elections was produced in mid-1992 by People's Deputy Victor Balala from the parliamentary Committee on the Work of the Soviets. It consisted mostly of general propositions and alternative conceptualizations of the election process. A more decisive version appeared in spring 1993 which urged the adoption of a pure majoritarian, single-mandate district system similar to the old Soviet model.

2.   **The Sheinis Draft**

The draft which received the most attention was written by a working group of the parliament's Constitutional Commission. Headed by the reformist parliamentarian Victor Sheinis, this group was formed upon the initiative of Sheinis' fraction in parliament, "Concord for the Sake of Progress." While the group did not have the official backing of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, chaired by Ruslan Khasbulatov, the effort was approved by deputy chairman of the parliament, Nikolai Ryabov (current Chairman of the Central Election Commission). Despite the absence of full official backing, this draft quickly shaped debates both within the Constitutional Assembly and the Supreme Soviet. The delegation met with two of the members of the working group that prepared the draft, Nikolai Petrov and Alexander Sobianin.

Among the most important elements of the Sheinis draft (which has now became a low) election law is the introduction of the principle of proportional representation by party lists, in order both to give fledgling political parties a voice and to stimulate the consolidation of a party system. According to the Sheinis draft, the lower chamber of the parliament, the State Duma, would be elected by a mixed system: half of the 450 deputies would be chosen from single-seat districts by majority vote, the system used in the 1990 elections, and half by proportional voting with seats awarded based on the nationwide showing of the various parties or blocs.

Immediately prior to the IFES team's arrival, a compromise draft emerged following the instructions of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The Balala draft was essentially combined with the Sheinis draft, with the differences on the electoral system presented in the form of optional variants.   On June 15 this draft was officially distributed to the standing commissions of the parliament for discussion. In July, however, the draft constitution being used as the basis for discussions in the Supreme Soviet endorsed a pure majoritarian system for electing the State Duma. Political parties were unprepared for this decision and were ill-prepared for the task of organizing for early elections.

According to Radio Liberty on September 25, a Constitutional Assembly meeting chaired by Sheinis, recommended that the number of seats in the State Duma be raised from 400 to 450, that the number of deputies elected proportionally be raised from one-third to one-half and that the number of signatures required to nominate a candidate be reduced by one half.

C.   The Emergence of Political Parties

The preparation of the election law has acted as a catalyst for existing political parties and movements to create electoral blocs in anticipation of an election campaign. Most existing political parties, with the possible exception of parties claiming the mantle of the former Communist Party, face many difficulties including limited membership, few resources, and questionable influence in Russian politics. The communist system, even under the more benign leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, resisted the creation of a multi-party system.

A number of variables have combined to thwart the development of a viable multi-party system in post-Soviet Russia, including: suspicion of political parties accompanied by weak foundations of civil society within the Russian electorate; limited knowledge, even among political activists, of the functions of political parties in pluralistic systems; the disproportionate resources and opportunities of parties with strong ties to communist structures; the seeming inability of parties to develop themes, establish priorities, and consolidate and differentiate their organizations under more competitive circumstances; and, the absence of positive legal initiatives which clearly delineate the activities and protect the rights of political parties.

Similarly, the refusal of many politicians, Boris Yeltsin being the most prominent, to join or endorse any political party or organization following their resignation from the CPSU also denied nascent party organizations an important source of legitimization. On the other hand, the unwillingness of many parliamentarians, who joined political nascent political parties either during the Soviet period or following the demise of the CPSU, to commit in practice to the programs of their parties has been similarly damaging in terms of the development of party identities and policy agendas.

In addition, the continued tendency toward "cult of personality" within party structures has undermined the importance of long-term party ideals and political programs. In-fighting and divisiveness have proven the hallmark of early party development in Russia. Movements which emerged in opposition to the CPSU tended to be amorphous groupings of parliamentarians or other prominent individuals and informal groups which grew from Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Among the most significant was the broad-based reform coalition Democratic Russia, which brought together several dozen civic organizations and embryonic political organizations with reform-minded voters. Democratic Russia favored radical economic reforms, the creation of a multi-party system, Russian sovereignty, and fundamental human and individual rights. The movement played an important role in the 1990 elections to the Russian parliament, particularly in Moscow, Leningrad and a few other urban areas. Democratic Russia was also instrumental in leading the campaign to elect Yeltsin as Russian president in 1991 and mobilizing support behind Yeltsin for the April 25 referendum. Despite several attempts to restructure the group as a political party, Democratic Russia remained a loosely organized political movement that suffered from tactical, strategic, and political disagreements which have reduced the organization's structural viability and political influence. In the absence of a

"Yeltsin party" the group nonetheless served as an important source of grass-roots support for economic and political reform, and many of its members were tapped for important government and executive posts.

Another political force of importance was the self-proclaimed "centrist" group Civic Union. The group combined a number of parties and organizations including Nikolai Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia, Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi and his People's Party of Free Russia, and the Renewal Party which was closely associated with the "industrialists", managers of large state-owned enterprises, led by Arkady Volsky. The coalition included a wide range of political groups who differed in their attitudes toward Yeltsin and his policies, but who generally supported a significantly stronger state sector and a slower pace of reform than the "radical" democrats associated with Democratic Russia. The increasingly acrimonious relations between Rutskoi and Yeltsin in the runup to and aftermath of the April referendum virtually guaranteed a split in the organization. By June 1993, splits in Civic Union were already apparent. By summer's end the national headquarters of the Democratic Party withdrew its membership from the coalition and advised its local chapters that they were free to decide whether to continue or terminate their participation in Civic Union.

While the existing political alignments were undergoing these stresses, the so-called Sheinis draft election law included provisions for a portion of the parliament to be chosen through proportional representation of party lists. This aspect of the draft law enjoyed widespread acceptance and encouraged the formation of political blocs for the purpose of waging an election campaign. The draft also included a number of provisions designed to encourage the development of political parties while at the same time avoiding the proliferation of small and/or extremist parties. A three-percent threshold (in some versions the threshold is set at 5%) and registration requirements of 200,000 signatures from different regions virtually would force parties to seek allies and build coalitions. Victor Sheinis argued that ideally the law would result in the formation of three or four broad-based electoral blocs that would consolidate particular political orientations.

One newly created bloc is the pro-Yeltsin coalition Russia's Choice. Led by former prime minister and Yeltsin's chief economic advisor Yegor Gaidar, the coalition is comprised of the Association of Private Enterprises and Enterprises Undergoing Privatization, the Union of Farmers, elements of Democratic Russia, and numerous prominent politicians. Russia's Choice was formed in an attempt to unite all "radical" democratic forces in a solid electoral coalition. It has undertaken several serious initiatives aimed at targeting potential candidates and offering political and leadership training, among other services, to candidates and political organizations. It has, nonetheless, been criticized by some political leaders for lacking viable local structures of its own.

An important development that illustrated the split in the ranks of the Civic Union is the recent formation of another political bloc, "Entrepreneurs for a New Russia" (ENR). The delegation

met with the organizers of this bloc, in particular with the entrepreneur Konstantin Zatulin, who was elected chairman of the group at its founding congress on June 18. The new bloc describes itself as a "right-center" coalition. Organizers hoped to attract several political parties, including the Republican Party (which played a conspicuous role in organizing the founding congress), the Nikolai Travkin's Democratic Party of Russia, the Renewal Party (along with DPR, formerly key members of the Civic Union bloc), the Party of Free Labor, and Borovoi's Party of Economic Freedom. The leadership of the group, which included former Gorbachev adviser Grigori Yavlinsky, strongly opposed many aspects of Gaidar's economic policies--particularly on privatization strategy, foreign trade and taxation. The leadership was also offended by the unwillingness of Gaidar and Yeltsin to consult them on economic policy matters. Convinced that lobbying by itself was ineffective, the leaders of ENR seek political power through the electoral process.

Interestingly, the structure of ENR was changed in late June to expand the role of regional affiliates at the expense of the leadership of the political parties which comprise this bloc. This decision, most likely, was the result of a conflict which surfaced at the founding ENR congress over the reluctance of political parties to subsume their activities entirely within the new bloc. Most vocal in their opposition to a direct political role for ENR was the leadership of the small Party of Free Labor, a party that had been created specifically to promote the interests of private entrepreneurs. ENR planned to hold a second meeting in September to work out an election platform and to discuss electoral strategy.

The left-center remnants of Civic Union, particularly those anti-Yeltsin forces grouped around Alexander Rutskoi, comprise yet another political grouping. The first steps toward the creation of a new bloc based on these core parties and other like-minded organizations were taken at a conference of parties, trade unions, and industrialists held on May 20, 1993. An agreement on creating a "Coalition of Civic Forces" was signed by 23 parties and organizations in early June. The platform of this group will likely reflect a much more conservative approach to economic management, emphasizing the need to prevent unemployment, maintain easy credit for state enterprises, and emphasize the danger of declining production rather than runaway inflation. Among its backers are managers of state-owned enterprises.

Finally, it is likely that the alliance of most of the communist and ultra-nationalist movements, the National Salvation Front, will also field a slate of candidates. This coalition, which represents the extreme interests within the military and its industrial complex, has been described as "imperialist" in orientation and is committed to opposing all policies of the Yeltsin government. Its popularity is seen as low, but the group represents a real political force due to its ability to draw upon the remnants of the communist party structures and resources in the localities.

The presumption in the Sheinis draft law that only a few electoral blocs would emerge was open to question. The chance of leaders of the various parties and movements reaching agreement

on party lists and electoral strategies in a short time frame is doubtful. The draft law provided for party or bloc lists to be represented on the ballot by the top three names on the list. These and other candidates could run in single-member districts as well, and, if elected, the next person on the list would move up. Disputes over which three party leaders would head the list and the specific sequence of names thwart efforts to build large, multi-party electoral blocs.

Even at this stage, a number of small parties has sought to create blocs outside of the four mentioned above. For example, the Christian Democratic Union led by Alexander Ogorodnikov, claims 6,300 members and was instrumental in the formation of the "New Russia" bloc in January 1992. Other member groups include the Peasant Union (the leading organization of private farmers), the Social Democrats, and the People's Party of Russia (led by the anti-corruption investigator Telman Gdlyan). Another small party, but one of the leading groups representing the interests of entrepreneurs is the Party of Economic Freedom headed by Konstantin Borovoi. This party indicated in July 1993 that it would also form a bloc with other parties that would be called "August"--a move that could undermine the center-right bloc organized by Zatulin. In short, smaller parties do not, at this point, appear dissuaded from competing with their larger counterparts.

According to ITAR-TASS by the deadline on 6 November, 21 parties and blocs out of 35 initially registered had presented lists of the required minimum of 100,000 signatures necessary to participate in the 12 December election to the State Duma, the lower house of the Federal Assembly.

D.   Campaign Finance

The electoral blocs discussed above have links of various degrees to powerful economic interests that are likely to seek to translate their economic power into political influence. The predominantly cash basis of the post-Soviet economy increases opportunities for illegitimate influence buying and complicates efforts to oversee the financial aspect of politics.   As representatives of the Russian Republican and Democratic parties indicated in their meeting with the delegation, fund-raising and party expenditures are not monitored by any state organization and are essentially unregulated.

For those organizations attempting to abide by the law, the existence of unclear, inconclusive, and contradictory laws affecting the financial activities of social organizations has made fund-raising initiatives difficult. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of a law on political parties. The formation of independent, albeit affiliated, financial and technical organizations, such as the Democratic Russia Movement's Association of Funds and the recent formation of a campaign fund by the Democratic Party of Russia illustrate the complications of party and campaign finance in Russia. Similarly, many parties have formed joint ventures as a means of funnelling money into their political organizations.

In recent by-elections and elections for republic presidents, candidates were able to use personal funds to achieve a considerable advantage. Former Central Election Commission Chairman Vasily Kazakov indicated that Konstatin Borovoi, leader of the Party of Economic Freedom had spent large sums of money in an unsuccessful attempt to win a seat in parliament in Krasnodar. Borovoi's party, largely made up of Russian entrepreneurs, held a conference in June at which leaders indicated that the "minimum" expenditure required to organize a campaign for a seat in parliament would be 50 million rubles per candidate (just under $50,000 at the current exchange rate). On November 8 it was reported by the new CEC that Borovoi's party was not successful in collecting the 100,000 signatures necessary to qualify for the submission of the national party list.

The millionaire candidate Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who won his race for president of Kalmykia in April, was alleged to have handed out $100 bills to those who attended his campaign rallies. According to Gleb Pavlovsky, head of the Post-Faktum news agency, how the 31-year-old Ilyumzhinov became a millionaire remains a mystery. One of his opponents, a military general, apparently sought to organize free supplies of bread and milk for entire regions in a similar attempt to "buy" votes.

The Sheinis draft law on elections sought to place a cap on individual contributions to campaign funds, calculated as a multiple of the minimum wage (an option of 20 or 200 times was given in the draft). There was no limit, however, placed on the use of the candidate's own funds or the funds of his or her party. Under the draft law, parties would have to open, through the electoral commission, special accounts for campaign contributions. They would also be required to report to the election commission all contributions and expenditures connected with the campaign. These reports would then be published within three months of the election.

III. THE CURRENT ELECTORAL SYSTEM

A. Overview

Notwithstanding the single-party character of communist-era elections in the former Soviet Union, a rational administrative structure was used to organize and supervise elections. This administrative structure has remained in place for Russia's first democratic parliamentary and presidential elections, and will serve as the foundation for the structure established by the new electoral law.

The administration of the election process begins in Moscow with the Chairman of the Central Election Commission and ends in each of the 96,000 individual polling sites with the local poll workers. These polling sites are supervised by an election bureaucracy which includes 88 regional election commissions, district commissions, rayon commissions, and oblast commissions. The Russian electoral system utilizes a universal registration scheme for voters aged 18 and older to determine eligibility and a paper ballot-based process and single ballot

system to serve the federation's estimated 107.3 million voters.

Opinions diverge concerning the extent, nature, and ramifications of irregularities which occurred during recent elections and referenda. Nonetheless, the team found general agreement that weaknesses within the current system provide opportunities for exploitation, particularly within the context of more competitive elections. This was especially true in the areas of ballot security, poll worker training, and information dissemination. These areas need to be improved within any new election law or accompanying guidelines. It is clear from the team's meetings that the Russian Federation does have the administrative structure in place to conduct elections. However, the system has yet to be tested in the context of multi-party elections and the scrutiny and challenge which that implies.

Concerns in several areas are discussed in this report and include: 1) ballot security; 2) voting, tabulation, reporting, and grievance procedures; 3) poll worker selection and training; 4) poll watcher mobilization and training 5) non-partisan voter education; and, 6) electoral automation and information processing.

B. Election Commissions

1. Central Election Commission

The Central Election Commission (CEC) for the Election of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation administers all national elections for the Russian Federation. It is important to note that the former CEC was a commission of the recently suspended Congress of People's Deputies and therefore had all of its legal powers suspended as well.

The former commission which consisted of 29 citizens originally appointed by the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR), was established in 1989 to organize and supervise that year's elections to the Russian Congress of People's Deputies. This CEC supervised Russian presidential elections, two referenda, and periodic by-elections to fill seats left vacant by the death or retirement of members.

Vasiliy Kazakov was the Chairman of the CEC at the time of the team's visit. The commission had an executive committee of 6 members and an administrative staff of 14 which is directed by Chairman Ryabov. The CEC oversees overall compliance with the electoral law, provides technical and procedural guidance and supervises the activities of regional election commissions in carrying out the administrative responsibilities in each of Russia's 88 electoral regions. The regional commissions in turn supervise the work of commissions at the district, oblast, rayon and polling site levels.

With the disbanding of the parliament, a new CEC headed by former deputy speaker of parliament, Nikolai Ryabov, was constituted. As presently designed, the CEC serves as the

central policy-making arm for the electoral-administrative structure. It is now made up of 21 members. Among its primary duties are the following:

a. preliminary planning and preparation for national elections, including supervising the appointment of regional commissions;

b. supervisory control over the execution and uniform application of the electoral laws and direction of the activities of regional and district election commissions;

c. formation of the electoral districts;

d. preparation of the nation-wide election budget;

e. design and approval of all forms and commodities used in the election process including ballots, protocols, ballot boxes, voter lists, registration documents, seals of election committees, etc.;

f. nation-wide tabulation, validation and reporting of election results, and confirmation of elected deputies' authority to take office, particularly regarding the nationwide election conducted by proportional representation; and,

g. final authority to arbitrate disputes or complaints about election violations including overturning or suspending decisions or actions of subordinate election committees.

2. District and Polling Site Commissions

The terms of District Election Commissions (DEC's) begin 90 days before an election and end when the CEC certifies the authority of the newly elected deputies. Under the Soviet law, DEC members are appointed by local Councils of People's Deputies based on nominations by labor collectives, public associations, educational institutions, electors' assemblies and other authorized groups. DEC's are directly supervised by the Central Election Commission.

The DEC's are responsible for supervising the compilation of the list of voters for the constituency; familiarizing voters with this list, considering allegedly incorrect entries, and authorizing the appropriate amendments to the list; notifying the population of the location of the DEC offices, the hours of its work, and the date of time of voting; providing for the provision of premises for polling stations and the resources for conducting the election; supervising the conduct of voting at the polling stations; ascertaining the results of balloting within their constituency and transferring them to the CEC; and, considering complaints pertaining to problems of election preparation and administration.

Polling Site Commissions of 3 to 15 members are also appointed by the regional, urban and provincial Councils of People's Deputies, serve at the polling-site level, and operate under similar provisions governing the District Election Commissions. Polling Site Commissions must be appointed no later than 45 days before the election. In considering their appointments the Councils must also take into account the nominations from recognized groups such as work collectives, institutions, electors' assemblies and independent population units. Once appointed, Polling Commissions are supervised by District Election Commissions in charge of the election district where the Polling Commission is located. Generally speaking, there has been little personnel turnover in District and Polling Site Commissions. As a result, commissioners tend to be unfamiliar with, and in some cases hostile to, the concept of independent electoral administration.

One of the major functions of the Polling Site Commissions is to conduct the voter registration exercise in their precinct area. Relying heavily on local government offices who provide them with data, Polling Site Commissions may also choose to verify the voter lists for their polling places through a door-to-door canvass. In addition, the Polling Site Commission is responsible for setting up the polling site and acquiring supplies and commodities to conduct voting on election day. The Polling Site Commission is responsible for acquiring supplies with funds allocated to them by the corresponding District Election Commission.

According to the law, Polling Site Commissions are responsible for the processing of voters and accounting for all used, unused, damaged and voted ballots. They are also tasked with counting of ballots at the close of the polls, completing a "protocol" of results, and transporting counted ballots and materials to the DEC where results from the polling site protocols are summarized at the district level prior to their eventual incorporation into the nationwide totals.

3.   . Chain of Command

The former Central Election Commission was solely responsible to the Congress of People's Deputies, which was suspended by President Yeltsin. There is a close administrative tie between the lower levels of the election structure, including the Regional, District, and Polling Site commissions, local councils, and the executive offices of local government. District and Polling Site Commissions are dependent on these bureaucratic entities for administrative support including acquisition of their working headquarters, printing and material support, provision of security and transport, and distribution of their allotted funds. The new CEC maintains most of these relationships.

During the campaign period these local officials who support the election commissions also play a significant role in the campaign process. For example, the DEC's, in cooperation with the local councils, are required to assist candidates by providing office space, equipment and commodities, in arranging their public meetings and rallies, and in providing access to public media.

Traditionally, local councils and local government officials have played an integral part in supporting the election process even though election commissions are charged with the actual organization and administration of the election. While they serve as an extension of the election administrative structure, local governing bodies are not bound by the body of election laws, which delineate the responsibilities and govern the activities election commissions at all levels.

4. Training of Election Commissions

According to former CEC Chairman Kazakov, the CEC conducts training programs for the District Election Commission chairmen in advance of the election. The CEC held training classes for the April 25 referendum election on February 8, 1993. The Polling Site Commissions hold public meetings before the elections to hear suggestions and problems. There is one paid professional for each Polling Site Commission. All other staff are volunteers.

It was reported that for the referendum, there was a lack of written procedural guidelines and election laws distributed to Polling Site Commissions. This absence of documentation led to inconsistencies in poll administration from site to site. Moreover, polling sites were located in factories, enterprises, collective farms, and schools. These stations were often staffed by employees -- workers, supervisors, and bosses -- of the same entities. The influence of the workplace hierarchy also exacerbated inconsistencies within the administration process and reinforced the lack of independence of Polling Site Commissions.

C. Campaign Rules and Activity

According to the Soviet election law, the campaign period begins four months in advance of each election. Candidates are nominated through organizations which have at least 300 members. Organizations comprised of fewer than 300 members can hold a joint conference with another group(s) to nominate a candidate. All organizations must register with the Ministry of Justice to nominate a candidate. Meetings are then held in regions and nomination documents are filed with the District Election Commission, which makes the final decisions concerning qualification requirements.

Once candidates have been registered, election commissions provide them with limited support. For example, election commissions set up meetings for candidates with groups of voters, provide pertinent reference and informational materials, or produce posters showing all candidates. With regard to campaign posters, each candidate is given equal space with information such as a picture, biographical information and statement of beliefs.

During the course of the campaign, a candidate's salary is subsidized by the government, he or she is allowed up to five paid campaign workers, and the costs of in-constituency candidate transportation, except by taxicab, are covered. In addition, televised debates, which include all

candidates, are aired. The language of Soviet-era election laws, clearly stipulates that all candidates are "to participate in the election campaign on an equal basis starting from the moment of their nomination.

E. The Ballot and Election Commodities

The current election system utilizes pre-printed paper ballots for voting. For the April 25 referendum election, the wording and size of the ballots was prescribed by the Central Election Commission. Local printing houses throughout the regions were responsible for printing the ballots. The actual number of ballots for each polling site was determined at the regional or district level. On December 12, voters will be presented with at least four ballots (single mandate and party list ballots for the State Duma, Council of the Federation, and the referendum on the constitution.) Local elections may also be held on the same day.

From the information given, it appears there has been little control or scrutiny over the printing process in the past. Ballots for the April 25 referendum were reproduced on regular stock paper with no watermark or other unique identifier. The ballot format did not include stubs, which could be numbered for accounting purposes. In practice, there has been difficulty in accounting for all the ballots printed, ballots issued, ballots used and ballots unused. Standard independent auditing procedures are not in place which would allow for the accounting of all ballots.

Ballots are printed in sufficient quantity to accommodate every registered voter with a percentage overage built in to make up for printing irregularities, damage or other circumstances. During the referendum, however, a large excess of ballots was reported at numerous polling sites and in District Election Commission headquarters where voting does not take place. In many instances, more accurate, up-to date, voter registries would allow for a better estimate of the number of registered voters in any given polling location. Better estimates would reduce the need for more than 5-10% overage.

Once ballots have been printed, they are distributed to each polling site. The experience of the April 25 referendum shows that the time of delivery of ballots varied significantly from one polling site to another.

The potential for misuse of extra or un-voted ballots is an issue that should be considered. The existence of extra ballots alone requires that strict ballot accountability procedures be enforced. The audit trail of ballot papers should start at the printing level and continue through the polling and the verification at the count.

F. Role and Duties of Polling Place Workers

      1.   Selection process

Polling Site Commissions use up to 20 workers per polling place (each location handles from 20 to 3000 voters, an average of 1200). In a system formulated under the Soviets and still used today, factories and other places of employment select one or more workers to work at the polls. Although theoretically these poll workers are elected by fellow employees, in practice the same individuals are generally chosen to participate as poll workers each time. The employer allows the worker about a 45-day paid leave for the election period.

In the past, political parties and candidates were not asked for official representation on the polling site staffs, although they may designate official observers. Unlike in many democracies, there was no organized or formal procedure to insure that poll workers represent the interest of different parties or electoral subjects. This system may have had the practical effect of promoting an imbalance by some groups (i.e. state-controlled institutions) and under-representation of others (new or entrepreneurial endeavors and political parties).

During the referendum some parties reported difficulties in gaining access for their representatives to Polling Site Commissions. For example, party activists from the Voronezh Region reported that some commission members, who were known Yeltsin supporters, were forced off Polling Site Commissions. In addition, some workers, who were also members of democratic political parties and had been selected to serve of the Polling Site Commissions, were reportedly barred from filling their posts.

Complaints concerning Polling Site and District Election Commissions were forwarded, in the case of Voronezh to the Regional Election Commission. Party activists reported, however, that such complaints were not seriously considered. They also raised concerns that there existed no reasonable alternative course of action. According to party activists, complaints could be considered by the court system, but only if the request for a hearing was signed by two members of the regional legislature. Virtually no elected official, they reported, would be willing to take such a stand.

When representatives of the Voronezh Regional Election Commission were asked to identify any circumstances which would cause a poll worker to be forced off or denied access to his or her Polling Site Commission, they could think of none. In response to the issue of complaints, they stated that only a few complaints had been forwarded and that no violations of the law had been identified. Reports of fraud in conjunction with negligent consideration of complaints by local election officials were also raised by political activists in Novosibirsk.

2. Training materials

While the former Chairman of the Central Election Commission felt that there were sufficient training materials for the referendum, one of the leaders of political parties who worked at the polls told the IFES team that training manuals in addition to copies of the election law are needed and that they were not used at the location where he worked. The party leader also

indicated that most workers at the polls did not know how to handle difficult situations such as dealing with voters who lacked the proper documentation to vote at a polling site outside of their home polling site or ruling on the validity of a contested ballot.

3. Voter eligibility and registration

Voters must be citizens of the Russian Federation and at least 18 years of age. Persons convicted of felonies or those judged to be insane cannot vote.

The Russian Federation has a universal voter registration system. Each citizen is automatically registered with the local government body when born and then placed on the eligible voter list at the age of 18. If a voter moves he or she must notify the local authority of the move so that their record is updated. There is no purging of the voter list for people who do not vote.

Fifteen days before each election, the Polling Site Commissions post a list of eligible voters for examination by the public. At about the same time, voters on the list are notified by mail of the election and their polling site.

If someone arrives at the polls on election day and is not on the list, he is permitted to vote only if he shows proper identification which shows that the voter's place of residence is in that district. In some cases, however, this legal point was poorly enforced during the referendum. More than 2 million voters or 3% of those who cast ballots registered that day.

G. Voting Procedures

1. Voting Hours

Polls are open on election day from 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. local time. Under certain conditions, Polling Site Commissions can change the voting hours as long as it is decided and announced in advance of the election.

2. The Act of Voting

Russian voters formerly marked their ballot quite differently from most voters in the rest of the world. Voters were instructed to cross through the choice they do not favor, for example, a voter would cross through "NO" if they wanted to vote "yes" or cross through "YES" if they wanted to vote "no." The same procedure was used for candidate voting: voters cross through the candidate(s) they do not support. This process worked quite well under the old system when only one or two candidates appeared on the ballot, but would have proven cumbersome and time consuming in the multi-party contest expected of the December elections. A new western-style ballot has now been adopted.

3. Initialing the ballots

When a ballot is issued to a voter, there is a requirement to have an official ink stamp placed on the back by the poll workers. In the April 25 referendum, there was great confusion because some of the polling places did not have the proper stamp. In response to charges that fraudulent duplicate stamps could be made, the Central Election Commission, in an order broadcast on election day, required the placement of the initials of two of the poll workers on the back of each ballot in lieu of the stamp.

4. Poll List

A poll list similar to what follows is found at each polling place:

Name	Address	Signature	Poll worker initial
Ivanova, Nina	12394 Ulitsa Gorkovo		
Petrov, Dima	546 Nevsky Prospekt		
Volkov, Alexei	8878 Sadovoye Koltso		
Diuk, Leonid	1863 Ploshchad Suvorova		

According to the law, voters must show their "passport" or official identification to receive a ballot. Several people recounted stories of voters presenting, in addition to their own, the identification of others (relatives or neighbors) and receiving additional ballots to cast. This practice was commonly accepted under the old system.

5. Home Voting

The Russians employ a procedure on election day which allows two poll workers to take ballots and ballot boxes to voters' residences so they may vote from home. This is known as the "sick box," which is ostensibly provided for those voters who are sick, handicapped or elderly and cannot go to the polls. It was reported to the IFES team that poll workers have gone out about 4:00 p.m. to go door-to-door to service home voters. Under the Soviet system, it was common for the U.S.S.R. to report a 90%+ turnout in elections that only had one candidate on the ballot. High voter turnout was often facilitated in this door-to-door canvass by Polling Site

Election commission members.

It was reported that even in recent elections about 40 to 50 "home" ballots are cast for each 2000 votes at a polling place on election day. This would mean that 1.4 to 1.7 million people voted by this method in the April 25 referendum.

6. Early and Absentee voting

Voters who will be out of the area on election day may vote before the election in person starting 15 days before the election at the office of the local election commission. Military personnel and others who know at least 30 days before the election that they will be away can cast ballots where they are stationed. They must receive a certificate from their home polling site to be allowed to vote.

H. Tabulation Procedures: Certifying Election Results

The voter places his or her ballot in a secured ballot box which is only to be opened by the poll workers after 10:00 P.M. After the polls close, the same poll workers who have been working for 15 hours proceed to hand count all the ballots. For the April 25 referendum this averaged 700 to 800 ballots for each polling site although some workers were counting as many as 1800. Because there were at least four issues to count, (some polling places had more because of local issues on the ballot), most polling place workers had to search for up to 3200 marks on the ballots.

After counting the ballots, poll workers then complete a "protocol." The protocol is a two-sided card-stock document which certifies the election results from that polling place. The protocol also lists the number of improperly marked or voided paper ballots cast. According to Article 33 of the referendum law, the protocols do not account for the number of ballots issued to the polling place nor ballots not used.

There are two originals made of the protocol. One original is kept locally and the other is sent to the District Election Commission. The district commissions then keep a copy and issue a protocol from all the polling places in the district to the regional commission, which is the highest electoral authority on the "Subject of the Federation" level. The 90 regional commissions each issue a protocol for their respective region containing only the total votes cast in each district. The regional commission does not show the results from the individual polling sites within the region. These regional protocols are then sent to the Central Election Commission, which issues the final official results. According to published reports, two days after the April 25 referendum only 38 of the 90 regions had completed their count. The official nationwide results were announced by the Central Election Commission on May 5.

Ballots and other election related materials are kept for only two months before they are

destroyed (in the U.S. they are kept for a period of 22 months if a federal candidate is on the ballot). The team was unable to determine whether any procedures existed for securing the ballots after they are removed from the polling place.

The team did not encounter any attempt at independent verification of the results on the protocols from all locations. Random auditing procedures and computer testing programs are not used to identify unusual vote totals.

There is no orderly procedure, law or rule to have all the individual polling place results from the 96,000 locations placed on public record so that their accuracy may be verified. Because of allegations of vote total manipulation in the April 25 referendum, President Yeltsin ordered all the regions to send in their local vote totals to the Central Election Commission. Nearly 8 weeks after the election only half of the polling place protocols had been sent to Moscow.

Only the Sheinis draft electoral law included a provision requiring local tabulations to be forwarded to the Central Election Commission. However, this provision allows District and Polling Site Commissions up to three months to forward final results, a period of time far longer than that of virtually all western european countries. Timeliness as well as transparency is critical part of a credible reporting process.

I. Election Observers

Observers representing candidates on the ballot, as well as political parties and social organizations registered with the Ministry of Justice, are permitted at the polls. The experience of the April 25 referendum shows, however, that outside major cities, coverage of polling sites by the democratic parties was sparse. By and large, the political parties have lacked the resources to mount an extensive poll watcher initiative. This is especially true in the countryside, where local citizens are often afraid to represent pro-democracy candidates or parties in so public a fashion. During the April 25 referendum, some party chapters in provincial capitals and major cities chose to transport volunteers into the countryside due to the inability to mobilize poll watchers from rural areas.

Moreover, many poll watchers were unfamiliar with the referendum law and were only vaguely aware of their rights and responsibilities. A majority of the poll watchers had only a two-page overview of the law and, as a result were not exactly sure what they should be looking for. In some cases, poll watchers actually violated the law by such acts as participating in the counting of ballots and tabulation of the vote. In some particularly conservative districts, political parties reported that their poll watchers had difficulty gaining access to the polls.

International observers were also present during recent elections. For the April 25 referendum, U.S. and other foreign observers who had permission from the government were allowed at the polling places. The U.S.-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs conducted

election observer training for Russian political party representatives. The International Republican Institute provided assistance in the form of election guidelines and election education pieces and fielded a monitoring mission. Officials in Novosibirsk informed the IFES team that international observers were turned away at the airport and instructed to go home.

According to the new law, as many as 5 observers per candidate or party list are allowed at every polling site.

J. Adjudication of Grievances

Of key importance in any democratic election system is the process whereby grievances and allegations about election violations may be adjudicated fairly and uniformly.

Under the current system, grievances or alleged election violations are to be resolved within the framework and jurisdiction of the election commissions themselves. Violations are brought to the attention of the individual election commission responsible for the specific element of the election process involved. Each higher level of election commission authority may subsequently be called upon to review actions taken by a lower commission and uphold, overturn or suspend their actions. The decisions of a Polling Site Commission may be appealed to a DEC if the person bringing the charge is not satisfied by the remedy implemented by the lower level. Those with grievances may go still higher by appealing to the CEC. Under the law, the CEC's ruling is considered final, although the law cryptically provides the opportunity to appeal CEC decisions to the court.

One of the main issues of concern is the absence of guidelines to ensure that election commissions adjudicating grievances treat them consistently and uniformly throughout the country. On the contrary, the local Chairman seems to be given considerable judgement authority. Because most members of election commissions at all levels are voluntary members who meet only periodically, the team had the impression that many of the Chairman's decisions can be made autonomously. In addition, the law does not appear to give adequate guidelines concerning how remedies are to be applied, and the individual commissions are given a fairly wide latitude to determine what form of relief they decide is appropriate.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Many current election procedures do not meet generally recognized standards for control and transparency. Party leaders with whom the delegation met did not express great concern about the lack of controls on the election process. Their logic argued that any fraud occurring in the past would not have changed the outcomes. However, the current election process has not been tested in the context of multi-party contests. Such a change increases the demands of accountability because there are real contests to be won and lost by multiple participants and their interests.

A. Ballot Security

In the current system, ballots are printed locally with no use of special ballot paper. Use of a security paper stock which bears a unique watermark or imprint, increases voter confidence and reduces the possibility of counterfeit ballots being distributed. In the present system, there is no detachable stub used to reconcile ballots and voters. Many voting systems use a ballot configuration which combines the ballot and a stub or counterfoil. The two are attached through a perforated seam. The stub bears a control number but the ballot does not. Ballot control procedures can track which polling places have been assigned a particular series of ballots. Stubs and voted ballots must be reconciled. All unused ballots must be accounted for and returned to the election authority.

Instances of "chain" voting were reported. When ballot stock is not controlled, voters can be issued pre-marked ballots which are taken into the poll and unmarked legitimate ballots are taken out to be "pre-voted" and used by another voter. The "chain" guarantees that ballots are marked and voted for certain candidates without fail.

Multiple voting was also discussed. It was reported that it is not uncommon for a head of household to vote for his or her entire family. Possession of the passports of family members and, in some cases, neighbors, has apparently entitled people to vote on the behalf of others. Although such an act is technically illegal, it is practiced and prosecutions do not occur. The system of election day registration at the polls (with proper identification presented) is not an unacceptable practice when considered alone, but presents further concerns if the system lacks controls in other areas.

Home voting is a practice which physically takes the ballot box to the home of a voter. It was reported that when turnout figures needed to be increased, ballot boxes would circulate in neighborhoods with an increased velocity the later in the day that it became.

B. Voting, Tabulation, and Reporting

Election results are transmitted to the Central Election Commission in Moscow from the polling sites through an integrated series of summary reports or protocols. With the transmission in summary form alone of the election results comes the loss of source documentation critical for auditing the election returns. In an election process that cannot be observed in all polling sites, the audit process is especially important.

There is a lack of detailed election result information from the District and Polling Site levels. The current procedures require the CEC to collect returns only from the regional commissions and not from the lower-level units. The Sheinis draft of the election law provides for CEC collection and obligatory publication of returns on the polling site level within a three-month period.

C. Poll Worker Diversity and Training

There is an incongruity between the current method of selecting poll workers and the emergence of political parties. In most electoral processes, poll workers are funnelled into the process through political parties. In the current system, poll workers are selected through committees at their place of employment. Unless the poll worker selection process is modified to include political party participation, there will be a wedge between the electoral process and the multi-party monitor and observer functions which a partisan presence provides.

D. Nonpartisan Voter Education

Voter education is extremely important in a country like Russia which is undergoing a transition from a one-party political system to a multi-party system. The political system of Russia today is in a state of flux and uncertainty. The state and media both have a role to play in the dissemination of public information concerning the evolution and consolidation of a democratic system in Russia.

The IFES team found a high degree of skepticism on the part of government officials regarding the ability of political parties to lead and represent the population. The skepticism is based largely upon the recent origin and inexperience of the parties. There is, of course, a degree of distrust between the political parties and government officials. There are also indications that the general populace is less than enthusiastic towards the democratic political process. The deteriorating economic condition is likely to contribute to indifference and even hopelessness among ordinary people.

Given this atmosphere of political distrust among the elite and indifference among the people, the designing and implementation of an effective voter education program would be a critical component of Russia's preparation for upcoming parliamentary elections. The country needs a civic education program that reaches the entire population of the Russian Federation, from the cities to the villages, and also such specific groups as civil servants, the military, leaders of ethnic and tribal groups, election officials and workers, women's organizations, the media and opposition groups. Special attention must also be given to target groups which have demonstrated apathy during recent elections. Surprisingly, turn-out among young people, for example, was not particularly high for the April referendum. In addition, rural women tended to be ill-informed about and disinterested in the referendum, itself, as well and the political situation generally. The consolidation of a more open and competitive process depends upon the education and pro-active orientation of such groups.

E. Election Information Processing

Other democracies have developed information networks which provide a free exchange of political and social information and statistics during the time of elections. The IFES team had

the opportunity to visit the offices of four such independent political and economic research organizations: Interlegal, INDEM, the Institute of Political and Humanitarian Research and PostFactum. The organizations would benefit from the introduction of additional technology for a faster and wider exchange of information.

F. The Sobianin Report

Alexander Sobianin, head of the "Independent Information-Analytical Group" (other members are E. Gel'man and O. Kayunov) is perhaps the leading Russian authority on patterns of vote fraud. Sobianin is an expert advisor to the Supreme Soviet's commission on human rights (headed by the former dissident and Sakharov associate Sergei Kovalev). The group applies mathematical models to results from protocols from similar districts and results from past elections to note extreme deviations, both in turnout and outcomes. Using this approach, Sobianin and his colleagues argue that there has been a pattern of systematic vote fraud in a number of regions where the leadership is opposed to Yeltsin.

There were a number of allegations of fraud in the voting that took place on April 11 in several oblasts and republics for provincial executives (usually called chiefs of administration in oblasts, presidents in republics). These elections were conducted by local election commissions without the participation of the Central Election Commission. According to an analysis by Sobianin the results of elections in Orel oblast indicated that as many as 200,000 votes for the winner, former CPSU Central Committee member Ye. Stroev, were falsified. This result was achieved, according to this analysis, by claiming over 80-90% turnout in certain oblasts--a turnout unheard of for elections of this type. (In elections to this post held in other provinces the overall turnout was closer to 30%, while in Orel province it was reported to be 66%.)

Similar charges were levied against the elections for chief of administration in Briansk oblast and Lipetsk oblast. In Lipetsk Yeltsin's representative in the province, R. Kasymov, reported that over 18,000 ballots were given out improperly and that in 7,500 cases voters were given more than one ballot. Nine thousands names were missing from the voter rolls and there were cases of falsified signatures on the ballots. According to Kasymov, all the violations were committed with the active participation of local Soviets through Polling Site Commissions.

During the April 25 referendum Sobianin and his group estimate that nationwide the number of falsified ballots was approximately 8 million, almost all for the anti-Yeltsin "nyet, nyet, da, nyet" responses that were urged by Khasbulatov, Rutskoi, and the communists. The regions where this type of falsification was most extensive (in excess of 15%) -- again, based on deviation from mathematical models -- were the republics of Tuva, Buriatia, Bashkiria, Mordovia, and Chuvashia and the Amur, Chita, Kursk, Belgorod, and Smolensk oblasts. In as many as six of these regions, according to the Information-Analytical Group, the falsification was sufficient to turn a pro-Yeltsin plurality into an anti-Yeltsin plurality. The smallest proportion of falsified ballots were found in the large cities.

Sobianin added that during the April referendum, a kind of "natural experiment" took place in Voronezh and Penza provinces. Observers from the Yeltsin camp were stationed at polling stations in about half of all rural districts in Voronezh. In these districts, there was a significantly lower reported voter turnout (by 10-15% lower) than in similar districts where there were no observers. Precincts without observers reported suspiciously high turnouts, and the difference in turnout was reflected in an almost point-by-point percentage increase in the votes against Yeltsin. As a result, on the vote of confidence in the president, Yeltsin fell 0.3% (about 8,000 votes) short of a majority.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Ballot Security

Ballot control concerns could be addressed by the introduction of several simple control mechanisms. First, all valid ballot paper should contain some seal showing its validity. Since a centralized system of printing is not logistically feasible, each local printer must agree to abide by the same set of controls and standards for the printing of ballots. Selected printers could be provided with a dandyroll, a metal plate to imprint a special seal, like a corporate seal, on each ballot during the printing process. Printers can be made accountable for all ballot stock imprinted.

If dandyrolls cannot be used, another option would be a faint special ink screen that could be applied as background for the text at the same time that printing is accomplished. Some techniques would allow the security screen and the ballot text to be applied with one pass through by the printing house so that the cost would not be significantly increased.

The ballots are not padded or bound but are currently printed and trimmed so that the ballot papers are loose. Stacks of loose papers are counted manually and packaged for distribution to the various polling sites. Election officials could consider having the ballots bound or stapled, in uniform quantities to provide greater ease in packaging for distribution purposes. Standard packages would further enhance officials' control over the ballots under their supervision.

Finally, the team would strongly suggest that each ballot be attached to sequentially numbered stubs or counterfoils from which an unnumbered ballot could be separated at a perforated seam. The sequential numbering would allow the regional election commission to maintain a centralized accounting of which documents had been assigned to which site. The protocols could also include a specific section to identify the sequence of numbers used, individual numbers of ballots which were damaged or otherwise unusable, and the sequence of numbers of the ballot counterfoils left on the unused pads. The numbered stubs of issued ballots would remain part of the formal documentation of activity at each of the polling stations in support of the overall results.

B.   Voting, Tabulation, and Reporting

The practice of allowing voters to cast a ballot in another person's name should be abolished. To reinforce the change, violators should be prosecuted and poll workers who allow the practice should be instructed to eliminate this practice.

An information processing network could support the results transmission process. Protocols from all polling places should be made public and published. A random auditing process should be instituted to conduct a spot check of the ballots. It is recommended that 1% to 2% of the 96,000 polling sites should be randomly selected to have the ballots re-counted by an independent team. All the protocols sent to the regions should be audited and re-calculated to make sure that no major mistakes (or major manipulation) occurred. There are many simple computerized spreadsheet programs which could facilitate this process and provide a flagging system for discrepancies.

The electoral law should require the publication of Polling Site protocols within a short period of time. Only the Sheinis draft electoral law includes a Polling Site-level reporting requirement, and even this provides precincts with three months in which to report final tabulations. This period is too long to provide the CEC, media, and civic organizations a timely and adequate check against vote fraud. Complaint and adjudication procedures which are both unbiased and thorough in their resolution must also be established. Unreasonable conditions for filing a complaint should be eliminated.

C.   Poll Worker Diversity and Training

In can be surmised from the reports to the IFES team that there is great inconsistency in the training of the nearly 500,000 poll workers in the Federation. The development of an election preparation and administration video training series, including an installment on poll worker training, which would clearly explain and illustrate the laws, rules and procedures would strengthen the system considerably. If all poll workers are uniformly trained, their awareness of fraud is increased as is their ability to prevent fraud. They may then feel more compelled to challenge illegal or improper activity.

Standardized training manuals for poll workers would be designed to accompany each training video. They should be easy to understand, reinforce the theories and procedures presented in the videos, and provide detailed explanations, instructions and rules. Pictures and other graphics can be incorporated to illustrate what is required and expected of the poll worker or domestic monitor. An emphasis should also be placed on the exact requirements of ballot accountability and security as well as the proper completion of a protocol of results.

Additional information disseminated in such a manual might include: guidelines for handling unusual situations; the answers to frequently asked questions; important phone numbers; and,

a glossary of election-related terms. The manual should also support improved diversity of election commissions based on the inclusion of candidate and party representatives. A complete copy of the new election law would also be attached.

D.   Non-partisan Voter Education

A great deal of change has taken place in Russia in a very short period of time. The country has started on the road to democracy with a popularly elected president, free press, and a draft of a new constitution. The political party activities that would have been considered criminal in the Soviet days have now become a part of the daily political life of Russia. In order to preserve and consolidate these gains, the public needs to be educated about the impact and meaning of these changes and the roles and responsibilities of the citizens in a democratic system.

1. Voter Education Initiatives

Successful voter education initiatives could focus on concepts of democracy and multi-party politics. It may be wise to test the message and delivery program in a pilot project before the actual launching of the mass program. Though Russian voters are familiar with the existing electoral process of de facto compulsory voting there may be a need to encourage voter turnout.

The need is also for a concept-based education program, delivered on a local level, intended to reassure voters that their input makes a difference. Explanations of concepts such as freedom of choice, pluralism, privatization, democratic political parties, voter initiative, and relationships between voters and their elected representatives can make a substantial contribution to the process of democratization and institution building. In addition, target groups which have demonstrated low political awareness, eg. rural women, as well as low voter turn-out in recent elections, eg. young people, should be provided with additional education and encouragement.

Another installment in an election preparation and education series should be produced to support non-partisan voter education and get-out-the-vote projects. Simple and straight-forward voter education pamphlets should be developed for distribution throughout the course of such projects.

2.   Poll Watcher Mobilization and Training

A dearth of information and training for domestic poll watchers has produced weak internal monitoring efforts. These circumstances, in conjunction with a reluctance of civic organizations and government bodies to conduct non-partisan voter education projects, serve to undermine the development of democratic processes and institutions. In an attempt to introduce some consistency into such initiatives and provide essential technical information, IFES would produce

a second installment in the election preparation and administration video training series, this one devoted to poll watcher mobilization and training.

A standardized training manual for poll watchers should be developed to reinforce the concepts and procedures presented in the videos and to provide detailed explanations, instructions and rules. Graphics could be incorporated to illustrate what is required and expected of the domestic monitor. A complete copy of the new election law should also be included. In addition, an election-day checklist for domestic monitors should be developed for incorporation into the manual and use in future elections.

Use of election day checklists would allow poll watchers to record their observations throughout the course of balloting. The introduction of check-lists would encourage consistent collection of information and the creation of a written record which would allow poll watchers to determine the nature of the election process; to de-brief appropriate government, political, and civic organizations; and, if necessary, forward complaints. In short, check-lists function as a tool for poll watchers to record, in a more consistent and formal manner, their observations on election day. IFES could provide technical assistance in the development of such check-lists and in production and distribution efforts.

A domestic poll watcher training program, implemented through a series of seminars, should also be conducted to assist civic organizations, political parties, candidates and others in explaining the proper procedures to be followed on election day. In addition, IFES trainers could instruct seminar participants in the effective utilization of the poll watcher training and manual in training other poll watchers. In addition to teaching participants what to look for and what questions to ask on election day, special emphasis should be placed on what to do with this information after the election.

A post-election round-table should be held so that the observers can be properly debriefed. Ideally, a report could be issued following the roundtable which would outline the observations of the monitors and offer suggestions for improvements of the election process. Reports could be provided to political and civic groups, government officials, and academic institutions.

E.   Electoral Information Technologies

1. Election Administration

Automation serves as a vital tool in the administration of multi-party elections; supports reporting and monitoring activities; and provides an institutional memory, by collecting, storing, analyzing, and distributing information. Specific activities supported through automation include the development of accurate voter lists, rapid vote tabulation, accurate election result reporting, ballot tracking, signature verification, and mapping.

IFES proposes the development of a pilot project to introduce electoral information technologies, the first such automation exercise in Russia, in the city of Archangelsk. The impact and feasibility of expanding this project will be monitored by IFES with the intent of introducing automation in other regions of Russia.

2. Long-term Election Monitoring

The collection, storage, and analysis of election-related data is an important component in long term election monitoring. IFES is prepared to support this component of the election process. Such a databank of information could include the following areas: posting election results by electoral district; tracking candidates, political parties, and campaign finance activities; establishing bibliographies of articles and books; and tracking legislation and parliamentary actions. Through IFES technical support, a network of shared information could be established among Russian research, publication, and non-governmental organizations. Communication software and hardware could also support accessing Western databanks.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
NOVEMBER 11, 1993

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Recommendations for IFES
Programming in Russia

Appendix B

Formation of New Central Election Commission (CEC)

Appendix C

Profile of CEC Chairman
Nikolai Timofeevich Ryabov

Appendix D

List of Persons Interviewed by IFES Team

Appendix E

Map of IFES Team Deployments

Appendix F

Ballots Used During 1989 Elections
for the Congress of People's Deputies
of the Soviet Union