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**REPORT ON MISSION TO KRASNODAR (FEDERATION OF RUSSIA)
TO OBSERVE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS**

(17 to 21 November 1994)

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17 TO 21 NOVEMBER 1994**

At the invitation of the Union of Russian Cities and the Municipality of Krasnodar, a CLRAE delegation observed the municipal and regional elections taking place in the City and Region of Krasnodar, Southern Russia, on 20 November.

The delegation consisted of Mr O'Brien (R); Mr Morgan (L); Mr Mollstedt (R), and Mr Zahn (L). From the Secretariat, the delegation was accompanied by Mr Hartley.

This mission was the second such observation of elections in the Federation of Russia, following that of 12 December 1993 for elections in the City and Region of Moscow.

The Elections

Elections took place:

- in the City of Krasnodar for a new municipal council of 27 members;
- in the Region of Krasnodar for a new Regional Assembly which would have 50 members, the city of Krasnodar with eight seats, the remaining 42 being divided equally into seven electoral districts;
- throughout the territory for local councils.

There were no elections for the position of Mayor of Krasnodar or the President of the Regional Assembly, these positions continuing to be filled by Presidential appointment.

The elections were organised by two electoral boards, one for the city and one for the region, of which the delegation met both Presidents. Representatives of parties contesting the elections had seats on the boards.

Voters had been given the opportunity to check their registration beforehand on the electoral lists. There were adequate provisions for voting by electors absent on the day of polling eg students and for sick and hospitalised persons. Military personnel would vote in the normal civilian polling stations

For the elections to be valid, 25% of the registered voters were required to vote.

The elections were for a mandate in both cases of two years and were thus regarded as intermediate elections.

Parties and Candidates

The nomination of candidates was to be done 60 days before the elections, either by a group of voters or parties, their respective candidates being required to have a given percentage of the electoral roll of supporting signatures. 28 groupings had been formed of which 17 were accepted by the electoral boards, as being in conformity with the electoral legislation.

Of these, the principal parties and groupings were:

The Liberal Democrat Party (Jirinovsky)

The Communist Party

The Motherland Party (Communist)

The Yavlinsky Bloc

The Kuban Party (Kuban being the name given to the Krasnodar region)

The " Our Town, Our Home" Party.

The Cossack group (Cossacks are one of the principal ethnic groups in a region characterised by a high number of different ethnic minorities)

There were also a high number of independent candidates.

Opinion polls prior to the elections appeared inconclusive, although giving some preference for independent candidates. Of the parties, the Liberal Democrat and Communist parties had the lead. In discussions with city officials beforehand, the Liberal Democrat party was clearly considered as likely to be successful.

The Electoral Campaign

As far could be gathered through discussions with party leaders, the electoral campaign had been free of any major defect, except for the questions of candidate financing and TV time.

Candidates were given an equal but small amount of finance but were free to accept additional funds, within certain limits, eg no more than 3 million roubles from a commercial or business company, and no more than 2 million from an individual.

TV time was allocated evenly between candidates on state TV but there was no control over private TV stations where slots could be bought by anyone with sufficient funds.

The above procedures clearly favoured the more affluent parties, to the detriment of independent candidates and equally, candidates of the "Administration" were thought to be favoured, ie candidates with some official position.

One constant criticism was that the candidates on the ballot paper did not have their political affiliations indicated, a point which the CLRAE delegation raised with the Electoral Boards. The reply was that such practice was in conformity with the electoral procedure as defined by the Central Electoral Board in Moscow.

Nonetheless, there was a great deal of personal information appearing about each candidate on the ballot paper.

Meetings

The delegation met and had discussions with the Presidents of the Electoral Boards; with the Mayor of Krasnodar, Mr Samoilenko; with the Director of the National Cultures Centre, which grouped together 18 ethnic communities; and with representatives of the Liberal Democrat; Communist; Cossack; and Our town our Home parties.

Because of lack of time, the delegation was unable to meet as many representatives of parties as it would have liked but, on the polling day, the delegation had the chance to speak to representatives directly in the polling stations.

Dismissal of the Mayor, Mr Samoilenko

Two days prior to the election, the Mayor, Mr Samoilenko, was dismissed by decree of President Yeltsin.

The firing of the mayor was unknown to the hosts of the delegation when met them at the airport. It happened on the way to town, through an emissary of the Presidents office handing the dismissal personally to the Mayor, without any additional explanation.

The incident of course coloured the atmosphere immediately prior to the campaign; was widely and immediately publicised on TV and in the press, and highlights the current difference in actual legislative practice in Russia and the spirit of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Naturally, the delegation sought explanations - speaking to the Mayor and other party representatives, both before the polling day and on the polling day. The reaction was mixed; there was clearly sympathy for the mayor, even from his political opponents but there were also those who supported the Presidential decree.

The background is a mixture of related factors - the personality and position of the Mayor himself; a traditional rivalry between Krasnodar and central government and above all, a political battle between the forces in favour of direct elections of the Mayor and President of the Region and the resistance of central Presidential government.

Mr Samoilenko is clearly a controversial but powerful personality in the area. He is also President of the Union of Cities of Southern Russia and as such, also vice President of the Union of Russian Cities. He is leader of the party of "Our Town Our Home" and a known champion of ethnic coexistence to avoid the region of Krasnodar going the same way as the Osseta, the Chechine, Nagorno-Karabkh. He also achieved national publicity in arranging for the personnel in the Russian Black Sea fleet to be fed when, otherwise, their basic needs appeared to be forgotten in the crisis between Russia and Ukraine for the control of the fleet.

More relevant to the concerns of the delegation, Mr Samoilenko had already asked the President of the Region to organise direct elections for the position of Mayor. The President of the Region sidestepped the question, referring it the President Yeltsin, who refused.

In order therefore to defuse the institutional tension which naturally existed between an appointed mayor and an elected council, he had decided to stand himself as a candidate for the Council on the 20 November.

Then came his firing.

The reasons given on the Ukaze are that he acted against some specific regulations, although the delegation was not clear about what these were. Evidently, it was felt in the Mayors circles that the decision and the timing of the dismissal was designed to remove a highly visible mayor troublesome to central government and influence the immediate electoral climate.

The day of polling

The delegation divided into two groups. MM Morgan, Zahn and O'Brien visited southern Krasnodar and the area towards the Black Sea. Mr Mollstedt and Mr Hartley visited the west of Krasnodar and polling stations to the North, off the main highway to Rostov.

Of the 240 polling stations throughout the territory, the delegation managed to visit about 20, covering different situations; industrial areas, Cossack villages, residential urban areas, military establishments, rural communities etc.

The delegation talked to Presidents and members of local election committees in the polling stations; to candidates; to voters; and to observers from parties, some of whom came from the State Douma.

Impressions

The delegation observed no major shortcoming or flaw. Everyone seemed to be fully aware of the electoral procedures, eg what to do in the event of unused or spoiled ballot papers; voters not on the lists; sick or disabled persons who had to be visited; inspection of ballot boxes; counting procedures; posting of information about candidates etc.

The atmosphere in the polling stations was certainly different from that in Western Europe. Often there was music and television sets; generally food and drink could be purchased just outside; there were visits of dance troupes etc and voters milled around or sat at tables happily discussing their voting preferences. The festive mood is a characteristic of elections in Russia and was not felt by the delegation to have any serious consequences.

The delegation felt that its presence was welcome and appreciated and attracted a great deal of interest in the polling stations.

In discussions afterwards in Moscow with Mr Nikulin, Director of the Union of Russian Cities, some dissatisfaction, however was expressed. There had been complaints that electoral material had been posted inside polling booths by the Liberal Democrat party; that electioneering had continued to take place on day etc. However, the delegation did not observe any such irregularities.

Press Conference

The delegation gave a Press Conference on Sunday evening. During the day, Mr Mollstedt and Mr Hartley had spoken on local TV to a news team, coincidentally filming in the same polling station.

The delegation, at the Press Conference, expressed its satisfaction with the technical aspects of the electoral procedures; commented upon some criticisms made by parties, eg absence of party affiliation of candidates on ballot papers; spoke of the position of local government in Council of Europe countries and, above all, referred to the principles of the European Charter of Local Self- Government, with clear reference to the importance of elections for the position of Mayor as a key element in an authentic local democracy. Care was taken to avoid personal references.

The Results

The provisional results are as follows:

In the City of Krasnodar, all the 27 seats have been filled, as follows:

Party	Number of seats
Liberal Democrat Party	10
"Our Town, Our Home"	4
Cossacks	4
Motherland Party	2
Independents	7

The dismissed Mayor, Mr Samoilenko, was not elected to the City Council.

In the Regional Assembly, all 50 seats were filled, as follows:

Party	Number of seats
Motherland Party	16
Liberal Democrat Party	9
Kuban Party	8
Communist Party	2
Veteran Party	1
Slavik Union	1
Kuban Renaissance Union	1
Independent	12

In the City of Krasnodar, seven of the eight seats for the Regional Assembly were won by the Liberal Democrat Party.

The Future

The dismissal of the Mayor is seen by the Union of Russian Cities as a rallying point for the Mayors and Councils of other Russian cities to continue to press for direct elections of Mayor or at least their appointment by the elected municipal council. It is also argued that the hiring and firing of mayors by the President is in breach of the recently adopted Constitution. Krasnodar is not an isolated case. 15 mayors have been removed by Presidential decree in the last two years.

It increases the resolve of national politicians such as Mr Kirpitchenkov, President of the Union of Russian Cities, to push the Douma to adopt the draft legislation on the reform of territorial administration.

Conclusion

As in previous observation missions, the delegation saw no sign of malpractice and felt that the elections, by and large, were well organised. The CLRAE is clearly not, however, in a position to judge local and regional elections as a whole, given that they have taken place throughout 1994 and that some will continue to take place probably even next year. In some places, seats are still vacant, because of a lack of percentage turnout, but these are now beginning to be filled through the abolition of the percentage requirement. For example, St. Petersburg also held elections on the same day of 20 November with the result that finally, there will be a full council.

The key question is the continuing profound direct influence of central government and specifically, the President, on local administration. Current practice makes it all the more important that the question of local democracy and the role of the CLRAE in monitoring it within potential new member countries is accepted by the Committee of Ministers as a criterion of admission. The delegation would thus wish to reinforce the steps already being taken by the Standing Committee to this effect. (eg letter of the President of the Congress to the President of the Committee of Ministers, 9 November).

