

*Appendix IX***Post-Election Statement****INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION TO THE
BULGARIAN ELECTIONS**

Sofia, Bulgaria
October 14, 1991

We are pleased to offer this statement on behalf of the international observer delegation organized jointly by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). This delegation comprises 59 members from 22 countries, including several countries also in the process of transition from one-party, totalitarian government to multiparty democracy.

Many delegation members participated in the observer delegation organized by the two Institutes for the June 1990 Bulgarian elections, and so had a basis for comparing yesterday's elections to the elections that occurred 16 months ago. The delegation also relied on the information gathered by NDI and IRI during the past year, particularly as a result of pre-election missions to Bulgaria in August and September.

To ensure a comprehensive observation of the elections, the delegation divided over the weekend into 13 teams, 11 of which traveled to cities and towns throughout Bulgaria following an intensive day of briefings in Sofia. These teams, generally, concentrated their observations in the smaller towns and villages. Altogether, we visited approximately 400 polling sections. The Bulgarian Association for Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFEER) facilitated many of the delegation's meetings and visits to the polling sites. The delegation also coordinated with other international delegations present in Bulgaria for the elections.

The joint delegation sponsored by the Institutes in June 1990 concluded that Bulgaria's first multiparty elections in more than 45 years represented a significant accomplishment. At the same time, the delegation highlighted the "unfortunate reality that fear is still a factor in the country."

Since the June 1990 elections, Bulgaria has undergone dramatic changes. In August 1990, the Grand National Assembly elected Zhelu Zhelev, leader of the opposition, as president of the country; in December 1990, a multiparty government was formed, which proceeded to implement several key economic reforms; and political parties and the media have continued to flourish and multiply. In July 1991, Bulgaria became the first of the former Warsaw Pact countries to adopt a new constitution. Bulgaria also is the first of the former Warsaw Pact countries to hold a second round of national elections.

During the past 16 months, pre-election missions identified many of the positive changes that occurred. In addition, the missions noted that efforts were being made to ensure that the administrative problems encountered during the June 1990 elections were not repeated. Indeed, the election law incorporated many of the specific recommendations presented by the international delegation in 1990.

Fear also seemed to be less of a concern among the population than was the case in 1990, although examples of intimidation were still reported before and during the elections. While the fear factor has diminished, we note that a lack of trust continues to influence relationships among many Bulgarians.

The media in Bulgaria appears considerably freer today than it did in June 1990. There are hundreds of newspapers and magazines, many of which are affiliated with political parties. Newsprint and the distribution networks for print media are both more widely available.

The law and regulations governing access to the electronic media provided the political parties contesting the elections the opportunity to communicate their messages to the electorate. News coverage also seemed generally fair, and the electronic media made a concerted effort to educate prospective voters regarding the new electoral procedures.

Positive changes were also implemented with respect to the military's role in the elections. Directives from the minister of defense assured that military personnel would be exposed to information regarding the electoral process from all parties contesting the elections, including the publicizing of all party platforms in the official military newspaper. Further, to reduce the possibility of intimidation directed at military conscripts, separate polling sites for military personnel were eliminated from this year's elections.

Instead, military personnel voted at the same polling sites as the general population.

Notwithstanding the reforms included in the election law and the cooperation exhibited among members of the election commissions at all levels, the delegation observed serious administrative problems throughout the country. In part, this resulted from the late adoption of the election law and the consequent delays in appointing a new Central Election Commission. Also, the holding of national and local elections simultaneously contributed to the administrative problems, causing confusion among voters, long queues in some areas and delays in the closing of many polling sites.

The election registries, once again, were riddled with mistakes, necessitating the Central Election Commission to promulgate a decree two days before the elections that permitted voting by Bulgarians whose names were not on the registries. The instructions on this matter were erratically distributed and frequently misunderstood by voters and local election officials alike. Indeed, the majority of complaints received on election day and suspicions of irregularities related to implementation of this decree. The decree had the virtue of enfranchising significant numbers of voters, but also added to the general confusion at the polling sites. With respect to the latter matter, the Central Election Commission has committed to reviewing the voter lists and to prosecuting those who may have engaged in illegal activities.

The delegation also observed other administrative problems. These problems will be described in detail in the delegation's final report.

As was the case in 1990, parallel vote tabulations played a critical role in ensuring that the Bulgarian people had reliable information regarding the election results as soon as practicable. This reduced potential tensions that may have emerged, given the expected delays in announcing the official results. Consultations among groups conducting parallel vote tabulations also assured that the information provided to the public was consistent and mutually reinforcing, despite the relatively close race between the two leading parties and the uncertainty as to which parties would cross the 4 percent threshold.

The delegation's observations with respect to the Turkish, Gypsy and other minorities deserve special attention. At the outset

of the campaign, there were efforts to restrict the ability of the Turkish minority to participate fully in the electoral process. The Party for Rights and Freedom was refused registration as a political party, although a courageous decision by the CEC, which was upheld by the Supreme Court, permitted the Movement for Rights and Freedom, which is not technically a political party, to present party lists in these elections. Nonetheless, confusion and, in some cases, the deliberate efforts of regional election commissions delayed the registration of Movement candidates in some regions. These pre-election problems were exacerbated by developments on election day, where in some areas with large Turkish populations, there were insufficient efforts to ensure that prospective voters of Turkish origin were allowed to vote. It should be pointed out also that the delegation witnessed election officials who attempted to alleviate these problems.

Democracy in Bulgaria has gained strong roots. The Bulgarian people deserve special credit for assuring, notwithstanding the administrative problems, that yesterday's elections were a success. The new national government, which apparently will require a coalition among at least two parties, must continue the political progress made during the past 16 months, while effecting the difficult transition to a market economy. The parties obtaining seats in the National Assembly have a special responsibility to represent all Bulgarian citizens, particularly given the consequences of the 4 percent threshold established by the election law. The newly elected local governments also will face tremendous challenges in establishing their authority and in developing sound practices for managing the myriad of problems facing Bulgarian municipalities.

We believe that linkages with the West and other Eastern European countries will be strengthened by these elections. These linkages were instrumental in the process we have just witnessed. Political parties and nongovernmental groups, which played a critical role in these elections, have been supported by their international counterparts. Bulgaria's progress can best be recognized by the international community through a commitment to continuing this work and doing even more to assist its democracy.

This delegation, while it represented 22 countries, is nongovernmental. We, nonetheless, commit to report to our respective governments, parliaments, political parties and other institutions

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that Bulgaria is a democratic nation worthy of even more support in the economic and political spheres.