

BULGARIA

April 1996

Parliamentary Election Report

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BULGARIA

BACKGROUND

In March 1994, the International Republican Institute (IRI) renewed its program to assist Bulgarian national parties and coalitions with the development and operation of their grassroots structures and to strengthen communications between national and local party organizations. IRI's resident program officer conducted over 80 one-day workshops throughout the country during 1994 and four major conferences on media communications, voter contact programs, message development, research and polling, local party organization and election law. The conferences and workshops were designed to assist the development of parties not represented in parliament and prepare them for the upcoming parliamentary elections as well as continue to help parties represented in the Parliament with the strengthening of their organizations and coalitions. The ultimate goal was to help all parties extend their outreach to voters in Bulgaria, ensure electoral success for a broader representation of democratic parties in the national assembly and hopefully to break the bipolar parliamentary paralysis between the Bulgarian Socialist party and the Union of Democratic Forces of the previous two years.

In organizing these programs, IRI worked closely with several political groups: the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU, that later was part of the People's Union coalition with UDF splinter Democratic Party), the Center New Policy/New Choice and the Democratic Alliance for the Republic (DAR). To a lesser extent, IRI also worked with several other political groups including the Bulgarian Business Block (BBB), Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) and the Liberal Party. Although great disagreements exist between some of these groups, there was a general tolerance of IRI assistance to multiple groups because it was seen as part of the democratic opposition to the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party (the former Bulgarian Communist Party).

Contributing to the success of IRI's 1994 programs was a concentration by the resident program officer (RPO) on pre-election training in anticipation of parliamentary elections (held in December 1994). To increase the contact and democratic education process with local grassroots structures of the national parties and coalitions, IRI focused on local party organization, political communications, message development and many of the same programs the national party leaders received. The impact was greater and more immediate, however, because these local activists would be responsible for the business of the campaign. By the time the December elections were held, over 1,000 local pro-democratic supporters had attended an IRI seminar in their local village, town or city. As a result, of the 115 pro-democratic parliamentary seats that were won, at least 27 of the Members of Parliament (MP's) were trained by IRI in 1994.

In addition to local activists and party members, attendees of local seminars included campaign managers and candidates. Of the 18 Members of Parliament elected from the People's Union, 10 were trained in IRI seminars in 1994; at least 17 of the 69 UDF MPs also were trained by IRI. Although it is difficult to determine whether all the activists who were trained by IRI participated actively in the campaign as staff, one can assume their efforts helped the People's Union campaign succeed. While the UDF failed to achieve the percentages of past elections, without this additional

local training, their percentages in December could have been lower. Also, many of the supporters of the Bulgarian Business Block and the MRF attended IRI conferences in 1994 and brought that training to their local campaigns, helping them win seats in Bulgaria's most diverse post-communist Parliament.

THE 1994 NATIONAL ELECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

In the following summary, parties and coalitions are discussed in two groups: those that elected members to the national assembly in the December 1994 elections and those parties/coalitions not represented in Parliament, but still part of the Bulgarian political landscape. Parties are addressed according to the percentage of the vote they received in the 1994 elections. The electoral threshold for the parliamentary elections was four percent -- a barrier that only five of 49 competing political parties overcame. This is, however, an increase from the three parties represented in the 1991 national elections that were won by the Union of Democratic Forces. That Parliament was riddled with strife, internal disagreements and factions and resulted in the loss of power by the UDF government in December 1992 through a vote of no confidence. Professor Lyuben Berov was nominated to head a government as Prime Minister by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms and supported by the MRF and the BSP and governed until he was forced to resign in September 1994, thereby setting the stage for early elections.

The Bulgarian Political Spectrum

Although Bulgarian politics are unique, there are some basic positions and platforms that easily distinguish one party from another. Bulgarian political parties are not yet molded or recognized by the traditional "left" or "right" political values as understood in the United States. The difference in Bulgaria is a more basic one -- communist or anti-communist, which applied to U.S. standards elicits levels of distinction.

"Communist" is embodied and defined by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) -- the former Communist Party. The BSP also can be referred to as the left end of the political spectrum -- advocating closer ties to Russia, a belief in state-owned companies and a state-run economy. The BSP also believes that western markets and investments are unnecessary to improve the worsening economic situation in Bulgaria and that the answer lies in closer economic and international relations with Bulgaria's immediate border countries and Russia. Membership in the EU and NATO and assistance from the World Bank and IMF are welcome, but not seen as essential to Bulgaria's economic development. This is evidenced by the change of dialogue by Foreign Ministry officials, no longer saying that they seek membership in NATO, but rather that they want to become "associated" or "work closely" with the alliance. In fact, Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Baitchev recently stated, "Although we do not consider Russia's position to be decisive, we do believe that Russia's legitimate rights cannot be ignored."

In addition to the BSP, there are other left groups and parties, but none are of major significance. In recent elections, the Patriotic Union coalition included such extreme groups as the Fatherland Front and the Women's Union, combined with the formerly reform-minded and pro-democratic Party Liberals. They were unsuccessful in gaining any significant percentage of the national vote and therefore, at this time, cannot be considered to be a part of Bulgaria's political future.

"Anti-communist" is the label recognized as the democratic alternative to communism and socialism

in the western sense. Free market reform, western investment, privatization and restitution of land are embodied in the programs of the democratic parties and coalitions on the anti-communist, or right, side of the spectrum. Also included in pro-democratic ideology are greater personal freedoms and opportunities and, to some extent, decentralization of power and enabling local government to control more of its own destiny. The principal power in this political category is the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). Winners of the 1991 parliamentary elections, the UDF addressed few real economic or social issues although, they did embark on a program of privatization and restitution, little progress was made and the UDF soon began to face great internal problems that resulted in a split of the parliamentary group and the coalition.

As a result of these splits, several other groups also have begun to fall under the democratic umbrella. In fact, these groups are not seen as anti-communist as the UDF, therefore placing them arguably in the developing center of Bulgarian politics. The People's Union, a coalition of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) and the Democratic Party (DP), was formed immediately prior to the 1994 national elections. The DP split from the UDF largely because of the feud between UDF leader Philip Dimitrov and Democratic Party/UDF Parliamentary Group chair Stefan Savov over the direction of the coalition. The BANU had left the UDF prior to the 1991 elections (in which they failed to surpass the 4 percent threshold) and needed a coalition partner to ensure electoral success in 1994. The People's Union coalition is committed to democratic reform, restitution, privatization and other democratic principles and is looking ahead positively to the 1995 local elections. The parties that make up the coalition have been able to see that most voters are concerned about issues beyond communism and anti-communism.

The Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF), the Bulgarian ethnic party for the Turkish population, also falls into the rightist spectrum. Despite its convenient coalition with the BSP in the previous Parliament, the MRF is discussing regional cooperation with the People's Union for the upcoming local elections. One priority of the MRF is to ensure that the rights of the Turkish population are considered equally by the Bulgarian government and that Turks are not discriminated against as in the past.

The center of Bulgarian politics remains in a very developmental stage. The Bulgarian Business Block (BBB), led by former actor and fencer George Ganchev, is best classified in this area. Ganchev claims to be committed to building a party, which he has been slow to develop. Most of his appeal is personality based, held over from his presidential campaign of 1992 when he received almost 18 percent of the vote. His platform appeals to a Bulgaria-first mentality, is almost nationalistic at times and comparisons have been made to Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. The BBB, which claimed to be anti-communist, won just over five percent of the vote and holds 13 seats in Parliament. The BBB, has since voted to support the BSP elected government of Jean Videnov and in return was rewarded with two chairmanships in the Parliament.

Other center groups include the Center New Policy/New Choice, a party led by former UDF Defense Minister Dimitar Ludgev. Despite an abundance of money, something rare to Bulgarian politics, New Choice received only 1.3 percent of the vote but optimistically sees this as a "mandate" for the liberal democratic future of Bulgaria. New Choice is developing a local election strategy for 1995 and is discussing a possible coalition with another unsuccessful center group called the Democratic Alliance for the Republic (DAR). Made up of the Green, Bulgarian Social Democratic (BSDP),

Alternative Social Liberal (ASP) and Civic Alliance (GOR) parties, DAR fell just short of the four percent threshold, but continues to plan for its future on the local level. While the People's Union and New Choice grew from the UDF right mold, DAR may be considered a center-left coalition due to the genesis of the Civic Alliance and Alternative Social Liberal parties in the BSP.

It would be difficult to discuss all 49 parties that took part in the recent national elections, but the parties and groups discussed above are the major entities for the future of Bulgarian politics. The almost 25 percent of the vote for UDF indicates that it is still the principal democratic force in the country, though it may soon be challenged by groups such as the People's Union and DAR unless it finds a way to move beyond its anti-communist platform and begins to state clearly what democratic principles it stands for and how to achieve them. Election of the People's Union candidates indicates that Bulgarians are looking for and are open to additional democratic alternatives, that will perhaps actually effect change. Ethnic support for the MRF faded slightly, but it is still representative of the large ethnic population and will continue to play a role in possible future democratic governing coalitions. The return of the BSP to power is a reflection of the Bulgarian people's frustration with little improvement in the economic or social conditions over the past five years. Whether the BSP will be able to implement the reforms to make those desired improvements remains a question.

Bulgarian elections are based on the proportional system with parties receiving regional seats based on the percentage of the vote from that particular region. Candidate lists are largely chosen by the national party apparatus with some input from the local election clubs. Rarely, however, do candidates identify themselves. The preference of the local organization is to have a nationally known figure at the top of the ballot hoping to attract more votes to increase support for the lesser known candidates also on the list. Not all local club leaders were satisfied with the candidate selection of the national councils and in some cases were unwilling to organize local campaigns for unpopular candidates.

Television time was also a factor in the election campaign. The Central Election Commission issued a ruling that gave free television time to the three parliamentary groups elected in 1991. This excluded splinter groups such as New Choice and DAR and non-parliamentary groups such as the People's Union. Some minimal television time was available to these groups later in the campaign, but it was not nearly as beneficial to these groups as it was to the BSP and UDF who were more professional and effective with their allotted time.

PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS

Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)

Chairman: Jean Videnov (Prime Minister)
Other Figures: Krassimer Premianov (Parliamentary Group Chair)
Blago Sendov (Chairman of Parliament)
Svetoslav Shivarov (Deputy Prime Minister)
Georgi Pirinski (Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Actual Election Result: 43.61%, 125 seats in Parliament

Campaign Theme: "Let's Stop the Downfall, Let's Renovate Bulgaria"
"Change, Justice, Security"

The Party:

The Bulgarian Socialist Party is the reformation of the old Bulgarian Communist Party. Led by the 35-year-old, Moscow trained and educated Jean Videnov, the BSP appealed to the people by blaming "democracy," specifically the UDF, for the worsening economic conditions in the country. Having lost the previous two elections (parliamentary in 1991 and presidential in 1992), the BSP successfully delivered the message that it was out of power and therefore not responsible for the current declining state of the country. Despite BSP support of the Berov government in coalition with the MRF, few voters actually made the connection between the BSP and the Berov government and its unsuccessful attempt at governing the country. By replacing the leading faces of the old Bulgarian Communist Party with the newer, younger images of leaders like Videnov, the BSP was able to convince voters that it had indeed changed. The direction it takes in the first several months of governing will indicate what change, if any, has really occurred. The BSP has sought coalition partners within the Parliament in order to spread some of the responsibility -- and potentially the blame -- should things not go well. The only party willing to join at this point is the Bulgarian Business Block.

The 1994 Campaign:

Throughout the 1994 parliamentary election campaign, the BSP held several advantages over the rest of the field. These included financial resources, knowledge and effective use of television time, good message delivery techniques, an existing grassroots network of supporters at the local level developed during the communist period and economic and social conditions and crisis for which many blamed "democracy" and the UDF. The leading figure of the BSP campaign was Videnov. He did an excellent job of bringing back older voters that the BSP previously had lost, while convincing younger, newer voters that the BSP was indeed a progressive, reformed party.

Television time was dominated by the parliamentary groups, and little time was given to the non-parliamentary groups participating in the elections. The BSP took full advantage of this and

produced telegenic experts at every opportunity. The UDF inadvertently helped the BSP cause by being ill-prepared for debates and challenging the BSP on issues and topics where the BSP was superior or at least better prepared. The BSP also focused on the paralysis of the original UDF government in 1991 and the idea that the BSP was the only party experienced at governing effectively and being able to achieve change for the better. Rallies were popular, as were town hall meetings, often drawing thousands of supporters. Campaign songs were readily available on cassette and included new and traditional music for the young and old alike.

The strong showing for the BSP in the election surprised even its own pollsters, though some independent pre-election polls accurately predicted the large BSP win. Its strength was in the villages and small towns where the least amount of change has occurred and where pensions have shrunk because of escalating prices. In addition, BSP had additional support from older urban voters who have been pinched by economic changes and financial instability and have seen their planned retirements disappear with price increases, lost jobs and plant closings. Naturally, those dependent on the state economy, such as plant managers and factory workers, also supported the BSP.

After several years of worsening economic and social conditions, the socialists used their superior organization, financial advantage and professionalism to persuade the voters that democracy was not all it was thought to be and that relief would be found in the stability of the older, more experienced BSP. With a population that is growing increasingly elderly and unemployed, voters longed for a stable government that the BSP promised.

Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)

Chairman: Ivan Kostav (former UDF Finance Minister)
Other Figures: Philip Dimitrov (former Prime Minister & UDF Chair)
Ivan Sokolov (Parliamentary group chair)
Krum Slavov (MP, UDF Vice Chair)
Stefan Sofianski (MP, UDF Finance Chair)
Christo Bisserov (MP, UDF Chief Secretary)

Actual election result: 24%, 69 seats in Parliament

Campaign Theme: "Victory, Bulgaria"
(playing off of Bulgaria's World Cup soccer success)

The Party:

The UDF is actually a coalition of 15 parties with varying levels of structural development and support. Successful in the 1991 elections by portraying a staunchly anti-communist theme, the UDF government had limited success in governing the country, fell in a vote of no confidence in December 1992 and was succeeded by the MRF-supported Berov government. Since that time, former Prime Minister Philip Dimitrov led the UDF down an unsuccessful road to this recent election. Failing to understand the importance of voter communication and issue identification, the UDF remained singularly committed to its anti-communist rhetoric and failed to persuade voters that the UDF's direction for the country would be positive and effective. The UDF has adopted a top-down managerial style with most decisions being made by the National Coordinating Council -- a body consisting of one representative of each of the 15 parties. As a result, the few large parties are frequently unhappy about being governed by decisions dictated by the numerous small party representatives. This issue caused the split by Stefan Savov and the Democratic Party just three months before the December 1994 national elections. The UDF leadership also portray a self-important attitude and sees the group as "the only legitimate democratic alternative in Bulgaria," viewing their former coalition partners BANU and DP with much the same attitude as they view the BSP. Because this is erroneous, it does not endear the UDF to its former partners and makes for difficult working relationships. Recent discussions have focused on the willingness of the coalition to expand and include in its membership unaffiliated voters who are supportive of the UDF democratic concept as a whole. Whether this happens and whether these people will be allowed to play any role in the local or national structures remains to be seen. Recently, the UDF and People's Union announced that they will work together to support some joint candidates at the local level in upcoming 1995 municipal elections.

The 1994 Campaign:

Electoral victory was pursued on two levels: one, superficial rallies and concerts; and two, an appeal to the voters using subliminal pictorial images on anonymous leaflets delivered sporadically around Bulgaria, hoping voters would connect the images to the UDF. The campaign slogan, "Victory, Bulgaria," attempted to draw a link between the success of the Bulgarian World Cup soccer team and

the electoral chances of the UDF. The campaign was largely managed by movie producer/politician Evgani Mihailov who was very effective at organizing rallies, concerts and backdrops but understood little about message development, written campaign materials, or what UDF messages and images should have been delivered or portrayed. The UDF received adequate state television time but managed to challenge the BSP politicians on irrelevant issues and appeared to have no agenda or positions except anti-communism. Two weeks before the election, one UDF leader was unable to state concisely and specifically what the UDF stood for or the campaign themes. Campaign literature attacking the BSP was developed and distributed, yet it failed to mention or identify the UDF as an alternative. Other materials were developed that relied more on subliminal pictorial images than on statements contrasting the BSP way of life with that of the UDF. It was these messages to the subconscious that the UDF believed would win the election.

In addition to the problems of issue identification and message development, the UDF alienated many of its own supporters in the two prior years and during the campaign. The candidate selection process was damaging to the workings of the local UDF structures and disagreements erupted between the local and national bodies over the selection of candidates. In some cases, the local clubs refused to support candidates at the top of the electoral lists. Another obstacle that the UDF faced was that, in general, people still perceived the UDF as being in power despite the change in government in late 1992. The fact that the Berov government was supported primarily by the BSP and MRF never appeared as a UDF campaign issue until the final week of the campaign. As a result, uninformed voters assumed the UDF, as victors of the last election, was to blame for the current crisis. UDF campaign tactics also relied on voters coming to hear what the candidates had to say, instead of taking the campaign to the voters through door-to-door campaigning and block meetings with local candidates. Some good electioneering items were produced such as cassettes with UDF songs and UDF key chains, but few made it into the hands of the general public.

The UDF was unable to expand beyond the anti-communist theme. The Bulgarian people were looking for a positive program to support and the UDF offered only negative and anti-communist rhetoric. To regain any power, the UDF must increase its cooperation with other democratic forces, such as the People's Union, and attempt to win back the hearts and minds of voters who want a break from the socialist past. Recent ideas to decentralize the power structures within the UDF, increase activity on the local level and improve relations internally -- thereby strengthening the coalition for future elections -- have been discussed but not yet acted upon.

The People's Union (PU)

Chairmen: Mrs. Anastasia Moser (BANU)
Stefan Savov, Democratic Party (DP)

Other Figures: Dr. Zdravko Kraev (BANU International Secretary)
Roumen Yontchev (PU Parliamentary Advisor)
Atanas Zelezchev (Parliamentary Group Chairman)

Actual election result: 6.48%, 18 seats in Parliament

Campaign Theme: "A Reasonable Choice"

The Party:

The People's Union was a new coalition formed before the December 1994 elections between two of Bulgaria's oldest traditional parties, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) and the Democratic Party (DP). Although the DP had been part of the UDF until September 1994, the Savov-Dimitrov conflict became too great and resulted in Savov first leaving the UDF Parliamentary group and then the UDF as a whole. Recognizing the need for coalition if he and his party were to survive, Savov recognized the strength of the BANU at the local level and a coalition was born to the benefit of both groups. While the BANU had a sizable but elderly volunteer force and local organizations, they had little direction or ability to campaign and appeal to a wider audience. Mostly agrarian, the BANU needed a younger, industrial, urban appeal that it got through the coalition with the Democratic Party. In turn, the Democratic Party received the benefit of the local agrarian organizations. The Democratic Party activists at the local level also provided valuable experience from the successful 1991 UDF campaign that was helpful to the BANU clubs nationwide. The broader appeal of the two parties resulted in a higher percentage than either would likely have received independently.

Moser is an historical leader of the BANU; her father was the party leader before the communist takeover in 1945 and subsequently was sentenced to death. However, he escaped to America and today the party lives on through his daughter's leadership and political skills that she learned while living in the United States before her return to Bulgaria.

Both parties have committed publicly to each other for the political future and are working together to create local campaign organizations stronger than those that existed for the December elections. In addition, they have formed a closer relationship with the Movement for Rights and Freedom than in the past and may consider some joint candidacies in certain local areas. Joint candidacies with the UDF also are likely in some regions in the 1995 municipal elections.

The 1994 Campaign:

Although the coalition had local organizations throughout the country (mostly BANU), many failed to understand what they needed to do to organize an effective and successful campaign. With little

or no money for literature development and only limited television time -- a fraction of what the parliamentary groups received -- their campaign relied heavily on door-to-door campaigning, town meetings and rallies that often featured Moser or Savov or sometimes both. These forums also included all the candidates on the list from that particular region, increasing the familiarity of the voter with the candidates. Realizing that the UDF's single-minded anti-communist rhetoric was not appealing to the voters, the People's Union made itself available as a "reasonable choice" for the voter. The coalition also was helped by receiving a favorable ballot color, the traditional agrarian orange, which it did not receive in the unsuccessful campaign of 1991.

Eventually, literature was developed that included several compare/contrast pieces with the BSP/Berov government and several pieces that were positive promotional pieces for the People's Union. Materials highlighted the coalition's positions on privatization and land restitution and were used by the coalition's candidates as they walked their towns and villages.

As part of the developing political center, the People's Union has an opportunity to expand its role in the democratic and political development of Bulgaria and has already tried to reach out to the UDF in hope of establishing a peaceful coexistence. In late March 1995, UDF and People's Union leaders finally announced that they would indeed work to support joint mayoral and council candidates in upcoming local elections. Although the UDF views the People's Union as a temporary coalition and one that will eventually cede into the UDF, supporting joint candidate lists is a step in the right direction for the UDF because it recognizes potential democratic allies. Without pro-democratic groups working together, the BSP will maintain a greater superiority over the direction of Bulgaria and the democratic forces will continue to struggle.

Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF)

Chairman: Ahmed Dogan

Other figures: Mhmed Octay

Actual election result: 5.39%, 15 seats in Parliament

Campaign theme: none

The Party:

The Movement for Rights and Freedom is the party that appeals almost exclusively to the ethnic Turk population in Bulgaria. A party with very limited national appeal, it centers its efforts in those areas populated predominantly by Turks -- the north-central and south-central/southeastern parts of the country. Party structures are generally weak and organization is conducted on a neighborhood or village basis instead of through clubs or formal organizations. Ahmed Dogan, the leader of the party, is said to have a very short political speech for campaign purposes, one that in effect says, "The MRF is the only group that represents the minority Turkish population. You are Turkish. Any questions?" After the fall of the UDF government in 1992, the mandate to form a new government was given by

the President to the MRF which, with BSP support, formed the Berov government. Shortly after forming the coalition however, the MRF had serious regrets about its coalition with the BSP and eventually withdrew all support for its own coalition government. This pressure on the MRF almost led to a split within the party, but the need for Turkish representation overruled the divisions and the MRF remained united, although losing some of the support it enjoyed in 1991. The MRF will remain an exclusively minority party because it sees little need or has little desire to try to expand beyond its present boundaries. Hopefully, by developing working relationships with other democratic parties and joint candidate lists, the MRF may begin to increase its political role.

The 1994 Campaign:

Having some television time as a result of being a parliamentary party was helpful to MRF candidates, but success in appealing to an audience wider than their ethnic base was limited. All of their campaign materials were centered and distributed around their ethnic population bases. While they addressed the issues of concern to minority voters such as language of choice in schools and armed services, and economic and land issues, what seemed to matter most was their simple ethnic make-up. As long as the MRF continues to focus solely on the Turkish vote and not expand to a greater audience -- difficult as that may be -- their electoral percentages, and therefore their political influence, will remain limited.

Bulgarian Business Block (BBB)

Chairman: George Ganchev
Other Figures: Kristen Kristev (Parliamentary Deputy Chairman)
Christo Ivanov (Foreign affairs advisor)

Actual election result: 5.4%, 13 seats in Parliament

Campaign theme: better opportunity for businessmen, wipe out mafia,
assorted/inconsistent themes

The Party:

One of the wild cards in Bulgarian political history, George Ganchev is more widely known than any single facet of his party. The former fencer and actor burst onto the Bulgarian political stage in 1992 as a presidential candidate. With a style new to Bulgarians, one full of energy, activity, and confidence, combined with attitudes and actions that many considered comical, Ganchev brought his near nationalistic ideas back to Bulgaria from the U.S. and garnered almost 18 percent of the presidential vote. Encouraged by this result, Ganchev set about organizing a political party of businessmen in the hope of creating a type of middle class in Bulgaria that would support him. Finding the business side of this endeavor difficult, he focused on the political side. Though difficult to identify or locate, Ganchev was successful at setting up and organizing some local BBB clubs. His energy is boundless, and his commitment to creating the party cannot be questioned. With

continued attention for his party as a Parliamentary group, Ganchev hopes his second presidential run in 1996 will be more successful.

Surrounded by attention and becoming more famous -- or infamous -- for his antics in the spotlight, Ganchev has been called everything from a joke, to an ultra-nationalist, to crazy. Regardless, those who thought he would disappear were wrong, and he is now a more serious political player than ever.

Upon election to Parliament, each party was able to nominate a deputy chairman to the assembly to be voted on by the entire Parliament. Ganchev nominated one of his MP's, Kristen Kristev, a former national basketball player. Once Kristev was confirmed by the Parliament and Ganchev became aware of the benefits of the job, he immediately called for Kristev's resignation so that he himself could take the deputy chair position. Kristev refused to vacate his position and Ganchev expelled Kristev from the Business Block. Ganchev then called for a parliamentary debate and a vote on the validity of Kristev as a deputy chair since he was no longer part of the BBB. Ganchev lost the vote and Kristev remains a deputy chair. This is an example of Ganchev's erratic and illogical behavior. Furthermore, despite his negative comments during the campaign about the BSP, the Business Block voted to support the government nominated by the BSP; Ganchev recently received chairmanship of the Committee on Media as a reward for his support.

The 1994 Campaign:

To no one's surprise, Ganchev himself was the center of the BBB campaign. With little television time, he made the most of each appearance, often appearing with a guitar singing about himself, the Business Block, or about other Bulgarian topics or parties. When he was without guitar, he was professional, loud, direct, and well versed in the topic of the day. Compared to other candidates who were often lifeless, poorly dressed and ineffective speakers, Ganchev struck a dramatically different image.

Candidates on the Business Block lists were sometimes nationally known athletes, musicians, actors, or professors but were not as famous as Ganchev believed them to be. The Business Block's message was very simple, straightforward and spoken just as the people themselves were saying it. Ganchev portrayed himself and the Business Block to be one of them, very populist in nature, and very successful. Ganchev hopes to use this parliamentary success as a stepping stone for the creation of additional party organizations to support his presidential candidacy. His campaign style is obviously appealing to some and with additional party structures he may find even more success. This campaign also included music cassettes with Ganchev singing a variety of traditional Bulgarian songs along with his own original works.

Non-Parliamentary Groups

Democratic Alliance for the Republic (DAR)

Chairmen: Alexander Tomov (Civic Alliance Party - GOR)
Peter Dertliev (Bulgarian Social Democratic Party - BSDP)
Alexander Karakachanov (Green)
Alternative Social Liberal Party

Actual election result: 3.98%

Campaign theme: varied

The Party:

Actually a coalition of four parties, DAR was thought to have a good chance of surpassing the four percent threshold. Former BSP splinter groups Alternative Social Liberal and Civic Alliance parties combined with UDF splinter groups Green and Social Democratic parties to make up this coalition. Alexander Tomov of the Civic Alliance party was the driving force behind the coalition and the campaign and was also the primary source of funding for the campaign. The coalition produced effective television spots for the limited time made available to them and distributed numerous posters with the DAR logo and young and old faces that appealed to a broad constituency. One of the principle problems of the coalition, however, was one of control. Among the four major leaders, there was an unhappiness that spilled into the campaign. Additionally, candidate selection was made nationally and, like the UDF, this resulted in some local clubs refusing to work for list leaders they did not support.

Although the DAR coalition did not come into being until late in the summer, it should have been able to organize more effectively. Mistrust between some national leaders and local clubs forced by the coalition to work together made for expected difficulties in Bulgarian politics. The coalition is committed to remaining intact despite its electoral failure, and the members hope to be able to rebound in the upcoming local elections.

The 1994 Campaign:

DAR worked very hard to deliver a center-left message during the campaign, but could not overcome a public mistrust of some of the leaders who came from the former communist/socialist party (Tomov) and the difficulties some of the coalition parties had working together at the local level. The Bulgarian political spectrum is not so well developed that there is room for a center-left party and DAR tried vainly to create the perception that it could work between the so-called right and left. Limited television time worked against the coalition that would have benefitted from increased name identification since it was a new contestant in national elections. Few candidates actually participated in voter contact programs such as door- to-door activities or apartment block meetings, relying instead on what has become an accepted part of Bulgarian politics -- the rally.

Center New Policy/New Choice (CNP)

Chairman: Dimitar Ludgev (former UDF Defense Minister)
 Alexander Pushkarov

Actual election result: 1.5%

Campaign theme: "New Choice"

The Party:

This party was originally created when Dimitar Ludgev left the UDF parliamentary group in 1992 and formed a new parliamentary group that he hoped would become a center group for Bulgarian politics. To assist the new parliamentary group, he created a think tank called Center New Policy. Unwilling and unable to form a coalition with any other splinter group, the Center New Policy became the political organization New Choice midway through the year. Determined to create a democratic alternative to the UDF, New Choice hoped to fill the void of a liberal democratic organization for the Bulgarian voter. Ludgev set out to create CNP business clubs around the country, trying to identify and attract the professional businessman and entrepreneur who was smart, educated, professional and respected in his or her community. While moderately successful in creating clubs on the local level, CNP failed to provide these clubs any national direction or leadership in areas such as policy positions, organization, etc. In addition, despite the high profile of Ludgev himself, he failed to recognize that in addition to those among whom he was a popular leader, there was perhaps an even larger group among whom he was unpopular.

Local club leaders often adopted an attitude of superiority towards local citizens and voters and instead of aggressively marketing CNP/New Choice to the public based on issues or beliefs, they expected the public to follow CNP because of who the leaders were. This was evident throughout the campaign.

Despite failure in the December elections, Ludgev is convinced that New Choice carries the banner for the future of liberal democracy in Bulgaria. His list of political enemies is long and distinguished, and he is likely to find little support among any other current leaders in his effort to regain political power. Regardless, Ludgev believes New Choice will continue, perhaps under yet another name, and CNP is preparing for local elections later in 1995.

The 1994 Campaign:

One thing that set New Choice apart from many of its competitors was money. Where other campaigns and parties struggled to raise money, this was not a problem for New Choice. As a non-parliamentary group it received very limited television time; for a campaign that was designed to rely heavily on television to increase name identification, this was bad news. Instead, the leadership decided the best way to increase name identification was through controversy. While perhaps a reasonable idea, the practice was not particularly well received in Bulgaria. The initial New Choice poster displayed the image of many human buttocks and the words "old choice" over the top, and "or

New Choice" below. Had Ludgev been a newcomer to politics, perhaps the outcome would have been different.

The second attempt by New Choice to gain public recognition and support was with a campaign poster featuring Bulgarian soccer star Christo Stoichkov with the words "New Choice" at the bottom of the poster. Even younger voters were insulted at the idea that they could be persuaded to vote for a particular party simply because of an endorsement by Stoichkov; New Choice leaders failed to understand that popularity in sports does not translate to politics.

Overconfidence on the part of the party was also evident in its local leaders. Many believed that people would vote for New Choice because they were "professional, good looking, and smarter than them" in the words of a party leader. What these local leaders failed to do was to go out and seek votes and really understand what the voters were looking for in a candidate. Despite an endorsement of actors in a popular television series (which was pulled from television months before the election), New Choice failed to convince voters it was a realistic political alternative and not a source of wasted votes. Despite the impressive lineup of scholars, athletes, actors and experts who supported the coalition, New Choice could not communicate why it was different from any other group fighting for the political middle and suffered from an overly optimistic attitude that they were actually reaching voters through a simple poster and radio campaign.

Monarchists

Chairman: unknown

Actual election result: .61%, .78%

Campaign theme: unknown

The Party:

There are two groups known as royalists that would like to see the return of the King to Bulgaria. Both these groups endorsed the UDF, but brought nothing to the table as far as local organizations or support networks. Even though both monarchist groups endorsed the UDF, they officially were registered as parties on the election lists and gained some independent support.

Bulgarian Communist Party

Chairman: unknown

Actual election result: 1.51%

The Party:

Still technically in existence, the BCP maintains the hard line of the former communist party, but has relatively few structures and minimal support nationwide. Most real support has moved on with the BSP.

Patriotic Union

Chairman: Petko Simionov (Liberal Party)
others unknown

Actual election result: 1.43%

The Party:

This was an interesting coalition between former democratic reformer and 1990 UDF campaign chairman Petko Simionov of the Liberal Party and ultra-hardline nationalist parties such as the Fatherland Front and the Democratic Women's Union. The coalition was accepted by the Liberal Party because of the appeal of good financial resources and in political desperation. The Liberal Party leaders decided that if they were unsuccessful in this election, the party would fade from existence so they made a deal with the devil and still found no success. Once one of the democratic leaders in Bulgaria, Petko Simionov now finds himself viewed by many as a traitor and a communist supporter by many of his former allies. The future of the coalition, and even the Liberal Party, is in doubt and is unlikely to organize any legitimate campaign in upcoming local elections.

TOTAL VOTES and PERCENTAGES
December 1994 Elections

PARTY	TOTAL VOTES	%
Bulgarian Socialist Party	2,223,128	43.58%
Union of Democratic Forces	1,233,248	24.18%
People's Union	332,737	6.52%
Mvmnt for Rights & Freedom	274,385	5.38%
Bulgarian Business Block	241,474	4.73%

After adjustments made for votes given to parties not meeting the 4% threshold, final percentages for the five successful parties are as follows:

PARTY	%	SEATS
Bulgarian Socialist Party	52.1%	125
Union of Democratic Forces	28.8%	69
People's Union	7.5%	18
Mvmnt for Rights & Freedom	6.3%	15
Bulgarian Business Block	5.4%	13

REGIONAL SEAT DISTRIBUTION OF BULGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
(240 seats available)

No.	REGION	UDF	BSP	PU	BBB	MRF
1.	Blagoevgrad	3	6	-	-	1
2.	Burgas	3	5	1	1	2
3.	Varna	4	6	1	2	-
4.	Veliko Tarnovo	2	5	1	1	-
5.	Vidin	1	3	-	-	-
6.	Vratza	2	5	1	-	-
7.	Gabrovo	2	2	-	1	-
8.	Dobrich	1	4	1	1	-
9.	Kardjali	-	2	-	-	4
10.	Kyustendil	2	3	-	-	-
11.	Lovech	2	3	-	-	-
12.	Montana	1	5	-	-	-
13.	Pazardjik	3	6	-	-	-
14.	Pernik	2	3	-	-	-
15.	Pleven	2	5	2	1	-
16.	Plovdiv city	6	4	-	-	-
17.	Plovdiv region	4	6	1	-	-
18.	Razgrad	-	2	-	-	3
19.	Russe	2	4	1	1	-
20.	Silistra	-	3	-	-	1
21.	Sliven	1	5	1	-	-
22.	Smolyan	1	3	-	-	-
23.	Sofia 1	6	4	1	1	-
24.	Sofia 2	6	3	1	1	-
25.	Sofia 3	5	4	1	1	-
26.	Sofia region	2	6	-	-	-
27.	Stara Zagora	3	5	2	1	-
28.	Targoviste	-	4	-	-	1
29.	Haskovo	1	4	2	1	1
30.	Shumen	1	3	-	-	2
31.	Jambol	1	3	1	-	-
	240 total seats	69	125	18	13	15

APPENDIX 1

CHRONOLOGY OF 1994 IRI ACTIVITIES IN BULGARIA

Purpose: IRI Sofia Office Re-opens
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria
Dates: March 5, 1994

Following the re-opening of its Sofia office staffed by a new resident program officer (RPO), IRI held four national conferences with major democratic parties on topics such as media communications, grassroots organization, campaign planning, voter contact programs and research. Additional programs were developed to assist in building grassroots local party structures. Over 80 political party training seminars were held throughout Bulgaria to assist local activists in campaign organization, message development, research and voter contact programs. Those who attended included national and local political leaders, Members of Parliament, activists, club chairmen, volunteers and candidates. RPO also developed and assisted parties with an independent get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaign aimed at increasing voter turnout in December parliamentary elections.

Purpose: IRI Communications/Election Law Conference
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria
Dates: March 12-13, 1994

IRI sponsored a conference led by two U.S. trainers with national democratic party and coalition leaders including the UDF, BANU, BSDP, Green and Liberal parties on voter and party communication programs and election law. Participants included national party chairmen, Members of Parliament, regional coordinators, regional directors, media department personnel, election law advisors, and Sofia region party activists and club chairmen. IRI trainers also held private meetings with major party leaders to discuss growth potential, communications programs, message development and potential election law changes.

Purpose: Political Communications and Grassroots Development Conference
Location: Shumen and Varna, Bulgaria
Dates: June 25-26, 1994

IRI conducted a conference with two U.S. trainers to address political communications possibilities and grassroots organization in eastern Bulgaria. The first two major conferences IRI held outside Sofia, these meetings proved extremely valuable to participants who otherwise may not have received political or campaign training. Participants included Members of Parliament, regional and local political leaders, election club chairmen, regional directors and other representatives from all major democratic parties and coalitions in the country.

Purpose: Campaign Communications and Grassroots Campaigning
Location: Sofia, Bulgaria
Dates: October 15-16, 1994

Two U.S. experts in campaign communications and grassroots campaign organization and activities conducted a Sofia conference with national and regional campaign leaders. Focus of the conference was on specific programs and activities campaign leaders could use in the upcoming national elections. Emphasis was placed on message development, local campaign techniques, candidate activities and election club organization and strategy. Participants included national and local campaign managers, volunteers, candidates and club chairmen.

Purpose: Get Out The Vote Training Mission (GOTV)
Location: Pleven, Pazardjik, Veliko Tarnovo, Stara Zagora, Russe, Burgas, Lovech, Sliven, Haskovo, Vratza, Plovdiv and Montana, Bulgaria
Dates: December 4-11, 1994

To counter declining voter interest and low turnout that has been seen in other Eastern European elections, two U.S. experts in get-out-the-vote strategy and programs traveled throughout Bulgaria to train parties in GOTV strategy immediately prior to the December elections. They met as many as four election clubs each day in each city to assist in the developing local GOTV programs. Aimed at increasing voter turnout on election day, GOTV trainers delivered IRI-developed GOTV materials including posters, stickers and buttons to major pro-democratic party activists for distribution. In addition, small seminars were held with each local group to discuss other specific programs that they could initiate to increase voter turnout on election day. Meetings were held with all major pro-democratic parties or coalitions. IRI's trainers visited twelve cities in five days.

Purpose: Local Grassroots Political Party Development
Location: Sofia (7), Russe (7), Lovech (2), Haskovo, Kardjali (3), Pazardjik (3), Blagoevgrad (2), Vidin (4), Montana (4), Veliko Tarnovo (4), Varna (3), Shumen (2), Burgas (4), Stara Zagora (2), Plevan (4), Dobrech (3), Sliven (3), Plovdiv (4), Jambol (3), Smolyan, Dimitrovgrad, Pernik (4), Dupnica (2), Silistra (3), Dulovo, Sandanski, Razgrad, Targoviste
Dates: April - November 1994

To assist the local organizations and leadership, IRI's resident program officer spent a considerable amount of time travelling throughout Bulgaria in 1994. This was a hands-on effort to increase the activity and organizational skills of local election clubs and to assist in the development of communications with the national party, candidate selection, grassroots organization, issue research and message development and other topics of local interest and necessity. Through these meetings, the RPO communicated directly with more than 1,000 local political activists and leaders and assist in the continued development of their democratic organizations. Participants often included future candidates and Members of Parliament, local candidates and election club leaders

and volunteers.

APPENDIX 2

CHRONOLOGY: IRI's EARLY EFFORTS

IRI's Bulgaria programming began in the winter of 1990 with consultations between election law experts from the United States and members of Bulgaria's primary democratic coalition, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), that was negotiating for a new election law -- a law that would ensure Bulgaria's first multi-party elections in 45 years. Before the June 1990 elections, IRI conducted numerous training seminars for the UDF that focused on organization building and campaign preparation. Although the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the former communist party, won the elections, the UDF gained enough electoral support to establish its future viability in Bulgaria's political system.

Along with other international organizations, IRI monitored the June 1990 elections (as well as the elections in October 1991) and produced a comprehensive report that offered observations and recommendations to Bulgaria's national election committee.

Between October 1990 and July 1991, IRI assisted newly-elected Members of Parliament representing the democratic opposition. The Institute hosted small workshops and discussion groups that explored issues such as rules of procedure, drafting legislation, committee organization, and constituency services. This training was invaluable for those MPs who had never held any form of public office.

Because of the widely held view that the newly elected government would last only for a short time, IRI continued its organization-building and campaign-preparation training for the UDF (and later for the Movement for Rights and Freedom [MRF]) in anticipation of early elections. IRI especially concentrated on demonstrating how the UDF and the MRF could intensify their grassroots outreach methods, select appropriate candidates, and improve their overall communication techniques -- all problematic areas for the organizations in the previous election. To further alleviate some of the disadvantages of the democratic opposition, IRI provided computers, office supplies, transportation equipment and communications apparatus. Finally, IRI produced a videotaped get-out-the-vote message by President Ronald Reagan that was televised nationally in Bulgaria prior to the October 1991 elections.

One month before the elections, IRI opened an in-country office in Sofia to implement program activities on an ongoing basis and better monitor the constantly changing Bulgarian political environment.

In the historic October 1991 elections, the UDF narrowly defeated the BSP and formed a coalition government with the MRF; the new government was led by IRI-trained UDF leader Philip Dimitrov as Prime Minister. Another recipient of IRI training, Zhelyu Zhelev, was later elected as Bulgaria's first President in the 1992 presidential elections. Similar to the assistance it provided one year earlier, IRI once again furnished the newly elected MPs of the UDF and MRF with advice and instruction on legislative techniques.

Difficulties within the governing coalition, however, resulted in a 1992 vote of no-confidence against the Dimitrov government. When the UDF once again found itself in the opposition, IRI worked with its leaders nationally, and locally in coalition workshops that were aimed at keeping the organization unified and focused as a strong parliamentary minority.

In 1993 and 1994, IRI devoted a large amount of time and resources strengthening Bulgaria's democratic opposition, especially the grassroots level. This not only meant assisting the UDF, but enhancing other developing democratic alternatives as well. As early parliamentary elections became imminent later in 1994, IRI intensified its campaign training activities and introduced civic education programs encouraging Bulgarians to vote.