



## **VOICE Association for Protection of Voters' Rights**

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### **Fourth statement on the results of long term observation of State Duma elections, 2003**

For the period November 7 – December 1, 2003

VOICE Association continues the observation of the electoral process in 30 regions of Russia: Samara, Yaroslavl, Vladimir, Vladivostok, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Barnaul, Omsk, Tomsk, Saratov, Ekaterinburg, Cheliabinsk, Astrahan, Volgograd, Voronezh, Kaliningrad, Krasnodar, Lipetsk, Karelya, Penza, Rostov, Riazan, St. Petersburg, Stavropol, Tatarstan, Tambov, Nizhny Novgorod, Kostroma, Kemerovo, Krasnoyarsk.

The organization is observing electoral process in the 30 regions, with a focus on:

- the work of the electoral commissions
- the use of administrative resources in electoral campaign and
- observation of election day.

This is the fourth statement on the status of elections in Russia in a series to be continued through elections day. The present statement covers the period between November 7 – December 1, 2003.

November 7 marked the beginning of the official campaign, leading parties and candidates to seriously increase their efforts to reach to the voters through the use of the media, campaign literature, meetings with voters, debates, etc. Both legal and illegal, ethical and unethical means are used in a highly polarized electoral fight: federal and regional administrations, on one side, their opponents, on the other. Most regional administrations have been co-opted in the United Russia's campaign, which led to administrative resources being used extensively to both promote the respective candidates and to fight their main opponents. Various tactics and means have been ingeniously used against the main opponents, starting with the process of registration and throughout the campaign. The intense polarized fight has led to a campaign characterized by (a) intensive use of administrative resources in support of certain candidates and (c) tricking, rather than convincing, the voters.

#### *Use of administrative resources*

Federal, regional and local administrations in all regions and at all levels are using various means to show their support of specific candidates – media, public appearances, billboards, posters, flyers and letters. Officials who are forbidden to campaign by law are either simply breaking this provision or have found ways to go around it. All levels of administration, from mayor of a village to the President, are actively involved in campaigning, either for United Russia or for specific single mandate candidates.

- Virtually every city of the country is filled with billboards of a design very similar to the one of Unity Party, carrying the words “I believe in one strong, united Russia” and signed V.V. Putin;
- The TV (which channel) are broadcasting the ad of United Russia “Together with the President – vote for United Russia”;
- Moscow is stuffed with posters showing various candidates to the State Duma together with the Mayor of Moscow, I. M. Lushkov, and with the text “Together with the Mayor”;
- 2,000,000 households in Moscow have received a letter signed by B.V. Gryzlov (Minister of Interior), S.K. Shoygu (Minister of Emergency Situations) and Y. M. Luzhkov (Mayor of Moscow) encouraging voters to vote for candidates supported by United Russia “who work in the same team with the Mayor and the President”;
- In Kostroma, District 95, the candidate supported by United Russia, Sergey Kommissarov, also General Director of the “Kostroma Gas Distribution Company” benefits of extensive coverage in the local newspaper “Severnaya Pravda”. Recently, Mr. Kommissarov registered the vice-governor of Kostroma, Sergey Galytskovo, as his surrogate. While Mr. Galytskovo (partially) obeyed the law by going on vacation prior to being appointed candidate’s surrogate, another vice-governor, Borys Korobov, is openly campaigning for Kommissarov, while fully in office;
- In Tambov, where elections to the City Duma are to be held also on December 7, the favorite candidate is N. A. Koval. The Mayor of the city has opened a hot line, operated by himself, one of his aids, L. N. Andreeva and Mr. Koval. The opening of the hot line has been widely publicized in the local media, with photographs of the candidate together with the mayor. The governor, Oleg Betyan, is also actively supporting the candidate, appearing together on various occasions;
- In Pskov, the regional administration is supporting A. Sygutkin, the United Russia candidate for the respective district, whose main opponent is M. Kuznetsov, incumbent State Duma deputy. Consequently, the regional administration is carrying out an intense campaign against Mr. Kuznetsov. Initially, the Regional Electoral Commission denied his registration as a candidate on the ground of campaigning (in a regional newspaper) not paid for out of the candidate’s electoral fund, despite the bill showing that the article has been paid for legally. The Court ruled against the REC’s decision, who had to register Mr. Kuznetsov. Vice governor of Pskov, Anatolyi Tulkin, has repeatedly campaigned against him on the regional TV. Moreover, the regional administration suggested the regional TV stop broadcasting Mr. Kuznetsov’s ads, as they allegedly contain inaccurate information and, through them, Mr. Kuznetsov takes credit for the achievements of others;
- Krasnoyarsk presents a very interesting case: the current governor, A. Khloponin, is running for a seat in the State Duma, heading the party list of United Russia for the region. Mr. Khloponin will, likely, not leave his gubernatorial position for that of a State Duma deputy, and his only role is to promote the party and its candidates. The Krasnoyarsk governor is currently on vacation (as required by the law) yet the regional media amply reports about his activity and achievements as a governor, and his extra-office activities (i.e., lectures to students).

### *Tricking voters*

As in past elections, campaign is aimed at the use of various tricks to confuse, buy and/or mesmerize the voters to vote for a certain party or candidate, rather than convincing them that this is their best choice. A lot of resources and effort are put into downsizing the opponent, rather than positively promoting oneself. At the regional level, comparison between and weigh of candidates and their stand on issues is almost impossible to be made, as the practice of regional

TV debates or candidate forums is missing. Candidates avoid to openly confront each other, they prefer to go one after another throughout their campaign. Generally, the campaign lacks focus on issues, and it is rather a generation of ample, general promises on behalf of all parties and candidates.

At the federal level, the open confrontation is intermediated by the federal TV, through debates broadcasted by TVC, ORT and RTR. Given the high number of parties and their participation in the debates of three at a time decided by lottery, these tend to lack relevance.

- The Regional Electoral Commission of Kostroma has reported that 7 out of their 10 candidates have misreported their assets and income, the difference between those stated and reality ranging from RR 2,000 to shares in 12 different companies (the last, as in the case of Evgenyi Trepov);
- At the federal level, the Central Electoral Commission has released a list of 700 candidates, from all political parties, who misreported their assets and income;
- In Kostroma, Aleksandr Chuev, incumbent for a seat in the State Duma, has used the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, the Day of Militia, to give five computers as a present to the regional Militia – not directly, as this would be illegal, but through a local charity organization;
- The party list of United Russia includes 30 governors, together with ministers, members in the Federation Council and other high level officials. Many of them have openly stated they have no intention of leaving their current positions, their only reason for being on the list is to fool voters and, consequently, attract votes;
- The President has recently announced an increase in the pensions of the inhabitants of the Far North and hardly accessible regions, valid from January 1;
- In Moscow, the final section of the 3-rd ring (one of the Moscow circular high-ways) will be inaugurated on December 4, three days before the State Duma and (for Moscow) mayoral elections.