

# The Ukrainian Repeat Elections of 1995

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In December 1995, Ukraine staged the fourth in a series of electoral exercises designed to fill its 450-seat parliament. A total of 338 mandates were allocated when the country held its first post-Communist elections in March and April of 1994 (see Birch, 1995). Repeat elections in July and August produced a further 59 deputies, and another 12 were chosen in November and December. This left 45 seats up for grabs when the fourth round of elections was held in December 1995; of these, 14 were filled.

The main reason for the unusual length of Ukraine's electoral cycle is the double-ballot electoral law, which stipulates that turnout in a constituency must be over 50 per cent for an election to be valid, and that the winning candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes cast. When elections were first held in the spring of 1994, they were invalidated in 90 constituencies because neither of the candidates in the runoff received a majority; two dozen more contests were invalidated by low turnout (Arel and Wilson, 1994). Subsequent efforts to fill the vacant seats have been dogged by sagging levels of electoral participation. A moratorium on elections passed in March 1995 postponed further attempts for another nine months, but the delay did little to revive voter enthusiasm. In the most recent elections, held between 10 and 24 December, turnout failed to reach the 50 per cent mark in 31 constituencies.

Of the 14 deputies who were elected, four are members of the Communist Party, one is a member of Rukh (Ukraine's largest reformist party) and the other nine have no party affiliation. Seven of the successful candidates are enterprise directors, five are professional politicians, one is a Communist Party worker, and one is head of a youth organization. It is significant that all 14 seats have been filled by people in posts that in Soviet times would have made their holders part of the *apparat*. Though the numbers are small, the complete absence of members of the liberal professions and the working class points to the rise of electoral clientelism.

The most notable feature of the legislature that has resulted from this protracted process is that nearly half its members are independents (see Table 1).<sup>1</sup> The left-wing parties, that inherited both the ideological mantle and organizational infrastructure of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, comprise approximately a third of the parliament, while members of the new centrist and right-wing parties together make up a sixth.<sup>2</sup>

Repeated elections are costly, they lend a sense of inefficacy to the political process, and they leave in their wake an unrepresentative parliament. The seemingly endless nature of Ukraine's electoral cycle has led to proposals for a new semi-proportional system, which would alleviate these problems and at the same time promote the much-needed consolidation of new political parties. Meanwhile a fifth round of elections has been set for 7 April 1996 to fill the remaining 32 seats.

## Notes

1. Moreover, only 28 per cent of the deputies currently in the parliament were actually nominated by the parties they represent, and though nine in ten have joined one of the parliament's ten factions, the ideological coherence of many of these factions is low.

TABLE 1. Composition of the Ukrainian Parliament

Party	Elected December 1995	Total as of 12/95
<i>Left</i>		
Communist	4	100 (65)
Agrarian		34 (28)
Socialist		15 (5)
Total		149 (98)
<i>Centre</i>		
Liberal		8
Party of Democratic Rebirth		6
Labour		6 (1)
Civic Congress		1
Social Democratic		1
Party of Economic Rebirth		1
of Crimea		1
Total		23 (1)
<i>Right</i>		
Rukh	1	24 (12)
Republican		9 (8)
Democratic		2
Christian Democratic		1
Total		36 (20)
<i>Far right</i>		
Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists		3
Conservative Republican		1
Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists		1
Ukrainian Nationalist Assembly		2
Total		7
<i>Independents</i>	9	203
<i>Unfilled</i>	31	32*

\*One of the deputies elected in December 1995 died shortly thereafter.

Note: Figures in parentheses are numbers of deputies nominated by the parties of which they are members.

Sources: Vyborg-1994 database constructed by the Petro Mohyla Scientific Society; *Khto Ye Khto* (1995); *Holos Ukrains'kyi* (1995) 12 December, p. 1; 26 December, p. 1; *Ukrainian Weekly* (1995) 24 December, pp. 1, 18; 31 December, p. 2.

2. The parliament is more balanced in terms of its internal structure: a third of the deputies are members of left wing factions, right-wing factions make up a fifth, and centrist factions a quarter (*Khto Ye Khto*, 1995; Holovatiy *et al.*, 1995).

## References

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