

## VII. POTENTIAL GOVERNING COALITIONS

The 1994 elections resulted in the complete domination of one party, SDSM, in government. The outcome of the elections will be different this year with no single party likely to win an overall majority. Either SDSM or VMRO-DPMNE will probably form the next government with the co-operation of at least two other parties. Alternatively, it may even be possible for VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM to form a coalition between themselves.

For SDSM to form the government, two things need to happen. Firstly, the VMRO-DPMNE-DA coalition must receive fewer than 50 seats, otherwise it would be in a position to form a government with either the support of SPM or LDP and a few ethnic Albanian independents. Secondly, SDSM needs to gain at least 35 seats, including those of SPM, to form a government with PDP. As a fall-back, SDSM may also look to LDP for support.

VMRO-DPMNE is hoping that together with DA it will win 50 seats with its coalition. If, however, the coalition picks up fewer than 44 seats, they are in a much weaker position compared to SDSM. Even with the co-operation of LDP, SPM and a few independents, it is unlikely that they could achieve a 61-seat majority. The coalition's belief that it may appeal to the ethnic Albanian parties is probably misguided. In effect, VMRO-DPMNE seems destined to remain in opposition unless it wins a landslide or is able to garner the support of one of the ethnic Albanian parties.

The ethnic Albanian party coalition is not expected to last beyond the first round of elections, but is almost assured to winning at least 20 seats: 17 majoritarian seats and at least three proportional seats. The additional seats gained proportionally will depend upon Albanian voter turn-out. PDP has made no secret of its desire to see SDSM form the next government with its co-operation. They see a historic opportunity to deliver on some of their promises to their constituents.

PDPA/NDP elected members are likely to remain in opposition regardless of which ethnic Macedonian party forms the government. Prospects of the PDPA/NDP coalition joining a VMRO-DPMNE government make sense from the perspective of a united opposition but are unlikely given programmes and past relations.