

Management of Social Transformations

MOST

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**Managing cultural, ethnic and religious
diversities on local, state and international
levels in Central Europe: the case of Slovakia**

A pilot project

*by
Dov Ronen*



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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**Managing cultural, ethnic and religious diversities
on local, state and international levels in Central Europe:
the case of Slovakia**

A pilot project

Executed at the Institut für Konfliktforschung, Vienna (Austria)
Director: Dr. Anton Pelinka

The Report was written by Dr. Dov Ronen, Principal Investigator, in May 1999

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Foreword

The Institute for Conflict Research in Vienna (Austria) has a certain amount of experience in studies in ethnic conflicts. One of the Institute's research activities in that particular field has already resulted in the publication *The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict, Democracy and Self-Determination in Central Europe* by Dov Ronen (Frank Cass, London 1997).

The project presented here, which was completed in 1999, is in some respects the continuation of the research exemplified in that book. It deals with ethnic conflicts in Central Europe (especially in Slovakia) not only from the perspective of an analysis of the conflicts themselves but also from that of possible policies to de-escalate the conflicts' intensity. The outcome should not only improve our understanding of the conflicts' roots and their different manifestations. It should also improve our understanding of political instruments which are capable of dealing with these conflicts.

This project is also a continuation of a very fruitful cooperation with Dr. Dov Ronen who was once again the principal investigator. His experience in researching ethnic conflicts – as is clearly shown by his list of publications – fitted perfectly in the Institute's academic outlook.

The project is based on cooperation with UNESCO and with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Transportation. By funding the research, both have made the project possible.

The project was designed as a pilot study for ethnic research beyond the case of Slovakia. It should be seen as a model for further research in ethnic conflicts and as a possibility for developing policies for managing ethnic conflicts. As these conflicts do not seem to disappear – especially in Central and Eastern Europe – the need for further research is stronger than ever.

Anton Pelinka,
Institute of Conflict Research, Vienna
June 1999

Introduction

The objective of the prospective research project on Central European countries is the development of policy strategies to manage cultural, ethnic, and religious diversities in Central European countries. This pilot project on Slovakia is a test case. Our task, therefore, was not to study the Slovak case in depth but to approach it as a sample of other cases; our efforts were aimed at learning from this case study in order to design an expanded research project. Furthermore, in view of the objective of developing policy strategies, we embraced an openly declared position in favour of recommending political techniques that can improve the ability to live with diversities.

Three main issues appear to be of primary importance for the development of policy strategies to manage diversities, and are therefore our primary concern here:

- (a) the type of diversity in any given country, past or present;
- (b) the potential for conflict between and among diverse groups;
- (c) the possible type and range of strategic approaches to manage diversities.

Consequently, our main tasks in the pilot study on Slovakia were:

- (a) to identify the type of diversity in Slovakia;
- (b) to take note of the type of diversity that disrupted, disrupts, or might disrupt in the future peaceful cultural, ethnic, and religious relations in Slovakia;
- (c) to explore past, present, and proposed future patterns of diversity-management approaches aimed at preserving/restoring peaceful cultural, ethnic, and religious relations in Slovakia.

To accomplish these tasks, we have:

- (a) explored salient phases of the history and of cultural, ethnic, and religious relations in Slovakia;
- (b) familiarized ourselves with Slovak experiences with and past approaches to diversity;
- (c) taken note of Slovak experts' assessments of experiences with and approaches to diversity in Slovakia and elsewhere in Europe;
- (d) taken into account constitutional and legal changes pertaining to diversity in Slovakia.

Among the methods we used to obtain data were in-depth interviews with academic experts and community leaders in Slovakia, using a list of open-ended questions as a guide, and consultation of public opinion polls, published studies, reports, publications of Slovak experts, newspaper reports, and legal documents regarding various aspects of diversity in Slovakia.

One of our main concerns was to minimize the "colonization" problem; in other words, we tried to reduce and, as much as possible, eliminate the imposition of our own views, approaches, and policy preferences to the collected data. Accordingly, first, we made every effort to involve Slovak experts as participants in a systematic discussion and evaluation of the research in progress. Second, our research findings and recommendations were reported back to Slovak experts and discussed with them at a workshop, held in Bratislava on 18 March 1999, prior to writing the final report. In that workshop, we obtained the Slovak experts'

reactions to an earlier draft of this report, and solicited their recommendations for revisions. In short, Slovak experts have served as partners in formulating questions and findings rather than as pure respondents in a traditional way.¹

Part I of this report, **Methodology**, provides, very briefly, details about major elements of the research methods we used in Slovakia. We present the questionnaires that we administered and point to the choices we made among various options that presented themselves. Part II, **Background**, provides an historical overview of Slovakia, a glimpse at the socio-cultural composition of its population, and a brief summary of statistical data. It should be noted that the section of historical overview is relatively long for two main reasons. First, we are of the view that understanding the issue of diversity at any given time requires an understanding of the historical background of the people living with diversity. History, we submit, is prelude to the present. Second, the historical overview was lengthened at the request of the academic experts we consulted, who asked us to add certain facts of history and to provide details about others. Those requests reemphasized the known fact, which we shall point to subsequently, that "historical memory" plays a crucial role in the relations among diversities. Part III, **Issues**, provides an overview of diversity-related findings, especially those that appeared to us most relevant to other Central European countries, as well as to Slovakia; Part IV, **Recommendations**, presents a number of ideas that we have come up with in light of our experience in this pilot project, and which may be of use for designing an expanded project in Central European countries.

Please note that in this Report "ethnicity" refers to self-proclaimed and/or attributed shared ties among members of a group, that are presumed to reach back to their origins, or at least to the distant past, be it on the basis of language, culture, race, place of origin, or religion. Nevertheless, we treat religion in this Report as a separate category for two reasons. First, religion in communist countries tended to be suppressed, and its institutional resurgence after the end of communist rule (*vis-à-vis* atheism, for example) may be of special interest. Second, religious beliefs in modern times have tended to become personalized and to gain cultural rather than strictly religious content. Of course, "culture" is a commonly-listed basis of ethnicity.

¹ Our sincere thanks are extended especially to: Mgr. Lubomir Faltan, CSc. of the Institute of Sociology, The Slovak Academy of Sciences; Dr. Silvia Mihalikova, Associate Professor, Department of Politics, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University; and Ms. Dagmar Kusa, graduate student at Comenius University, for assisting us in all phases of the project. We also wish to thank for their cooperation the following individuals who, in addition to those listed above, assisted us in various phases of the project: Ms. Danka Babincova, Milan Simecka Foundation, Bratislava; Dr. Viera Bacova, Institute of Social Sciences, Kosice; Dr. Ol'ga Gafrikova, Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia; Professor Miroslav Kusy, Department of Politics, Comenius University; Dr. Jana Kviecinska, Milan Simecka Foundation, Bratislava; Dr. Ludmila Malikova, Department of Politics, Comenius University; Dr. Arne B. Mann, CSc., Department of Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences; Ing. Jozef Mrva, CSc., Vice President, Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia; Milan Olejnik, Mgr., Institute of Social Research, Kosice; Dipl. Ing. Peter Pazmany, Mayor of Dunajska Strada; Dr. Stefan Sutaj, Director, Institute of Social Research, Kosice.

Part I. Methodology

The predominant method used in the pilot project was interviews of academic experts, community leaders, and government officials. The central question that the project aimed to answer was a reformulation of the objective of the project, namely: What should be done to preserve/ restore peaceful cultural, ethnic, and religious relations in a country with cultural, ethnic, and/or religious diversity? This question was broken into several components, and reformulated again into related questions actually posed to interviewees, such as: Why does the interviewee propose a particular measure? How should it be implemented? By whom? What might be its anticipated effect? What alternative proposals exist, in the view of the interviewee, and why does he/she not support them?

1. Interviews

Our first task was to prepare several drafts of a questionnaire, which led to a model questionnaire. This model was subsequently revised and reformulated into a working questionnaire. The working questionnaire itself was used as a guide for the questions we actually asked in the personal interviews. (See Appendix II.) The questionnaires were not handed over to the interviewees, but were used as a reference by the interviewer.

Open-ended questions were posed in personal interviews. These were conducted by the interviewer either in English (with English-speaking interviewees), in Hungarian (with Hungarian-speaking interviewees), or in English with the help of a Slovak translator (with Slovak-speaking interviewees). Questions often led to lengthy conversations during which extensive notes were taken. These were then studied, edited, and incorporated into the various sections of this report.

2. Location of interviews

Our plan was to conduct interviews with academic experts and community leaders in two Slovak towns: Bratislava and Kosice. The choice of Bratislava and Kosice was dictated by two factors. First, there appeared to be a traditional rivalry between them as to their relative prominence in Slovak political, academic, and economic life. Second, and perhaps more important, it seemed that the character of ethnic, religious, and other "minority" agglomerations were different in the two sub-regions of Slovakia in which these two towns are located: Bratislava in the west, in close proximity to European Union member Austria, and Kosice in the east, in close proximity to the Ukraine and, beyond that, to Russia and Romania. (It might be noted that the newly elected President of Slovakia, Rudolph Schuster, is a former Mayor of Kosice.) We thought that the differences between these two towns might influence answers to the questions we posed, perhaps producing detectable clusters of responses to ethnic, religious, and other types of diversities.

We indeed conducted one set of interviews in Bratislava and another in Kosice. However, we learned through these two sets of interviews that (a) the concern with Hungarian and Romani minorities and the relationship between them and Slovak majorities is shared in both Bratislava (close to the Austrian border) and Kosice (close to the Ukraine and Polish border); (b) no significant difference exists among possible solutions offered in regard to Hungarians and the

Romani in these two towns; (c) the main research interest and concern of Slovak academic experts in Kosice focused, primarily, on Ukrainian and Ruthenian minorities living in their region, which form a minuscule minority within Slovakia and do not seem to pose a problem in the country as a whole, as far as diversity is concerned.

In light of the above observations, a second round of interviews was conducted in Bratislava but not in Kosice. Instead, interviews were conducted in two locations: in the small town of Skalica, some 60 km north of Bratislava, in close proximity to the border with the Czech Republic, and in Dunajska Streda, a primarily Hungarian-minority inhabited town, some 30 km south-east of Bratislava.

We feel that conducting interviews in these two small towns was useful. In a future research project efforts should be made to interview in various locations and in towns with a variety of ethnic characteristics.

3. Interviewees

We interviewed academic experts and solicited from them suggestions as to the names of other interviewees. In most cases, academic experts themselves helped to secure appointments with other interviewees. Such a solicitation was, in most instances, virtually inevitable, and in all cases desirable. Academic experts are knowledgeable about the issue of diversity in their own country and, in our case, research on it was among their research specialities. Their guidance was most useful in all instances.

In light of these consultations with academic experts, we interviewed ethnic Hungarian community leaders, government officials on State and local levels, social and educational activists, and a Protestant religious community leader. We did not interview representatives of political parties as had been intended because our visits coincided with parliamentary elections in Slovakia. Nevertheless, due to the ongoing election campaign, we had the benefit of access to publicly issued political statements regarding our topic of interest. Also, we did not interview "economic elites" which, in Slovakia, did not appear to have direct relevance to the issue of diversity in this country. This might not be the case in other Central European countries. As to immigrants, there were no significant number in Slovakia in the second half of 1998, at the time our interviews were conducted; immigrants coming from the former Yugoslavia and from, or through, the Ukraine were largely in transit to other countries. Here, too, future research might focus on refugees as well, especially since the conflict in connection with Kosovo has produced greater numbers of refugees in Central European countries. As the Romani population in Slovakia is specifically concerned in our subject, we interviewed an academic specialist and consulted a number of studies published on the Romani people.

In sum, we accomplished as much as possible with interviews within the limitations of the pilot project. Interviews should be conducted on a much larger scale in the planned wider project.

As to other methods used to gather information, we obtained and made use of a considerable number of publications from various sources. We also used the Internet both for information about ongoing events, and for access to documents. Lastly, we kept in contact with academic experts through e-mail, for gathering information and soliciting reactions to the report.

Part II. Background data

The first part of this section provides a brief and schematic historical overview of Slovakia. An attempt is made to include primarily those events that have influenced relations among various groups over the years, and which might still be factors in diversity. The second part of this section contains brief descriptions of and statistical data about the ethno-cultural and religious composition of Slovakia's population.

1. *Brief history*

The Slavonic peoples, including the ancestors of today's Slovaks, were among the many peoples of the 6th century who migrated westward to escape the invading Huns of southern Russia. The Slovak people themselves settled in the region of today's Slovakia in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. By the ninth century, much of today's Slovakia was part of the kingdom of Moravia, in which the Slovaks adopted the Roman Catholic religion. In the tenth century Slovaks came under Hungarian rule, and by the thirteenth century Slovakia was an integral part of Hungary. Significantly, after the Ottoman occupation of most of Hungary in 1526, many Hungarians, as well as many Hungarian institutions, moved to Slovakia or, more accurately in the context of the times, moved to the Slovakian part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This historical event not only further consolidated the integration of Slovakia into Hungary but also caused greater contact between the politically active Hungarian landowning nobles and Slovak populations. In the late seventeenth century Hungary was freed from Ottoman rule, and Hungarian institutions returned to Hungary proper.

The next series of significant developments occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the Hungarian nationalist revolution of 1848, the Hungarian elite led the revolution against Austrian rule and for Hungarian independence. In turn, educated Slovaks, most of whom were members of the Catholic clergy, demanded from the Hungarian government linguistic and cultural autonomy for Slovaks, including autonomy in the sphere of education.

The Hungarian revolution failed and the Slovak demands were rejected. In fact, after the founding of the Austrian-Hungarian Dual Monarchy in 1867, which increased the powers of the Hungarian government over its population, including Slovaks, the Hungarian government intensified a long-existing assimilation policy of Magyarization of Hungary's minorities. One aspect of Magyarization was educational and cultural homogenization. It was especially under the Hungarian Minister of Education, Count Albert Apponyi, that the suppression of minorities through Magyarization was intensified, in particular by the Education Act of 1907: in the sectarian schools among non-Magyar national groups, the use of the Hungarian language was required for both teachers and students. The other aspect of Magyarization was political: Slovaks and other minorities were not given the right to political autonomy. Minorities' rights, *qua* minorities, were limited. Individuals had the right to use various languages in Church and in public elementary and intermediary schools, but not in high-schools and above, and not in interactions with government agencies.

World War I resulted in the breakup of Austria-Hungary, the separation from Hungary of Slovaks and Slovak territories, as well as of other peoples and territories, and the birth of the

new State of Czechoslovakia. During the war, Czech and Slovak political leaders in Europe and in the United States joined forces to attain freedom from Austria-Hungary, and the ruling Hungarian political elites tried to shape their policies toward Hungary's minorities. We shall briefly discuss both issues which pertain directly to the question of diversity in today's Slovakia.

Meeting in Cleveland in 1915, Slovak and Czech political leaders of the "Slovak League" and the "Czech National Association" declared their intent to create a joint State. In February 1916, the Czechoslovak National Council was founded under the leadership of the Slovak M. R. Stefanik and the presidency of the Czech T. G. Masaryk. In September an interim government was appointed. All this was in the midst of the War.

In May 1918, toward the end of the War, the Slovak and Czech representatives in the Austrian Parliament asked for the conversion of Austria into a multinational federation, and the inclusion of Czech Bohemia and the Hungarian Slovak territories as member States in that Austrian federation. However, in June 1918, the French government recognized a "Czech National Council" in Paris as the representative of the Czech nation. The U.S. government supported this move. It interpreted the tenth point of President Wilson's fourteen points, "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development," to imply not autonomy but eventual independent statehood. It was not clear, however, whether it meant independence for one or two nations. Whatever the case, Czech and Slovak organizations in the United States signed the "Pittsburgh Declaration," calling for the independence of Czechoslovakia, and on 1 October 1918 the Slovak National Council voted for independence from Hungary and for joining Czechoslovakia.

It was agreed in the Pittsburgh Declaration that the Slovaks would form an autonomous nation in an independent Czechoslovakia. This was not realized in practice. But Slovak membership in Czechoslovakia meant Slovak secession from Hungary, which the Hungarian government could not prevent. Since Hungary was on the losing side in the war, its government did not have the wherewithal to prevent the incorporation of Slovakia in a future Czechoslovak State. When Czechoslovakia became an independent State in 1919, the hundreds of years of Hungarian rule over Slovaks, disrupted only briefly by Austrian rule in the sixteenth century, came to an end.

As to the political confrontation in the Hungarian political elite regarding policies toward Hungary's minorities during the war, Prime Minister Count Istvan Tisza opposed the making of any concessions to minorities, such as the right to vote. Count Mihaly Karolyi, along with the prominent Hungarian sociologist Oskar Jaszi, favoured reforms, including the right to vote and even autonomy for minorities. In May 1917 Tisza was forced to resign by King Charles (of Austria-Hungary) and succeeded by new Prime Ministers (first Count Moritz Eszterhazy then Alexander Wekerle), neither of whom introduced reforms. In the meantime, the radical Left in Hungary (Oskar Jaszi among them) – reacting, in part, to the serious food shortages during the war, dotted with hunger revolts and strikes, and the forthcoming October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia – were forecasting if not promoting a revolutionary change of the Hungarian regime dominated by the landowning nobility. In October 1918, Austria was transformed into a federation by King Charles, who expected that the same transformation would take place in Hungary. On 23 October, a Hungarian "National Council" was formed in

favour of such a transformation. On 31 October, King Charles appointed Mihaly Karolyi as Prime Minister, hoping that he would be able to introduce the needed reforms. It was not to be. The very same day Count Istvan Tisza was assassinated by Hungarian "red guards" and on 1 November Karolyi asked the King to absolve his allegiance to him, which was granted at once. Karolyi declared Hungary a Republic on 11 November 1918, and it became an independent State in March 1919.

Events in 1919-1920 had a significant impact on the future relations between Slovaks and Hungarians. The newly appointed Czechoslovak Ambassador to Hungary had held negotiations in Hungary in 1918, according to which (a) Hungarians in Slovak lands would have autonomy and their own Parliament, which would be connected with the Parliament in Hungary, and (b) the border between the two countries would more or less follow along ethnic lines. However, the military committee of the victorious powers at Versailles dealing with the post-War situation drew a different border in December 1918, and that, to the detriment of Hungary. The Czechoslovak government invalidated the Ambassador's agreement and ratified the borders dictated by the military committee in Versailles. Hungarian authorities were to leave the Hungarian-inhabited Slovak lands by the end of June 1919. The Hungarian government, the product of a short-lived communist revolution in Hungary (March - July 1919), reacted by sending armed forces across the border into those lands, which resulted in the establishment of a short-lived autonomous Slovak Republic and the reopening of negotiations about Slovak-Hungarian relations. When the Hungarian communist government fell, so failed the military excursion into Czechoslovakia. The post World War I Treaty of Trianon (signed June 1920) created the boundaries of Czechoslovakia.

What was the result of the new border between Hungary and Czechoslovakia? According to a census in 1920, Czechoslovakia's population was 13.5 million, of whom 6.3 million were Czechs, 3.5 million Germans, 1.9 million Slovaks, 1.1 million Hungarians (most within the Slovak inhabited regions of Czechoslovakia), 0.5 million Ruthenians, and smaller numbers of Jews and Poles.² Some 100,000 Hungarians were forced to leave Slovakia, and some 45,000 were deprived of their Hungarian citizenship. Areas from which Hungarians were expelled were resettled by Slovaks. According to a 1921 census, the population of only the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia was 2,958,557. Its ethnic composition was as follows: Slovaks: 1,952,866 (66%), Czechs: 72,137 (2.4%), Hungarians: 650,597 (22%), Germans: 145,844 (4.9%), Ruthenians, Ukrainians: 88,970 (3.0%), Others: 48,143 (1.7%).³

The Constitution of the new Czechoslovak Republic (1920) handled the "minority problem" in Czechoslovakia by granting rights for the use of minority languages and acknowledging respect for minority rights. However, a Slovak League, newly established after the founding of Czechoslovakia, began advocating the Slovakization of minorities, i.e. of Hungarians, in southern Slovakia, especially in the sphere of education. In reaction, and also immediately after the establishment of Czechoslovakia, Hungarians in Slovakia started to organize their

² Quoted in Peter Huncik, Fedor Gal, "The historical background to the formation of Slovak-Hungarian relations," Pavol Fric, Fedor Gal, Peter Huncik, Christopher Lord, *The Hungarian Minority in Slovakia*, A Study produced by the Institute of Social and Political Science, Charles University, Prague, 1993, 22.

³ *Ibid*, 23-24.

own political parties. The first such political party was the Republican Christian-Social Party, formed in 1919, and the second, the Hungarian National Party, was formed in 1920. These two parties, later joined by others, created in March 1924 the "Hungarian League of United Nations in the Czechoslovak Republic."

We move now to a very brief account of the World War II period. In the Munich Pact of 1938, parts of Czechoslovakia – the Sudeten, Silesia, North-West and Southern Moravia – were forcefully incorporated into Germany, and an area of 11,300 square kilometers in the southern part of Slovakia was attached to Hungary as part of compensation for Hungary's loss in the Treaty of Trianon. In the same year, the "Arbitration of Vienna" ceded an additional 800 km² from Slovakia to Hungary; this area contained a Hungarian population of 752,000, comprising 86 percent of the population of the territory. These boundary changes left 70,000 Hungarians in Slovakia, who had one deputy in the Slovak Parliament. In March 1939 German troops occupied Prague. Bohemia and Moravia became a German Protectorate, and Slovakia became independent. The Slovak government was de facto a German satellite and followed the directives from Nazi-Germany, including an active participation in World War II and the implementation of the Holocaust. The Hungarian minority in Slovakia opposed separation from Czechoslovakia. The tension between Slovakia and Hungary caused by these changes was restrained by German overrule.

At the Peace Conferences of 1945 after World War II, the areas ceded to Hungary before the War were restored to Czechoslovakia, along with some 600,000 Hungarians living there.⁴ An additional complication affecting Slovak-Hungarian relations in Czechoslovakia was that the Czech government's "Kosice Program" of 5 April 1945 – named after a town in Slovakia – provided for the confiscation of property of Germans and Hungarians in Czechoslovakia who had "actively helped" the Nazi enemy (Presidential Ordinance of 1945/108). Presidential Ordinance 1945/33, in turn, removed Czechoslovak citizenship from Germans and Magyars who could not prove they had assisted the Allies during the war. Ultimately, an exchange of population was agreed upon on 27 February 1946 between the Hungarian and Czechoslovak governments. Up to 100,000 Slovaks could choose to transfer to Czechoslovakia and the same number of Magyars could choose to transfer to Hungary.⁵ Eventually, some 60,000 persons were exchanged on each side.

Communist rule started in Czechoslovakia in 1948. Although the Communist Party emerged as the strongest party already in the first post-War elections of 1946, receiving one third of the votes, at first it only became the dominant – not exclusive – force in a coalition government. It was only in February 1948 that the Communists gained complete control of the government, enacted a new constitution, and turned to the nationalization of the economy. Political and cultural freedoms were curtailed, and show trials of opponents were held between 1950-1952.

In 1957, the Czech Antonin Novotny became President and from 1960 onwards, significant liberal reforms were introduced. However, Slovaks resented Novotny's Czech-dominated

⁴ The German inhabited Sudeten region was also detached from Czechoslovakia in 1938 and reattached to Czechoslovakia, withits German inhabitants expelled, after the war.

⁵ The transfer was compulsory for a certain number of Hungarian collaborators with the Nazis.

administration. In 1968, Alexander Dubcek, a Slovak, replaced Novotny as party leader, and introduced liberalization both in political and economic spheres. According to the new 1968 Constitution, Czechoslovakia was to become a federal republic by 1969 and, within that context, Slovakia was to receive political autonomy. However, the Soviet government opposed Dubcek's reforms. Its reaction was the Warsaw Pact allies' invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Most of the reforms were abolished, but the federal system was retained.

The retention of the federal arrangement did not eliminate Czech-Slovak rivalry and animosity, in spite of the fact that over the previous twenty years a considerable levelling of economic disparities between the Czech and Slovak lands had been attained. Slovakia, an economically backward agricultural region already under Hungarian rule, had been subjected to an intensive economic modernization under communist rule in Czechoslovakia both before and after 1968. Briefly, Slovakia was industrialized and among others, it became the centre of arms production. The increase in industrialization brought with it urbanization, a rise in the level of education, and so forth. In spite of considerable economic progress, Slovak leaders were not content with what they saw as the concentration of political power in Czech lands in Prague. Czechs, on their part, resented the economic preferences accorded to Slovaks. Nevertheless, political discontent, on both sides, could not manifest itself in public debates under communist rule, and even less in the formation of political parties and political platforms.

All this changed with political system in 1989. Two distinct organizations brought about the revolutionary change: the Civic Forum in the Czech lands and Public Against Violence in Slovakia. Both pressed for democratic freedoms. Indeed, with the end of communist rule in November 1989, a large number of political movements emerged and could freely promote their own distinct – including ethnic – interests. In Moravia there was a demand for a tripartite federation, one of its components being Moravia. Hungarian and Ruthenian (Rusyn) groups also demanded more rights.

Power-sharing within the federal government turned out to be a major focus of conflict between Czech and Slovak groups. Economic issues also became a bone of contention. Slovakia, a former link in the industrial chain that connected the Warsaw Pact countries, experienced serious economic difficulties, resulting in, among other things, rising unemployment. In short, after 1989, the confrontation between Czechs and Slovaks was aggravated, and ultimately resulted in the "velvet separation" between the two in January 1993, which created the Czech and the Slovak Republics as two independent States.

To end this historical background section, we present a brief overview of the history of the Romani people in Slovakia.

The history of the Romani⁶ people in Slovakia is studded with discrimination and persecution throughout the centuries. The ancestors of the Romanies lived in India and migrated toward

⁶ Romani is the approved name for a people who have been called Gypsies and Tsiganes. This was officially approved in a meeting of representatives of Romani organizations in 1971, in London, when the International Romani Union was also founded.

the West in the ninth and tenth centuries.⁷ Those who appeared in the Balkans from the eleventh century onward were called Zingaro, Tsigane, Zigeuner, or Cigani, while those who appeared in Eastern and Central Europe from the fourteenth century onward, migrating from lower Egypt, were called Egyptianos, Gitanos or Gypsies.

During World War II, the fascists regarded the Romanies as an inferior race – just as they did the Jews. However, while in other European countries the Romanies were transported to concentration camps and some 20,000 perished there, in Slovakia they were put in "working camps" and were subject to discriminatory legislation. In early 1945 many Romanies in Slovakia were summarily executed by the retreating fascists. In Moravia and Bohemia (in the Czech Republic) under the Nazi protectorate, the entire Romani population was sent to die in Auschwitz gas chambers.

After World War II, under communist rule, the Romanies were not regarded as a homogeneous ethnic group, and their language was considered a dialect. A policy of assimilation introduced in all communist-ruled States in regard to all non-ethnic groups, affected the Romanies as well. They were encouraged to identify as either Slovaks or Hungarians and, under a law passed in 1958, many were forced to settle in housing projects provided by the government. They, as other Slovak citizens, were expected to work for wages in the State economy and received social benefits provided by the regime.

After the introduction of democratic rule and privatization in 1989, various Romani political organizations emerged and for a time they had elected representatives as members of various political parties in the Slovak Parliament. They were also active in the organization called "Public against Violence." In April 1991, the Slovak government approved legislation that guaranteed equal rights to the Romanies along with other ethnic minorities living in Slovakia.

2. Socio-cultural composition

The size of the Slovak Republic is 49,036 km², and its population, according to the 1995 census, was 5,369,000. We shall examine a bit more closely the ethnic and religious composition of that population.

a. "Ethnic" diversity

Slovaks constitute 85.7% of Slovakia's population; Hungarians: 10.7%; Romanies: 1.5% (self-identified; actually it may be about 10%); Czechs: 1.0%; Ukrainians: 0.3%; Ruthenians: 0.1%; Poles: 0.1%; other: 0.3%. Total: 99.7% (due to decimal point rounding).

Slovaks: Slovaks, as Slavic people, are closely related to the Czechs, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, and Poles. On the other hand, Slovaks are not ethnically related to either the Hungarians or to

⁷ Most of this information was gathered in an interview with the ethnologist Dr. Arne B. Mann, and from publications written by him. See Arne B. Mann, "The Romanies of Slovakia," and "Motivation: The Inevitable Condition of Successful Education of Romany Children," *Local History and Minorities: Training Course for Teachers as Part of Pilot Project No 2 ...*," Council of Europe, DECS/SE/BS/Sem (94) misc 6 and 7, Spisska Nova Ves, Slovak Republic, 14-17 September 1994.

the Romanies.

Hungarians (Magyars): According to the March 1991 census, 567,296 Slovak citizens declared themselves to be ethnically Hungarian, while 608,221 said they were Hungarian native speakers.⁸ Over 90 percent of Hungarians live in the southern part of Slovakia. It is to be noted that as Hungarian is not a Slavic language, it has no commonality with either the Czech or Slovak languages; it belongs to the Fino-Ugric linguistic family.

Romanies: There are two Romani groups in Slovakia. One group, some 90-95 percent of the Romanies, are descendants of the Romani who settled in Slovakia from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. This group is composed of the "Hungarian Romanies," Romanies migrating from Hungary (settled mainly in the southern part of Slovakia along the Hungarian border), and "Slovak Romanies," who migrated there earlier. Their cultures are essentially similar, except for the influence of the respective Hungarian and Slovak languages. The other Romani group, which has minimal contact with the former group, are the Olassic Romanies who came to Slovakia from Romania in the second half of the nineteenth century. They tend to be more prosperous than the members of the former group and to live in cities. Members of both groups consider themselves Roman Catholic, but in fact their religion is a synthesis of various beliefs, superstitions, and religious practices.

Slovak Rusyns/Ruthenians: The apparently preferred self-identity of "Slovak Rusyns" are also referred to as Ruthenians, Carpatho-Ukrainians, Subcarpathian Rus-Ruthenians, and Ruthenian-Ukrainians. They are a Slavic ethnic group, Greek Catholic by religion, and are only a small segment of Rusyns living in the southern part of the Carpathian mountains, extending into Poland, and the Ukraine.

Rusyns, along with Slovaks, were minorities in the Hungarian Kingdom of the Dual Monarchy. After its disintegration, Rusyns were of divided opinion about their future. According to Ondrej Dostal,⁹ three orientations emerged: pro-Ukrainian, independent all Ruthenian, or pro-Russian. The choice was whether to stay in Hungary or to stay in independent Czechoslovakia. Ultimately, the pro-Czechoslovak view prevailed.

After the independence of Czechoslovakia in 1919, troops were sent to Rusyn territory (formerly in the north-eastern part of Hungary in the Carpathian mountains), which the new government named Subcarpathian Rus. A post World War I treaty stipulated that a Rusyn self-government be formed within Czechoslovakia. Indeed, a provisional administrative division was established between Slovak villages and Rusyn villages. But this division left some 85,000 Rusyns on the Slovak side of the line, including Presov, seat of the Greek Catholic Bishop. Rusyn leaders demanded to move the line farther to the West – which would have left many Slovaks in the Rusyn territory. Soon the traditional peaceful relations that existed between Slovaks and Rusyns when both were minorities in the Kingdom of Hungary deteriorated. In 1939, after the Munich Pact of 1938, Hungarians occupied Subcarpathian Rus and moved its

⁸ Kocsis, 38.

⁹ Ondrej Dostal, "Minorities," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 43.

boundary westward, thus further aggravating relations between Slovaks and Rusyns in that region, which has lasted, to a degree, up to these days.

After World War II, Subcarpathian Rus was annexed to the Ukrainian Republic of the Soviet Union. It became an autonomous *oblast*, and the communist Czechoslovak government's policy toward the Rusyns who remained in Czechoslovakia changed. While in the nineteenth century Rusyn intellectuals spoke Russian and the Rusyn population at large spoke and wrote in a local Rusyn dialect, which was close to the local Slovak dialect, after the annexation the Prague government declared the Slovak Rusyns to be Ukrainians, introduced the Ukrainian language in their schools, suppressed Greek Catholicism, imprisoned their Bishop, and designated Slovak Rusyns as Russian Orthodox.

The Greek Catholic Church was restored after the revolutionary change of 1989. Nonetheless, the former communist regime had a lasting impact. In the 1991 census, 17,200 persons identified themselves as Ruthenians and 13,300 as Ukrainians. (Those identifying themselves as Carpathian Rus formed a small third group.) Today, the two main groups do not recognize each other's definitions of their identities. Representatives of both groups met in 1996 and agreed that Ruthenians and Ukrainians living in Slovakia would act as representatives of one nationality with two languages and would not engage in confrontations. Nevertheless, the association "Ruthenian Revival" continued to claim that there is one ethnic community with one culture – Ruthenian – which develops in two national dimensions.

Czechs: About 60,000 of Slovakia's population is of Czech origin – mostly living along the border between the two countries – of whom 5,000 opted for Czech citizenship. (The Czech government does not recognize their dual citizenship.) There is also a Society of Moravians in Slovakia with about 1,000 members.

Germans: Germans in Slovakia are widely dispersed and largely assimilated. There is a "Carpathian-German Association" which aims at reviving German traditions and culture.

Jews: In the 1991 census 350 individuals declared Jewish ethnicity. If religion is taken into account, it is estimated that 5,000 to 7,000 people with Jewish backgrounds live in Slovakia. In 1996, a Center for Jewish Studies was established in Comenius University in Bratislava.

b. *Religious diversity*

Over twenty religious communities are registered in Slovakia, which has a population of 5,274,335 (1991)¹⁰ In a survey conducted in April 1996 by FOCUS, the public opinion research agency, 13.7 percent of the Slovak population described themselves as "deeply religious" while, in comparison, 25.5 percent were identified as atheists or non-religious.

Among the major religious and non-religious communities the statistical breakdown is as follows: Roman Catholic, 60.3%; Atheist, 9.7%; Protestant, 8.4%; Greek/Russian Orthodox,

¹⁰ Miroslav Kollar, "Churches," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 205-210.

4.1%; "Other," 17.5%.¹¹ Of the 52,700 ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia, 64.9% are Roman Catholic, while 15.5% claim to be of a different religion, mostly Roman Christian Church (11.3%). Nevertheless, none of the fifteen bishops is of Hungarian nationality, and only two of them speak Hungarian.

In sum, the population of Slovakia is diverse. On the other hand, as we shall note further on, the most important type of diversity is "ethnic," distinguishing between Slovaks on the one hand and Hungarians and Romanies on the other. Neither religious nor any other type of diversity is salient.

¹¹ Source: CIA World Fact Book, 1995.

Part III. Issues

In this section we focus on some of the major issues pertaining to diversity, with special attention to those that may be relevant to future research on diversity in Central Europe.

A. Moral principles, rights and constitutions

In every historical period one might detect certain moral principles regarding the rights of human beings. Moral principles are commonly kept in mind and transmitted through socialization. Moral principles are also the principles encoded in international documents on human and minority rights. Conversely, one might say that international documents on human and minority rights are encoded moral principles of the times. Moral principles, encoded or not in international documents, are also among the factors that inform constitutions of specific countries, which in turn guide the enactment of laws, and stand as endorsement of legal, or official, acts. Here is a schematic presentation of the relations among four main factors:

Schematic description of the flow of rights to minorities



We shall now briefly discuss the first three terms and, where appropriate, their application in the context of Slovakia.

1. Moral principles regarding rights

Moral principles are philosophical notions, tenets, as well as extrapolations from more or less distant historical experiences and events, such as the abolition of slavery, termination of colonial rule, or the sufferings during World War II. Among today's moral principles, which we tend to regard as valid globally and applicable to all human beings, we might include human equality and the right to freedom from repression, to use two examples. We have also taken as an overall moral principle at the end of the twentieth century the principle of democracy and, accordingly, the ability to live with diversities. Thus, moral principles of today reject dictatorial rule and discrimination on any basis. By implication, the moral principles of today recognize the equal rights of members of minorities relative to those of majorities. All that said, it was not the objective of this pilot project to gauge, and indeed in our view there is no way for us to gauge, to what degree moral principles, as such, are embraced by members of government, parliament, and citizens of the Republic of Slovakia, nor in any other country. On the other hand, the ratification of principles encoded in international documents and in constitutional principles and the adherence to them may be a strong indication of the prevailing

respect for universal moral principles in Slovakia and elsewhere.

2. Documents of international organizations

Among the international documents that pertain to rights are the UN Charter; the UN General Assembly Resolution of 18 December 1992; the "Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities" of the Conference for European Security and Cooperation [CESC]; and the European Convention for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.

Miroslav Kusy notes that according to a UNESCO review, more than eighty documents on human rights had been adopted by the UN and other international organizations by the end of 1996. As of May 1996 the Slovak Republic had ratified fifty of eighty-one internationally recognized human rights prescriptions. Apart from not ratifying many agreements, he writes, the pre-1998 government "violates a number of important international human rights agreements *to which it has formally acceded*."¹² Kusy also added that in July 1997, "the European Commission recommended against invitation of Slovakia to negotiations on EU membership, identifying it as the *only one* of ten associate countries that fails to meet the *political* criteria for EU membership. Respect of human rights and civil liberties – or the lack thereof – undoubtedly played an important role" in the decision.¹³

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was adopted by a meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Council of Europe in Vienna in 1993. It has been signed by 33 States and requires a ratification by 12 States. By the end of 1996 it was ratified only by five, including Slovakia. The European Charter, in turn, whose preparation began well before 1989 and which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1992, is not a general convention on minorities, but only on culture and languages. It was signed by 16 States, requires five ratifications, and was ratified as of 1996 by four States, though not by Slovakia. It is to be noted that the European Charter does not address collective rights, political rights and autonomy. It prescribes protection of minority languages, not protection of minorities. Overall, it contains a list of guiding principles. The Preamble of the European Charter also states that the protection and development of regional or minority languages should not be seen as a hindrance to the learning of the official language of the State. Most important, it does not stipulate rights; it imposes a series of obligations on governments. In sum, the majority has to understand that "differences are not necessarily reasons for separation or antagonism, but can be a positive contribution to the cultural wealth of a country."¹⁴

Some of these issues were discussed at a working seminar on the European Charter for

¹² Miroslav Kusy, "Human Rights," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 35 (emph. in the original).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁴ Working seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, Slovakia, November 11-12, 1996.

Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, on 11-12 November 1996. Several significant contributions by participants are noted here:

Mojmir Benza, of the Ethnic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Science, noted that one should distinguish between two identities: ethnic/national identities, on the one hand, and state/citizen identities on the other hand. "At first glance it would seem that two identical qualities are involved. However, this is not the case. An ethnic, national identity is a subjective phenomenon used at the individual citizen's discretion. Everybody can freely declare and change it. The State identity of a citizen, on the other hand, is an objective phenomenon based on a legal relationship between a citizen and the State."

Benza continued: "Looking at the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages from this point of view, we find that some of its articles do not satisfactorily reflect both of these identities. Some (notably parts of articles 8, 9, 10 and 13) even give preference to the ethnic identity, thereby counteracting the integration of citizens into one citizenship-based community with one State identity."¹⁵

"From the point of view of any State that sincerely strives to create from its citizens of different ethnic identities an integrated community, the recommendations in the Articles 8, 9, 10, and 13 are unadaptable. ... They introduce ethnic exclusiveness and segregation into the society, intricate and unmanageable language practices and perhaps may even lead to ethnic tensions and conflicts, which, taken as a whole, could bring the integrity of a particular State as well as peace and stability of the whole Continent under a threat."¹⁶

3. Constitutions

The 1960 Constitution of Czechoslovakia recognized Hungarians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles in Czechoslovakia as "nations," along with Slovaks and Czechs. The "Prague Spring" of 1968 brought about the further codification of the rights of "minorities" (Constitutional Law 144). However, the subsequent Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and consolidation of Moscow's control over the country did away with these laws. Instead, an overall policy of assimilation was introduced.

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic, promulgated on 2 September 1992, when Slovakia was still part of the Czechoslovak federation, guaranteed a wide range of rights. Article 11 of the 1992 Constitution notes: "The international agreements on human rights and basic freedoms which were ratified by the Slovak Republic and which have been declared legal, take precedence over its laws whenever they guarantee a wider scope of constitutional rights and freedoms." Section Four of the Constitution focuses on the "Rights of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups." Article 33: "The membership in any national minority or ethnic group whatsoever must not be detrimental to any person." In Article 34, the right of national

¹⁵ Working seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, on November 11-12, 1996, 107-8.

¹⁶ Working seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, on November 11-12, 1996, 109.

minorities and ethnic groups "to develop their own culture," the right to broadcast and receive information in their mother tongue, and the right to establish and maintain educational and cultural institutions is assured. It is added, however, that "The law shall specify other details." The right to education in their mother tongue, to use their language in administrative relations and to "participate in the solution of issues concerning national minorities and ethnic groups" are also assured "respective to conditions ordained by law." Lastly, Article 34 says the following: "The exercise of the rights of citizens who belong to national minorities or ethnic groups, and which are guaranteed by this Constitution, must not lead to the breach of integrity of the Slovak Republic or to discrimination against other citizens of Slovakia's territory." It should also be noted that the Constitution introduced the concept of "State language" instead of "official language."

In sum, it seems fair to state that prevailing moral principles are shared in Slovakia as in other European countries. One might also assume that those moral principles are transmitted through socialization. Where one might start to be critical of Slovak governments so far is, first, the limited scope of ratifications of international documents encoding moral principles on human and minority rights. Another point that one might make in this regard is that although Slovak constitutions do include references to rights of minorities in particular, allowance is made to specify these rights in laws. It is in the process of enacting laws that rights of minorities are reinterpreted and curtailed.

B. Political parties, elections and actions

1. Political parties

In democratic countries, political parties take positions, among other issues, on the rights of minorities specified in constitutions. Elected members of political parties become members of the Parliament and, at times, of the government; they are the ones who propose and enact laws, and implement them – or not. Reactions of individuals and groups of citizens to laws and to their implementation speaks for either coexistence among diversities in a given population, or conflict. Our interviews in Slovakia have shown a critical attitude toward political parties: "Political parties create conflict;" "Political elites have a major role in conflict;" "Most political parties are ethnic parties." We provide below brief descriptions of the Slovak political parties, all of which were formed in the 1990s, after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, in order to run in free elections.

Slovak-membership-based political parties and their range of views, especially concerning the rights of the Hungarian minority

Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokraticke Slovensko), HZDS. It was founded by Vladimir Meciar, who has been its chairman since the beginning. The party lacks a clear ideological orientation. It is based on a few strong personalities. Nonetheless the party is considered to be authoritarian, and nationalist. The HZDS and the Slovak National Party (see below) are the two major parties in conflict with Hungarian parties.

Slovak Democratic Coalition (Slovensk demokratick koalicia), SDK. It is a coalition of a wide spectrum of parties, marked “(SDK)” at the end of the party's description below.

Democratic Party (Democraticka Strana), DS. Its supporters are mostly intellectuals and people with higher education living in cities. The DS has strongly opposed most policies of the pre-1998 government and openly supported the Hungarian parties. It also strongly supports the coalition of all non-leftist opposition forces opposed to the Meciar government. (SDK)

Party of Democratic Left (Strana demokratickej lavice), SDL. Among its members are socialists and former communists. It was in the pre-1998 government with SDK. It supports membership in NATO and EU. In September 1996 the party was admitted to the Socialist International.

Party of Civic Understanding (Strana obianskeho porozumenia), SOP. Centrist, newly established before the 1998 elections, it is oriented toward undecided voters, is progressive, has a strong leader in the person of R. Schuster, candidate for the presidency in the elections of May 1999.

Christian Democratic Movement of Slovakia (Krest'ansko – demokratick hnutie na Slovensku), KDH. This was the strongest opposition party in the Parliament prior to the 1998 elections. Its members tend to be between 18 and 29 years old, or over 60 years old, having higher education, as well as pensioners, scientists, and students. The KDH ran in the 1998 elections in the SDK. It opposes regional autonomy for the Hungarian minority and is critical of the Hungarian minority's Coexistence movement. It is a strong supporter of membership in NATO and EU. (SDK)

Democratic Union of Slovakia (Demokratickania na Slovensku), DU. Did not run in the last elections. Liberal, progressive, neutral attitude toward Hungarian minority. Strongly opposed to policies of the Meciar government. Coordinates activities with the KDH and the Democratic Party. In February 1996 DU deputies presented in Parliament their proposal for a Constitutional Law on Implementing Basic Rights, Liberties and Self-Government, aimed at enforcing civil society and individual (but not collective or minority) rights. Hungarian coalition parties opposed it. (SDK)

Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (Socialnodemokratick Strana na Slovensko), SDSS. Social democrats. It did not run in the last elections. Member of the Socialist International. (SDK)

Slovak Workers Party (Zdru Jov Slovenska), ZRS. Social issues oriented, strong in rural areas and among people with low income and low education. Formerly in government with HZDS and SNS. Xenophobic; opposes NATO and EU membership. Had elected representatives in the Parliament until 1998.

Slovak National Party (Slovensk nrodn strana), SNS. A right-wing, conservative party with strong nationalist, xenophobic overtones. It is a coalition partner of HZDS. Members are of low income level and education. Strong defenders of Slovaks and Slovakia, especially with respect to Hungarian minority. Supported Slovak Hungarian treaty only with ratification of the

Penal Code. In September 1997 Jean-Marie Le Pen visited Slovakia at the invitation of the SNS. It opposes NATO and EU membership.

Slovak Green Party (Strana Zelenych Slovenska), SZS. It is ecologist, leftist, not very influential. Had two deputies in the pre-1998 Parliament and did not run in the last elections. (SDK)

Hungarian-membership-based political parties in Slovakia and their range of views, especially concerning the rights of the Hungarian minority

The interests and objectives of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia have been represented in various cultural organizations, such as CSEMADOK, the main organization. CSEMADOK, established in 1949, is dedicated, in principle, to the promotion of Hungarian culture. It has advocated the use of the Hungarian language and the establishment of schools for Hungarian-speaking children, and has organized theaters and various other cultural institutions. In addition, CSEMADOK has also had a political agenda: the advancement of the rights of Hungarian minorities, for which it was frequently accused of receiving guidance from the Hungarian government and Hungarian organizations. In fact, both Hungarian-membership-based parties and cultural organizations in Slovakia have close and relatively trouble-free links with political parties of Hungary itself.¹⁷

Hungarian-membership-based political parties have been the other important venues for representing Hungarian interests. Their agendas have not been uniform. Some of the parties have tended to emphasize autonomy and even boundary changes, while others have advocated personal and collective rights.

Party of the Hungarian Coalition (Magyar Koalicio Partja; Strana magyarskej koalicie), MK or SMK. It united for the sake of elections the following three organizations, each of which has a liberal orientation but spans a wide range of opinions, with nationality as the uniting factor:

- **Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement** (Magyar Keresztyendemokrata Mozgalom), MKDH. Liberal, very popular among the Hungarian minority, most of whom are religious. (In the pre-1998 election government it had seven elected representatives in the Parliament.)

- **Hungarian Civic Party** (Magyar Polgari Parti), MOS. The most influential Hungarian minority party, liberal, consists mainly of intellectual and political activists of the Hungarian minority; on good terms with DS. (In the pre-1998 election government it had one elected representative in the Parliament.)

- **Coexistence** (Egyuttes). Hungarian minority, liberal/radical, nationalist movement. Tends to highlight the situation of Hungarians as negative and does not cooperate with Slovak

¹⁷ Pavol Fric, Fedor Gal, Peter Huncik, Christopher Lord, *The Hungarian Minority in Slovakia*, A Study produced by the Institute of Social and Political Science, Charles University, Prague. 1993, 9.

political parties. (In the pre-1998 election government it had nine elected representatives in the Parliament.)

Representatives of the Coalition rejected the irredentist label applied to them by the Meciar government. To demonstrate their opposition to that label and its inappropriateness, the chairmen of the three parties, along with other Slovak political leaders and deputies, signed in September 1996 a common declaration in Mont Pelerinn, Switzerland, reaffirming their loyalty to the Slovak Republic. Then, in order to demonstrate the main concerns of Hungarians in Slovakia, the chairmen of the three parties, representatives of the Hungarian Teachers Association, and CSEMADOK met in October 1996, in the Hungarian-majority town of Komarno, and signed an open letter to NATO and EU warning that democracy, minority rights, and the rule of law were under considerable threat in Slovakia.

2. Elections

The National Council (Parliament) of the Slovak Republic (Narodna Rada Slovenskej Republiky) has 150 members, elected for a four-year term by proportional representation. In the elections of 1990 and 1992 both Hungarian and Romani representatives were elected to the Czechoslovak Parliament. In the elections of 1992, Hungarian parties (Coexistence, Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, Magyar Civic Party, and the Hungarian Peoples Party) together received 9.83 percent of the vote (about equal to their share in the population.) These elections provided them with 17 deputies in the Parliament. The party affiliations of the elected members of the Slovak Parliament after the elections of 1996 were as follows (comparison with the figure in September 1994 is also shown):

HZDS+RSS	61	+ 8
SV	18	- 10
MK	17	+ 5
KDH	17	- 1
DU	15	- 4
ZRS	13	+ 12
SNS	9	0

Results of the September 1998 elections in Slovakia:

Narodna Rada (Parliament)	%	Members
-----	100.0	150
Movement for Democratic Slovakia, HZD (Hnutie za Demokraticke Slovensko)	27.0	43
Slovak Democratic Coalition, SDK (Slovenska demokraticka koalicia)	26.3	42
Party of Democratic Left, SD (Strana demokratickej avice)	14.7	23

Hungarian Coalition Party, SMK (Strana madjarskej koalicie)	9.1	15
Slovak National Party, SNS (Slovenska narodna Strana)	9.1	14
Party of Civic Understanding, SOP (Strana objanskeho porozumenia)	8.0	13
Slovak Communist Party, KSS (Komunistick strana Slovenska)	2.8	-
Slovak Workers Party, ZRS (Zdru jov Slovenska)	1.3	-

In sum, it cannot be overemphasized that the political landscape in Slovakia from January 1993 to January 1999 was dominated by a right-wing government. This situation has created a political polarization between the government on the one hand, and political parties in the opposition on the other.

C. Laws regarding minorities

All the laws discussed here were enacted by the Slovak Parliament and government since the independence of Slovakia. The latest elections of early 1999 brought in a new Parliament and a new government, but their new laws, if any, are not reflected in this report. Thus, comments on legislation in Slovakia quoted here (such as the Slovak Republic "failed to keep pace with the human rights progress made by other former socialist countries," and "Perhaps most troubling from the standpoint of human rights . . . are attempts by the current Parliament to pass a series of laws that circumscribe civil and political liberties, such as . . . the law establishing Slovak as the official State language, and laws reorganizing the territorial and administrative division of the country"¹⁸) refer to laws enacted by the conservative governments that preceded the 1999 elections. References in this report are also to laws enacted prior to 1999.

1. Languages, education, and culture

Under the language act of 1990, the use of minority languages in road signs is permitted in districts where the minority population exceeds 20 percent. A Law on the State Language (270/1995), which took effect on 1 January 1996, required the use of the Slovak language in virtually all aspects of public life. In reaction, deputies from the Hungarian parties and the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) requested a ruling from the Constitutional Court on

¹⁸ Miroslav Kusy, "Human Rights," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 37.

that law's constitutionality. Its ruling, published in the autumn of 1997, upheld the right of Hungarians to use their own language in official State contacts. Subsequently, local governments in many communities with Hungarian majorities adopted ordinances permitting the use of Hungarian in official contacts in municipal offices. On the other hand, the National Council (Parliament) of the Slovak Republic prohibited the use of minority languages during sessions of the Parliament. This prohibition took effect on 1 January 1997.¹⁹

There is a network of elementary and secondary schools in which instruction is conducted in Hungarian. In 1997, however, the ministry of education decided to end the practice, dating back to 1921, of issuing bilingual report cards. In spite of opposition, the 1997-1998 academic year report cards were given only in the Slovak language even in schools where the language of instruction was Hungarian. Since 1 January 1999 the report cards are again in two languages.

In 1994, the ministry of culture provided CSEMADOK with a subsidy of 10.8 million Sk (about \$300,000 at the 1998 exchange rate); in 1995 it was reduced to 4.11 million Sk (about \$117,000 at the 1998 exchange rate); in 1996, the subsidy was eliminated altogether. Resources for minority cultural activities are provided from Pro Slovakia, a government cultural fund, to National Minority News, a four-page supplement to the pro-government daily newspaper, Slovak Republic, and to other activities bearing no relation to minority culture.

2. Redistricting

Until July 1996, Slovakia was split into 38 districts (including the city of Bratislava). The result was that of these 38 districts only two had a Hungarian population greater than 50 percent. In eight districts the proportion of Hungarians ranged between 20 percent and 50 percent. All in all, there were ten administrative areas with a greater than 20 percent proportion of Hungarians.

In October 1995, the government prepared a bill that would divide the entire country into eight large administrative regions, subdivided into 79 districts. Hungarian leaders opposed that bill when it was still only a proposal from the Ministry of Culture. Some of the most detailed criticisms of the proposal came from the Association of Slovak Cities and Municipalities (ZMOS), an association of more than 95 percent of all communities in Slovakia. ZMOS argued that the first priority of any administrative reform should be to clarify and to secure the jurisdiction, powers, and financial resources of regional and local governments. In spite of these reactions, the law on Territorial and Administrative Division of the Slovak Republic (221/1996) was approved in July 1996 and took effect the same day. The law increased the number of districts from 38 to 79. However, the number of districts with a proportion of Hungarians greater than 20 percent only increased from 10 to 13, and the number of districts with a more than 50 percent Hungarian population remained the same – two districts, i.e., no new district was created with a Hungarian majority. All in all, there were 15 administrative areas with a greater than 20 percent proportion of Hungarians.²⁰

¹⁹ Ondrej Dostal, "Minorities," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 39-46.

²⁰ See Vladimír Krivý, "Slovakia and its Regions," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia*

3. Territorial autonomy

Hungarians say that they only ask for recognition and rights to preserve their own culture through such means as their own schools. On the other hand, many Slovaks seem to believe that what Hungarians really want is autonomy, and that they are inclined toward secession. Indeed, we have found in interviews that "autonomy" is an emotionally charged word in Slovakia.

Thus the use of the term may be problematic for several reasons. First, autonomy was a political issue at the time Slovaks were a minority in Austria-Hungary, and the memory of those years is still alive. Second, in 1992, Hungarians suggested the creation of a southern belt for the Hungarian minority along the Hungarian border, which, for many Slovaks, appeared to be a potentially separatist move. Third, and above all, the Hungarian minority – the dominant component of diversity in Slovakia and concentrated along the border with its "home country" Hungary – regard the lands on which they live in Slovakia as their homeland, which is akin to regarding the land on which they live as Hungarian territory. Thus the proximity of the border with Hungary raises the spectre of border changes and secession. All in all, as a consequence of the proximity of the Hungarian minority to the Hungarian border and the connotations of the word "autonomy," any type of autonomy that might be asked by or granted to the Hungarian minority (cultural, linguistic, etc.) has a territorial dimension. Aggravating this perception is the Hungarian government's concern for, and suspected intervention on behalf of, Hungarian minorities in Slovakia. Slovaks in general and Slovak governments in particular have been keenly aware of this.

To avoid a misunderstanding that the term might create, the word "autonomy" is generally avoided by all and the concept of "self-government" is often used instead. The MKDH and MOS political parties use "autonomy" (also "self-administration") only in reference to education and culture, as in "cultural and educational autonomy." The Hungarian Coexistence, in turn, refers to "minority self-governance" in regard to education and culture, thus also de-emphasizing the territorial dimension. On the other hand, Coexistence also refers to "regions" instead of territory, thus appearing to retain the territorial dimension, perhaps without its secessionist connotation.

4. Minority rights

As noted earlier, the founding of the Austrian-Hungarian Dual Monarchy in 1867 meant greater powers for the government of Hungary over its population. Greater powers meant that Hungarian governments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were less restrained by Austrian rulers in formulating and implementing internal policies. Headed by and composed of members of the Hungarian landowning nobility, successive Hungarian

1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 55-65, and Ondrej Dostal, "Minorities," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 39-46.

governments had been able to refrain from granting rights – such as voting and landowning rights – to the population of Hungary as a whole; being Hungarian patriots, they could also more freely engage in the intensification of a long-existing assimilationist policy of Magyarization of Hungary's minorities²¹.

One aspect of this policy at the turn of the last century was educational and cultural: minorities, including Slovaks, were to speak Hungarian and to be educated in the culture of the Hungarian majority. The other aspect of Magyarization was political: Slovaks, like other minorities, were allowed limited representation in the Hungarian Parliament but had no right to autonomy. Individual rights were guaranteed, in that the use of the various languages was allowed by members of minorities in Church, in elementary and intermediary schools, but not in high-schools and above, and not in interactions with government agencies. All in all, Hungarian leaders considered Hungary to be a Hungarian national State, while other peoples within Hungary were not seen by them as nationalities but as minorities.

The Constitution of the new Czechoslovak Republic (1920), which also applied to Hungarian minorities now within the borders of Czechoslovakia, granted the right to use minority languages and acknowledged respect for minority rights. Also, perhaps in an attempt to reciprocate the pre-World War I attempts at the Magyarization of Slovaks in Hungary, a newly established Slovak League began advocating the Slovakization of minorities, including Hungarians in southern Slovakia, especially in the sphere of education.

Whatever may have been the effects of the Slovak League on Slovak government policies over the years, it is clear that the pre-1918 policies and attitudes of Hungarian governments in Hungary toward that country's minorities, including Slovaks, are components of a strong historical memory in the minds of many Slovaks even today. It is also likely that this historical memory plays a role in the formulation of Slovak government policies toward its minorities, including Hungarians. Here is one illustration of the presence of that historical memory: Milan Ferko, Director of the section of national literature and State language of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, in a working seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, noted that in Hungary, from 1000 to 1791, Latin was used as an administrative language. In 1791 the Hungarian government made the Hungarian language the language of the "motherland." Until 1918, the use of minority languages (Slovak, Ruthenian, Serbian, Croatian, Romanian, German) was systematically suppressed. In 1918 Hungarians became a minority in Slovakia, and now they demand linguistic rights. Ferko remarked: "Permanent aim of the real both past and contemporary Hungarian policy is the revision of the Trianon Treaty and the idea of revitalization of the Great Hungary."²² And again, "The question asked mainly by the Hungarian minority and their political representatives respectively concerns again the fact which I have already spoken about: the revision of the

²¹ Basically, the distinction between "nationality" and "minority" was made in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Dual Monarchy. Austrian governments regarded various groups in Austria as "nationalities," which implied certain rights, such as autonomy. Hungarian governments intentionally referred to various groups in Hungary as "minorities," which implied that they did not have the kind of rights nationalities might have, such as autonomy. Slovak governments followed the Hungarian practice.

²² Working seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, on November 11-12, 1996, 121.

Trianon Treaty and the effort of Hungarian radicals to violate the integrity of the Slovak Republic."²³ "We cannot disseminate e.g. the history textbooks in Hungarian with a systematic propaganda of a Saint Stephen idea of the Great Hungarian Empire. We cannot and will not tolerate this."²⁴

The crucial question is whether or not Slovak policy-makers recognize that the Hungarian governments' language policies toward minorities existed at the end of the nineteenth and in the early part of the twentieth century, while Slovak language policies toward its minorities are in force at the end of the twentieth. Moral principles have changed over the last century. On the other hand, a heightened sense of Slovak national identity, and resistance to demands of Hungarians in Slovakia that are perceived to weaken it, also play a role in the formulation of Slovak policies toward minorities. This heightened sense of Slovak national identity may partly be due to the fact that Slovakia is a new State, established on January 1, 1993. One might hope that this factor would diminish in the future.

5. The Romanies

While Slovaks and Hungarians are considered to be "the same" people except for their languages, the Romanies are considered to be an all-embracing social problem. It is particularly relevant to the issue of diversity in Slovakia that the latter are regarded by many in the rest of the Slovak population as a parasitic, antisocial group. "Gypsies don't pay taxes." "Under communist regime everybody had to work; under democracy you cannot force people to work – so Gypsies don't work." We were also told that although the capitalized word "Cigan" in the Slovak language means Romani, as it should, the non-capitalized and spoken word "cigan" in the Slovak language is a synonym for the word liar.

Apart from accusations of human rights violations, racist statements by the SNS and occasionally in the media, other overt actions against the Romani by members of the general public seem relatively limited. In 1995 the Slovak police registered nineteen assaults against Romanies, by members of extremist groups. In 1996, a similar number was registered. The attackers are usually skinheads, either alone or in groups. In interviews we have learned that the Romani often show one of three kinds of reactions to the negative public or individual attitudes toward them: not to identify themselves as Romani; refuse to teach the Romani language to their children; try to copy the life-style of the majority population.

In regard to education, our interviewees remarked that Romani children have no motivation to go to school in great part because textbooks, for example, do not refer to their history, contain pictures only of "white" children and, in general, refer only to the culture of "whites."

According to some estimates Romanies represent about 17 percent of Slovakia's unemployed.²⁵ However, certain policies have been introduced to remedy the situation and the

²³ Ibid, 122.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ondrej Dostal, "Minorities," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global*

Romanies were encouraged to pursue education and engage in cultural activities. In November 1996 the Government Council for National Minorities published a "strategic plan" addressing a number of Romani problems, including employment, housing, and education. In the 1996-97 school year some 586 Romani children who never attended kindergarten were assigned to so-called "grade zero" classes for remedial language instruction. On the other hand, with the loss of social and job security for all after 1989, both unemployment and poverty rose among them.

The Romani show a low level of political activity. Nevertheless, small changes are occurring. In the mid 1990s the Romani Civic Initiative (ROI) was founded, with Jan Kampus as its chairman. In the summer of 1996 a more radical group was established, Romani Intelligencia for Coexistence (RIS), critical of government programs for the Romani.

6. Germans in Slovakia

Otto Sobek, Chairman of the Carpathian Club of Germans in Slovakia, remarked in a working seminar that young ethnic Germans cannot speak German, or they speak in German dialects that differ considerably from standard German. "For [Slovak] citizens of German nationality the right to apply at [Slovak] public institutions in German is a questionable value, as they have far better command of Slovak than of German language... So we face a paradox; while in the case of the Hungarian minority the problem is to make children learn Slovak, in the case of the German minority, the problem is to make German children learn their own mother tongue."²⁶

D. Slovak-Hungarian government relations

Activists among Hungarians in Slovakia are in close contact with the Hungarian government; most of the Hungarian minority live along the border with Hungary; and the location of the border between the two countries is an issue in the minds of many on both sides of the border. Consequently, the relations between the two governments are an important issue in assessing the potential for conflict in the region.

1. The treaty between Hungary and Slovakia

On 19 March 1995 governments of Slovakia and Hungary signed in Paris a "Treaty of Good-neighbourly Relations and Friendly Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic." In that treaty the Contracting Parties declared that they feel responsibility for granting protection to, and promoting the preservation and deepening of, the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of the minorities living within their respective territories. Accordingly, they agreed, among other points, as follows:

Report on the State and Society, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 41.

²⁶ Working seminar on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Bratislava, on November 11-12, 1996, 110.

1. They will respect the inviolability of their common State border and each other's territorial integrity. They confirm that they have no territorial claims on each other and will not raise any such claims in the future.
2. They will create conditions for developing various forms of economic cooperation in the border region at regional and local levels, including cooperation between legal entities and natural persons.
3. They will attach importance to cooperation between higher-level self-governing units, towns and villages, in conformity with their competence and with the principle of subsidiarity.
4. They will support the teaching of the language of the other Contracting Party in schools and other educational institutions alike. To this effect they will assist one another in linguistic training and further education of teachers.
5. They will endeavour to expand the opportunities in their institutions of higher education for promoting the Hungarian and Slovak language studies in such institutions.
6. They will strengthen the climate of tolerance and understanding among their citizens of different ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origin, and will ensure equal and effective protection of rights of every person in their territories irrespective of race, skin colour, sex, language and religious, political or other conviction of national or social origin.
7. They confirm that protection of national minorities and of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights and, as such, falls within the scope of international cooperation and, in this sense, it is therefore not an exclusively domestic affair of the States concerned but constitutes a legitimate concern of the international community.
8. They agree that the Contracting Parties, in protecting the national minorities and the rights of persons belonging to those minorities, will be guided by the following principles:
 - (a) Membership of a national minority shall be a matter of free personal choice and no disadvantage shall result from the choice of such membership.
 - (b) All persons belonging to a national minority shall be equal before the law and have equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited.
 - (c) Persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right, individually or in community with other members of their group, to freely express, maintain, and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects.
 - (d) They shall refrain from policies and practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to minorities against their will, and shall protect these persons from any actions aimed at such assimilation. The Contracting Parties shall refrain from measures that would alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and which aim at restricting the rights and freedoms of those persons that would be to the detriment of the national minorities.
 - (e) Persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to establish and operate, in

conformity with their respective legislation and with the objective of the maintenance, development, and transfer of their identity, their own organizations and associations, including political parties and educational, cultural, and religious organizations. Both governments shall create legal conditions to this effect.

(f) Persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to take part effectively at the national, and where appropriate, at the regional level, in decisions affecting the minorities or the regions inhabited by the minorities, in a manner which is not incompatible with domestic legislation.

(g) Persons belonging to the Hungarian minority in the Slovak Republic and those belonging to the Slovak minority in the Republic of Hungary will have the right to use freely, individually or in community with other members of their group, orally or in writing, their mother tongue in public or in private life. They shall also have the right, in conformity with the domestic law and with the international commitments undertaken by the two Contracting Parties, to use their mother tongue in contacts with official authorities, including public administration, and in judicial proceedings, to display in their mother tongue the names of municipalities in which they live, street names and names of other public areas, topographical indications, inscriptions and information in public areas, to register and use their first names and surnames in this language, to have – without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language – adequate opportunities in the framework of the State educational system for being taught their mother tongue or for receiving instruction in their mother tongue and the right of access to public mass media without discrimination and the right to their own media.

9. They agree that the rights and duties flowing from their citizenship will be applied to persons belonging to national minorities as to any other citizens of the State concerned.

10. They agree that nothing in this article will be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any act contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular of the sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and political independence of States.

This treaty was concluded for a period of ten years. It specified that its validity will be extended for successive five-year periods, unless one of the Contracting Parties renounces it within at least one year before the given validity period expires. The treaty was subject to ratification and was to take effect on the date of the exchange of the instrument of ratification.²⁷

2. The Slovak parliament's reaction to the treaty

The Hungarian Parliament ratified the treaty, and on 26 March 1996, the Slovak Parliament approved the treaty with Hungary (119 voting for, 1 against, 19 abstentions, with all Hungarian deputies abstaining). But, significantly, the Parliament also adopted two accompanying clauses. One of the clauses specified that the treaty cannot be interpreted as granting minorities collective rights; the other clause specified that, in any case, collective rights do not mean the right to autonomy.

²⁷ For a more detailed version of the treaty see Appendix I.

These two clauses, which were not binding on Hungary since they were adopted only in the Slovak Parliament, were demanded by coalition deputies, purportedly in order to clear up confusion over the interpretation of the Council of Europe's Recommendation No. 1201, stipulating that ethnic minorities be given political autonomy. Ethnic Hungarian deputies, abstaining from the vote on the ratification of the treaty, stressed, first, that a number of steps had already been taken since the treaty was signed in March 1995 to limit minority rights, and second, that there had already been cuts in funding for minority culture, and laws had already been enacted on State language and on the country's territorial arrangement, both unfavourable to the Hungarian minority.

In addition, and at the same session in which it ratified the Slovak-Hungarian treaty with the two clauses, the Slovak Parliament also approved a penal code amendment on the protection of the Republic, which was passed by a 77-57 margin, with abstentions from only two coalition deputies.

The two laws (the treaty with Hungary and amendment of the penal code on the protection of the republic) are interconnected. While the former aimed to widen human rights, a condition for Slovak membership in the EU and NATO, by strengthening relations with Hungary, the latter could seriously damage ties with Hungary – and harm Slovakia's chances for Western integration – because the penal code was intended by its supporters to restrict statements and acts by ethnic Hungarians.

The penal code amendment was seen as a move against ethnic Hungarians, for it states that individuals who organize public rallies "with the intention of subverting the country's constitutional system, territorial integrity or defense capability" can be jailed for six months to three years, while those who "spread false information" that could damage Slovakia's interests, can be imprisoned for up to two years. Opposition journalists and politicians also perceived themselves as potential targets of the law. Hungarian political leaders feared they could be jailed under the legislation. Ultimately, the Slovak President Kovac vetoed it.

Linking the two legislative actions was insisted on by the radical Slovak National Party (SNS), a junior coalition partner of the government in 1996, which conditioned its support for the ratification of the treaty on approval of the penal law. On the other hand, the law on the protection of the Republic prompted fierce protests from the political opposition, the Catholic Church, trade unions, the Association of Slovak Judges, and a number of civic groups.

It was not only ethnic Hungarians who were concerned about the consequences of the law. Although cabinet members – including Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, Justice Minister Jozef Liscak, and Deputy Premier Katarina Tothova – stressed that the law was only intended for use in extreme cases, critics claimed that the vaguely worded legislation allowed for arbitrary interpretation and endangered the freedom of expression and assembly.

3. The disagreement continues

In January 1998, the Slovak Foreign Minister met his Hungarian counterpart in Budapest to discuss an agreement on methods of monitoring the implementation of the treaty signed two years earlier. The two countries still disagreed on the method of nominating two representatives of the half-a-million Hungarian ethnic minority in Slovakia. The Hungarian

government believed that the representatives should be drawn from or supported by three Hungarian ethnic minority parties in Slovakia, while the Slovak government argued that the minority parties did not represent the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. After a meeting with representatives, the Slovak Foreign Minister launched an unusually strong criticism of the status of ethnic minorities in Hungary and said that the Slovak ethnic minority's status in Hungary was "deplorable." The Hungarian government had pledged to ensure minority representation in the Hungarian Parliament in 1993, he said. He dismissed the fact that there was no similar law in Slovakia as irrelevant, saying that the population of ethnic minorities has increased over the past fifty years in Slovakia, while in Hungary the population of the Slovak minority has decreased over the past forty years from 400,000 to 10,000.

E. Public opinion

Public opinion research in Slovakia is carried out by two institutions: The Centre for Social Analysis (CSA) and the Institute for Public Opinion Research (UVVM), both in Bratislava. In addition, both the CSA and the UVVM also carry out surveys, about one a year. We have included here some of the data about opinions of populations concerning rights of minorities.

Hopes were aroused in November 1989 with the end of communist rule. But the 1989 change also removed the restraints previously put on Slovak patriotism and nationalism, and Slovak nationalist activities increased in southern Slovakia where the Hungarian minority of Slovakia was a majority. In April 1990, 54 percent of Slovaks and some 70 percent of Hungarians regarded relations between Slovaks and Hungarians as tense. In the fall of 1990, Slovak nationalists, led by the Slovak National Party, engaged in mass protests, hunger strikes, street demonstrations, and physical attacks on the Parliament and on its members, in connection with the proposed liberal language laws. After a much-modified language law was passed, which the Hungarian minority representatives accepted, all these manifestations dwindled and the atmosphere calmed down.²⁸

Also in the fall of 1990, 75 percent of Hungarians claimed that tensions between Slovaks and Hungarians were artificially stimulated by a number of Slovak politicians. (Only 21 percent accepted that accusation in relation to Hungarian minority politicians and only 19 percent in relation to the government of the Republic of Hungary.) Sixty-eight percent of Slovaks in the mixed areas claimed tension was being artificially stimulated by Hungarian minority politicians and 62 percent charged that the Hungarian government was responsible. (Sixty-two percent levelled this accusation against Slovak politicians, which may testify to the Slovaks taking a more critical attitude toward "their" politicians.)²⁹

The parliamentary elections of 1992 brought about the victory of the nationalist political parties, which pushed into the opposition not only the political representatives of the

²⁸ Pavol Fric, "Public Opinion with regard to the status of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, post-November 1989" in op.cit., 37-38.

²⁹ Pavol Fric, "Public Opinion with regard to the status of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, post-November 1989" in op.cit., 42.

Hungarian parties, but most members of the Hungarian minority. The election results meant at least the postponement of any fulfilment of hopes for a just solution to the problem of the Hungarian minority's status.³⁰

The Hungarian minority opposed the separation of the Slovak and the Czech Republics of 1993. Seventy percent of Hungarians considered the "more cultured" Czechs to be guarantors of Hungarians' security against the "more aggressive" Slovaks. Thus, the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, the independence of Slovakia, about which there was no referendum, was unfavourably viewed by the Hungarian minority.

In March 1993, 70 percent of Hungarians and 70 percent of Slovaks living in the ethnically mixed areas regarded relations between them, in those ethnically mixed areas, as good. Forty-seven percent of Slovakia's Hungarians feared Slovakization. Distrust of the government among Hungarians in March 1993 was 72 percent; among Slovaks, distrust of the government fell and trust increased.

Hungarians' dissatisfaction, complaints, and demands have been focussed especially on the question of the official use of the Hungarian language in schools, offices, and official acts. Hungarians demanded that in ethnically mixed regions dual-language public notices should be in use and public officials should be able to speak both languages. Slovak resistance to these demands diminished after 1990. Nevertheless, significant sections of the Slovak population objected to giving a minority language official status.

Zora Butorova reported that, at the beginning of 1997, 88 percent of ethnic Hungarians rejected government policies toward the Hungarian minority, while only 7 percent supported it; 54 percent of Slovaks approved the policies and 28 percent disapproved.³¹ In January 1997, 71 percent of ethnic Hungarians perceived their rights as being restricted, and only 24 percent perceived them as being sufficient for their future development. Twenty-two percent of Slovaks perceived ethnic Hungarians to be in a privileged position, and only 2 percent of the Hungarians had this perception.³²

Interestingly, while between 1993 and 1996 there was a 7 percent decline in the number of Slovaks who believed that the rights of ethnic Hungarians were protected (in 6 categories), there was a 20 percent decline in the number of ethnic Hungarians who believed these rights were protected (in the same 6 categories). Shortly before representatives of EU recommended against including Slovakia in the first wave of EU expansion, 76 percent of the Slovak population and 92 percent of the supporters of the Hungarian Coalition supported EU affiliation.

According to Pavol Fric, the Slovaks and Hungarians in Southern Slovakia find themselves in

³⁰ Pavol Fric, "Public Opinion with regard to the status of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, post-November 1989" in *op.cit.*, 45.

³¹ Zora Butorova, "Public Opinion," in Butora Martin and Thomas W. Skalodny, eds., *Slovakia 1996-1997: A Global Report on the State and Society*, Institute for Public Affairs, Bratislava, 1998, 67-80.

³² Zora Butorova, "Public Opinion," 73.

a boundary situation which, if the imagined threshold were to be crossed, would threaten the outbreak of violent conflict. The emphasis on good mutual relations is an attempt to escape the existing tension and thus preventively to mitigate any tendencies to "balkanize" the conflict by people from the outside. After all it is they – the people who live there – who alone are qualified to judge the situation in Southern Slovakia.³³

In March 1990 as many as 90 percent of Hungarians and 75 percent of Slovaks living in the mixed territory expressed the opinion that it was particularly those who did not live there who emphasized the bad relations between Slovaks and Hungarians.

³³ Pavol Fric, "Public Opinion with regard to the status of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia." 41.

Part IV. Recommendations

In this summary of our recommendations, based on our findings in the Slovak pilot project, we kept in mind their possible relevance and use for designing an expanded project in Central European countries. It seemed to us useful first to list some of our more seminal findings in the Slovak pilot project, and then list our recommendations separately, both in an arbitrary order.

1. A brief summary of our major findings

* *The "minority problem"*. Perhaps the most salient among our findings are that (a) the "minority problem" in Slovakia does not concern one minority group only, and that (b) the "minority problem" is not one-dimensional. There are several minority groups and several types of "minority problems," and each poses different sets of challenges to the government and society as a whole. Thus, for example, the Hungarian minority problem in Slovakia has political and inter-State dimensions in addition to cultural and educational dimensions; the Romani minority problem in Slovakia has wide-ranging social dimensions with racist undertones, in addition to other dimensions, and so on.

* *Political versus social problems*. Hungarian minority-Slovak majority relations are primarily political in that the Hungarian minority has strong political organizations. That issue takes the center stage. The Romani minority-Slovak majority relations, as well as relations between the Slovak majority and Ruthenian, Ukrainian, and other minorities, are primarily social, for these groups do not have strong political organizations. Nevertheless, social problems are equally as important as political ones, and may turn out to be serious in the long run.

* *The type of diversity*. The most important type of diversity in Slovakia as a whole is ethnic or national diversity. Other types of diversity – be it religious, class/income, or social status – do play an important role locally but to a far lesser extent nationally.

* *Historical memory*. Historical memories are an important component of the differences, especially between Slovaks and Hungarians and between Slovaks and the Romani. Personal experiences of "mistreatment," and historical memories of "mistreatment" of a group by another group – some of them from a distant past, others from the more recent past – tend to be alive in Slovakia.

* *The European Union*. Slovak governments, and most Slovak citizens, wish to be accepted into the European Union, and resent not being included on the list of candidates with their country's neighbours. This desire and the feeling of being left out seem to have had some positive effects on debates about human rights in general and minority rights in particular.

* *Democratization*. Post-1989 efforts for democratization and the switch to a market economy in Slovakia, and in other formerly communist-ruled States, are perceived as challenges. Attempts to meet these challenges do affect, and are affected by, policies toward minorities, but perhaps only because positive policies toward minorities are accepted as being among the

moral principles of democracy.

* *Recently acquired statehood.* The awareness of the fact that Slovakia, which became independent on 1 January 1993, is a new State, is probably responsible for a heightened sense of Slovak national identity and resistance to statements and acts that are perceived to weaken that sense of national identity. There is an additional awareness of the fact that the breakup of Czechoslovakia produced two States, a Slovak State and a Czech State, which produced a competition of sorts between the two countries.

* *The potential for violent conflict.* We have found no signs of any imminent eruption of violent ethnic conflict between Slovaks and minorities in Slovakia. However, in light of prejudice, various manifestations of intolerance toward some minorities, and a considerable intensity of historical memories, it seems to us possible that if economic conditions in Slovakia deteriorate – affecting sections of the majority as well as the minorities – these factors may prove to be sufficient contributors for an eruption of ethnic violence.

2. A brief summary of our recommendations

* For about five years, from the independence of Slovakia on 1 January 1993 until the elections at the end of 1998, Slovak governments and Parliaments were composed of members of conservative and nationalist parties. Their laws and policies toward minorities were not regarded as favourable. The newly elected Parliament and the new Slovak government are likely to enact more favourable laws and engage in more favourable policies toward minorities. Indeed, when the new government created the new vice-premierships for legal affairs, the economy, and European integration, it also created one responsible for minorities.

Parliaments and governments are now democratically elected in Slovakia and in other Central European countries. The outcome of these elections cannot be altered by researchers. However, it seems possible, and is recommended for consideration, that researchers try to involve members of political parties – especially those whose attitude toward minorities is not favourable – in discussions of minority rights. Open discussions on the meanings of "autonomy," "self-government," "civil society" and other concepts and issues might produce positive results: better understanding of the objectives of minorities; avoidance or reduction of conflicts based on mistrust; and, ultimately, more favourable legislation.

Such discussions, involving experts and members of political parties and, perhaps also, representatives of cultural associations, seem to be especially useful in countries such as Slovakia, where historical memories play an important role in the formulation of attitudes. Apart from discussing the terms mentioned above, one might also debate the importance of present versus past "moral principles." One might point out and discuss that while past harmful deeds may have occurred in the context of past moral principles, deeds at present could, and perhaps should, be viewed in light of contemporary moral principles, which present higher moral standards as far as attitudes and policies toward minorities are concerned.

* It seems to be a consensus among the experts we interviewed in Slovakia that as each country has its own pattern of diversity and history, no other country's solutions to the problems stemming from diversity are applicable to Slovakia. It is not clear to us, however, to what degree this apparent consensus is due to a lack of full information about solutions

elsewhere in the world. It is strongly recommended that the MOST program of UNESCO sponsor workshops with the participation of Slovak and other Central European experts, as well as experts from other regions of the world where specific solutions have been successfully implemented (for example Switzerland, South Tyrol, Belgium), to discuss a range of possible solutions and their applicability in Slovakia as elsewhere.

* Prevailing moral principles are to be found in international documents. Since virtually all interviewees favour membership in the European Union and in "Western society" in general, recurrent references to international documents relating to minorities may be helpful in promoting peaceful coexistence in diversity. In any case, pressure on elected officials might come from two sources. One source is greater public awareness of the moral principles of rights in general, and the standards of specific international organizations, such as the European Commission, in particular. The overwhelming support for membership in the European Union is an important incentive in that regard. The other source of pressure may derive from associations of the emerging "civil society."

* Education and "civic society." Not surprisingly, virtually all interviewees suggested that education was the most important means for the attainment of "civil society" among other recommended solutions. In more practical terms, interviewees recommended the creation of a large number of cultural associations to strengthen the foundations of civil society. In this regard, one interesting suggestion was to distinguish between "civic integration" and "national integration." The first seems to refer to integration on the societal level, the gaining of a sense among all inhabitants of Slovakia of being members of one society. National integration, in turn, seems to imply a sense of unity on the level of citizenship that, for example, obliges one to vote and otherwise participate in the political life of the country. We second these recommendations of our interviewees.

* We consider it crucial to take into account historical memories in any future research project in Central Europe. That requires of future researchers a thorough exploration of the entire history of relations among the various groups in any country researched.

* In specific reference to the Romanies in Slovakia, it was suggested that the Slovak government has to deal with all aspects of Romani life, including education, housing, and employment. Significantly, it was stressed that the Romanies should be involved in the decision-making process involving issues affecting their lives, including involvement in politics. This approach is recommendable.

* Although, as noted earlier, we did not find signs of an imminent eruption of ethnic conflict in Slovakia, a deterioration of the standard of living in Slovakia might bring it about. Consequently, we consider it important to enhance economic modernization in Slovakia, as elsewhere, especially in the short term.

* Striving for the promotion of tolerance and understanding, and for the acceptance of multiculturalism among diversities in Slovakia, as elsewhere, is our recommendation for the long term.

Lastly, we present two specific recommendations, one concerning education and the other concerning the elements of the Central European research project:

* *Education.* It is recommended for consideration that a special curriculum on "Diversity" be designed and introduced in Slovak elementary and/or high schools. We shall not presume to provide here the content of such a curriculum; it must be prepared by local experts. (It goes without saying that teachers should be involved in the preparation of the curriculum and be trained in administering it.) Suffice it to say that while the first part of the curriculum should perhaps be general (explaining and discussing ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other diversities), the second part should be designed according to the specifics of the country (taking into consideration existing diversities and issues and events related to them.) While education of all age groups and in all institutional settings is important, the greatest importance should be given to the education of the young in schools.

* *Research.* It is recommended that research on the "Management of Diversity" be conducted in each Central European country. With the help of UNESCO, a Central European Commission for the Study of Diversity (CECSOD), composed of (a) one or more academic experts from each country to be included in the expanded project, who would also serve as coordinators of research in their respective countries, (b) representatives of MOST and (c) representatives of the Institut für Konfliktforschung. They would meet periodically (perhaps in Vienna) to overview the draft research project, and to discuss and to react to the draft report at the conclusion of the research project.

Appendix I

Treaty of Good-neighbourly Relations and Friendly Cooperation between the Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic Paris, 19 March 1995

(This is a slightly revised version of the relevant sections of the English text, which was translated into English by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Hungarian and Slovak.)

The Republic of Hungary and the Slovak Republic (hereafter referred to as the Contracting Parties) ...

Recognizing that persons belonging to national minorities constitute an integral part of the society and of the State of the Contracting Party on whose territory they live [the Contracting Parties] declare that they feel responsibility for granting protection to, and promoting preservation and deepening of, [the] national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of the minorities living within their respective territories

The Contracting Parties have agreed as follows:

Article 3: (1) . . . that they shall respect the inviolability of their common State border and each other's territorial integrity. They confirm that they have no territorial claims on each other and will not raise any such claims in the future.

Article 7: (2) . . . [they] shall create conditions for developing various forms of economic cooperation in the border region at regional and local levels, including cooperation between legal entities and natural persons.

(3) . . . [they] shall attach importance to cooperation between higher-level self-governing units, towns and villages, in conformity with their competence and with the principle of subsidiarity.

Article 12: (6) . . . [they] shall support the teaching of the language of the other Contracting Party in schools and other education institutes alike. To this effect they shall assist one another in linguistic training and further education of teachers.

(7) . . . [they] shall endeavour to expand the opportunities in their institutions of higher education . . . for promoting the Hungarian and Slovak language studies in such institutions.

Article 14: . . . [they] shall strengthen the climate of tolerance and understanding among their citizens of different ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origin. . . . [they] shall ensure equal and effective protection of rights of every person on their territories irrespective of race, skin colour, sex, language and religious, political or other conviction or national or social origin.

Article 15: (1) . . . [they] confirm that protection of national minorities and of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights and as such falls within the scope of international cooperation and, in this sense, it is therefore not an exclusively domestic affair of the States concerned but constitutes a legitimate concern of the international community.

(2) The Contracting Parties, in protecting the national minorities and the rights of persons belonging to those minorities, are guided by the following principles:

(a) membership in a national minority shall be a matter of free personal choice and no disadvantage shall result from the choice of such membership,

(b) all persons belonging to a national minority shall be equal before the law and have equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited,

(c) persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right, individually or in community with other members of their group, to freely express, maintain and develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in all its aspects,

(d) . . . [the parties] shall refrain from policies and practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to minorities against their will, and shall protect these persons from any actions aimed at such assimilation. The Contracting Parties shall refrain from measures that would alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and which aim at restricting the rights and freedoms of those persons that would be to the detriment of the national minorities,

(e) persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to establish and operate, in conformity with their respective legislation and with the objective of maintaining, development and transfer of their identity, their own organizations and associations, including political parties and educational, cultural and religious organizations. Both governments shall create legal conditions to this effect,

(f) persons belonging to national minorities shall have the right to take part effectively at the national, and where appropriate, at the regional level, in the decisions affecting the minorities or the regions inhabited by the minorities, in the manner which is not incompatible with domestic legislation,

(g) persons belonging to the Hungarian minority in the Slovak Republic and those belonging to the Slovak minority in the Republic of Hungary shall have the right to use freely, individually or in community with other members of their group, orally or in writing, their mother tongue in public or in private life. They shall also have the right, in conformity with the domestic law and with the international commitments undertaken by the two Contracting Parties, to use their mother tongue in contacts with official authorities, including public administration, and in judicial proceedings, to display in their mother tongue the names of municipalities in which they live, street names and names of other public areas, topographical indications, inscription, and information in public areas, to register and use their first names and surnames in this language, to have – without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language – adequate opportunities in the framework of the State educational system for being taught their mother tongue or for receiving instruction in their mother tongue and the right of access to public mass media without discrimination and the right to their own media.

(3) . . . [the parties] agree that the same rights and duties flowing from their citizenship shall be applied to the persons belonging to national minorities . . . as to any other citizens of

the State concerned.

(5) Nothing in this article shall be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any act contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular of the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

Article 22: (1) The present Treaty is concluded for a period of ten years. Its validity shall be extended, always for another five-year period, unless one of the Contracting Parties denounces it within at least one year before the given validity period expires.

(2) The present Treaty is subject to ratification and shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of the instrument of ratification. . .

This Treaty was written in Paris on 19 March 1995 in both Hungarian and Slovak languages, both texts being equally authentic.

Signed: Gyula Horn for the Republic of Hungary and Vladimir Meciar, for the Slovak Republic.

Appendix II

Working Questionnaire: Slovakia

Date:

NAME:.....

TOWN:.....

POSITION/PROFESSION:

Thank you very much for agreeing to see me. We are engaged in a research project of the Institut fur Konfliktforschung in Vienna on "Managing cultural, ethnic and religious diversities in Central Europe," which is sponsored by UNESCO's MOST project and the Ministry of Science and Technology, the government of Austria. The main question we are seeking answers for from experts and community leaders in the various countries is this:

"What should be done to preserve or restore peaceful cultural, ethnic and cultural relations in the various Central European States?"

Slovakia is the first country we are looking at. We are trying here to learn what kind of questions we should ask. I would appreciate it if you would correct me if I ask the wrong question and help me to reach a better understanding of the situation.

Basically, there are four types of questions I want to ask:

1. What kind of diversities exist here (ethnic, religious, etc.)
2. What kind of problems have they caused in the past and present?
3. What were government responses to these problems?
4. What kind of solutions would be appropriate in your view?

1. What kind of diversities (ethnic, religious, etc.) exist here (in Slovakia, in this region, in this town):

a. Do they have organizations here? Do they live in specific parts (of Slovakia, the region, town)? Do they have their own schools? Their own churches? b. How large are these groups?

2. What kind of problems have these groups caused in the past and in the present?

What are their demands? What kind of activities were they engaged in?

3. What were government responses to these problems and demands?

Have these responses worked? How? Why not?

4. What kind of solutions would be appropriate in your view?

What do you think should be done to preserve/restore peaceful relations?

a. Improve economic conditions? b. Provide them with greater political representation?
c. Grant autonomy? d. Improve education?

Are there any questions that I did not ask that you think may be helpful for me to understand the situation?

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Male/Female; education:; mother tongue:; town/village:;
occupation/profession:; religion:

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