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Slovakia's image abroad is created on at least four different levels: journalistic accounts; general comparative academic articles; the assessments of international organisations such as the European Union; and more rigorous academic analyses of Slovakia's particular path towards democratic consolidation. While the first two media have tended to present simplistic and rather negative images of Slovakia, the country benefits from more detailed analyses which are better suited to reflecting the full complexity of developments. Since the thorough approach of the European Union will be the most crucial in deciding Slovakia's fate, its ability to make real progress in democratic consolidation should eventually prove to be more important than the negative images that individuals sometimes present.

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Ownership Reform and Corporate Governance (the Slovak Privatization Process in 1990 - 1996).

By Mikael Olsson. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1999.

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Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – And After.

By Richard Crampton. London: Routledge, 1997.

Robert Lane Greene

Global Reports on the State of Society (Slovensko 1995, Global Report on Slovakia. Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends for 1996, Slovensko 1996, Slovakia 1996-1997, Slovensko 1997, Slovensko 1998-1999, Slovakia 1998-1999).

Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, Sándor Márai Foundation, 1995-1999.

Tomáš Strážay

The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht.

By Andrew Moravcsik. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

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Dear Readers,

this is the first issue of the *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* review, which is published under the auspices of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. It will be published twice a year exclusively in English.

The Review is intended to fill a gap in the communication between Slovakia and the world in the research fields of international relations and political science. This communication should be two-way, and the Review is intended not only as a channel of information on Slovakia and the central European region for foreign recipients, but also as a base for the exchange of information on world issues. We consider communication and dialogue to be the most significant components of integration processes that will take place in the 21st century. Today, ten years after the fall of Communism, Slovakia has its own community of scholars and politicians, who feel an intense need to establish a dialogue with the same community in the West. Many Slovak students studied international relations at European and American universities and *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* also aims to be a forum in which they may present themselves and air their views.

What we consider to be of equal importance is to open up the publication for our foreign colleagues who specialise in our region and its problems. We particularly rely on our colleagues on the editorial team as well as many researcher in academies and renowned think-tanks. We would like to express our gratitude to our Slovak and foreign friends for their decision to participate the Advisory Board of *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, its editorial team, and would like to express our conviction that our co-operation will be fruitful.

It is not accidental that the Review will be published by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), as it is of vital importance that the forum for the publication of a journal like this should be independent, non-governmental and impartial. While government varies, Slovak national interests – democracy, prosperity and integration – remain constant. Since its inception in 1993 (the break-up of federal Czechoslovakia), Slovak society has resolved to stimulate the Slovak population's interest in political events in the world, as well as to bring Slovakia into international networks of contact. In 1995, the Research Centre, the first Slovak independent think-tank to study international relations, was set up within SFPA. An internal monthly periodical – *The Newsletter of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association* – has been published in the Slovak language since 1997. The first issue of *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* is published at the beginning of the year 2000. We feel that the continuity in our action is obvious.

In the second half of the 20th century, Slovakia within the Communist bloc faced unprecedented isolation, and from the viewpoint of civilisation, technology and information, it was separated from western Europe, to which it culturally and historically belonged. Today we strive for political and economic re-incorporation into this area. Since the fall of Communism ten years ago, Slovakia has undergone complicated economic and political transition. Paraphrasing Claus Offe, passing through a long and dark



tunnel we are able to see the light at the end of it. However, now it is very difficult to estimate how long our journey to its end will be.

Slovakia does not consider Euro-Atlantic community integration to be only a one-way admission act, but it also wishes to have its share of responsibility for the situation in the Central European region as well as all of Europe. It wishes to become a steadfast link in the chain of stability. In order to achieve this, it is necessary that our politicians and diplomats be well-informed and also that information on our thinking will be available to recipients abroad, in Europe, and in the world.

The first issue of *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* chiefly addresses Slovak issues – Slovakia's international image and its NATO/EU integration efforts. In the future, we would like to publish contributions on issues extending well beyond the horizon of Slovakia, and which address issues such as security, democratisation and the building of prosperity in the central European region as well as the Balkans. The development in this region will considerably affect the form of security in all Europe. Not only our geographical proximity to the region but also our historical and cultural links prompt us to devote more attention to this region.

We hope that you find the first issue of *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* interesting and become our loyal readers or even contributors. We intend to introduce a Letters to the Editor section, so your comments on the form and content as well as on particular articles in this issue are welcome and will be published.

In conclusion, allow us to express our conviction that the *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* review will become not only an effective channel of information presenting useful and original ideas and material by prominent scholars, but also a title publication associated with quality, innovation and critical judgement.

Magda Vašaryová
Chair of International
Advisory Board

Pavol Lukáč
Chair of Editorial Board



EDUARD KUKAN

Slovakia and its Integration into the EU and NATO

For the Slovak Republic, 1999 will go down in its history as an exceptionally successful year. A deep fault can clearly be seen in contrast with the unfavourable foreign policy situation of the country in the autumn of 1998 when the current government was formed. As a result of the politics of the previous ruling coalition, whose predominant trait was the deep gap between the declared objectives on the one hand and the political practice and inconsistency between internal and foreign policy on the other hand, Slovakia excluded itself from the main stream of the European and transatlantic integration movements. This is why the new Government set a return to the integration trajectory as its primary objective: the revitalisation of co-operation with its neighbours as part of the Visegrad 4 regional grouping, and the earliest possible integration of the country into the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Last year's results demonstrate that these objectives, formulated in the programme of the Government, are not devoid of a true meaning. From a country whose partners found obscure and cryptic, Slovakia became a country with clearly defined domestic and foreign policy priorities which conducts politics in a manner conducive to their attainment. It has seen itself change from a country that was often the destination of démarches sent by the EU and by the governments of Western democracies, into a country which received an invitation at the Helsinki summit to open negotiations on accession to the EU. It has changed from a country whose internal politics discouraged its neighbours from forging closer ties, into a country which has revitalised co-operation in the region. From an isolated country, to a country that can be counted on.

The prospect of membership in the three international organizations to which we

Eduard Kukan (1939) held several diplomatic posts since joining the Czechoslovak foreign service in 1964. Between 1990 and 1993 he served as the permanent representative of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic to the United Nations in New York. Since the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 he was the Slovak ambassador to the UN. He briefly served as Slovakia's minister of Foreign Affairs from March to December 1994 and has been appointed to the same post after the 1998 parliamentary elections. He currently also serves as the special UN envoy for the Balkans.



currently strive - NATO, EU, OECD - now seems to be a far more realistic possibility than at any time in the past. We do not view this issue however, from only the security, economic or legal aspects. We view it as our reentry into the civilisation and cultural realm to which Slovakia naturally belongs. I see a certain symbolism in the fact that this turnaround in relations between the Slovak Republic and NATO and the EU took place in 1999, i.e. the tenth anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, which had as one of its central motives a return to Europe. In 1999, Slovakia took a decisive step in the direction of "Brussels", with Brussels being a very fitting metaphor as it is the seat of both the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Slovakia had managed to retreat from the cul-de-sac and embark on the road leading to where this country belongs: to the community of countries interconnected not only by a dense network of institutional links, but primarily by common values, without which such a dense network could not exist.

It is my sincere conviction that in a few years, Slovakia will become a member of both the EU and NATO. It will, however, not enter the EU and NATO as they are known today, as even international organisations go through their own life-cycle, evolving and adapting to changing circumstances. At present, this is especially true of the EU, which is about to promote institutional reform and which has increasingly greater ambitions to expand and deepen co-operation by adding a security dimension. Although Slovakia is not yet a fully-fledged member of either the EU or NATO, it must have a vision of their future, a vision of its own future within such, and of the significance of these organisations for its future.

The objective of my article is therefore threefold. First and foremost, it is to recapitulate the train of events that distinguished 1999 as a successful year for Slovakia, and that had a central significance for the ambitions of Slovakia to be integrated into the EU and NATO. At the same time, I will briefly outline the events that we anticipate in the immediate future, above all for the year 2000, and finally I will touch upon the above mentioned Slovak view of the importance of today's EU and NATO for our country and for Europe as a whole.

Slovakia and the EU

At the Luxembourg summit of the EU, Slovakia was not selected to open negotiations in March 1998, unlike the other countries comprising the Visegrad Group. The Slovak Republic was excluded from this group mainly due to its failure to fulfil the political component of the Copenhagen criteria. It was thanks to the outcome of the September 1998 parliamentary elections, that the creation of the conditions for changing the relationship between Slovakia and the Union was finally made possible. The Regular

The prospect of membership in the three international organisations to which we currently strive - NATO, EU, OECD - now seems to be a far more realistic possibility than at any time in the past.



Report by the European Commission, published in November 1998, was issued too early to reflect any positive post-election developments, but the outcome of the elections had an almost immediate effect, changing the quality and frequency of contacts between Slovakia and the EU. Immediately after the elections in Slovakia, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in which it expressed its appreciation for the conduct and results of the elections and recommended adopting a flexible approach vis-à-vis Slovakia, taking account of the new situation. Based on a proposal by the European Commission, a High Level Working Group (the Working Group) was subsequently set up between the Slovak Republic and the European Commission; it was a specific temporary mechanism whose objective was to speed up and facilitate the preparation of Slovakia for integration by means of regular exchanges of information relating to the fulfilment of the priorities of the pre-accession strategy.¹ Over the 10 months of its existence, the Working Group met five times and, in September 1999, representatives of both sides agreed that the Working Group had fulfilled its objectives and that its activities could be discontinued. The very fact that the Working Group did not consider it necessary to continue in its work after less than one year can be also considered as proof of the marked progress made by Slovakia.

However, the most tangible proof of the recognition of Slovakia's efforts was the Regular Report from the Commission on Slovakia's Progress towards Accession, published on 13 October 1999. It noted that Slovakia had discharged the key tasks set out for 1999 and that Slovakia clearly had a positive track record in fulfilling the Copenhagen political criteria. Following the parliamentary elections, proportional representation was ensured for the opposition on the parliamentary oversight committees and supervisory boards, and opposition deputies were offered chair positions in six of eight committees. A representative of the Hungarian Coalition Party was appointed Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development, and a member of the Roma minority was appointed to the newly created office of Government's Plenipotentiary for Roma Minority Issues. In July 1999, Parliament passed important legislation on the use of national minority languages. Slovakia's OSCE commitments had been adhered to not only in the holding of parliamentary elections, but municipal and presidential elections too.

Naturally, it is not enough to fulfil political criteria alone. In the section of the Regular Report devoted to the fulfilment of economic criteria, the Commission notes that Slovakia is close to having a functioning market economy. We realise that one of the main preconditions for accession to the EU is to make our economy capable of coping with the competitive pressures of the internal market of the EU. It is in the vital interest of

¹The head of the Working Group for Slovakia was State Secretary Ján Figel and for the Commission, Deputy General Director of DG IA François Lamoureux. Individual sessions of the Working Group were devoted, in particular, to the fulfilment of the short-term political criteria and the adoption of certain basic acts concerning the internal market (public procurement, state aid, technical requirements for products and conformity assessment).



Slovakia to revitalise and modernise its economy so that it is capable of coping with an economically demanding environment. This is why the restoration of economic balance together with economic restructuring became one of the key priorities of the pre-accession strategy. Since January 1999, the Slovak Government has adopted a number of comprehensive measures to improve economic parameters. The *Medium-term Strategy of Economic and Social Development of Slovakia* was adopted, establishing the medium-term priorities of economic policy. In March, the Government adopted a strategy promoting the inflow of foreign direct investment, which in the legislative field envisages the harmonisation of VAT rates and other indirect taxes with the taxes in the EU, and in the financial field it proposes tax holidays for investors of up to 10 years in certain fields. The core of the *Programme for the Restructuring of Selected Banks and Financial Restructuring of Enterprises* adopted with a view to restructuring the banking and corporate sector, is the improvement of the loan portfolio and re-capitalisation of the four largest Slovak banks with their subsequent privatisation. Another important legislative step was the amendment to the Act on the Conditions of the Transfer of State Property to Other Persons, i.e. the Large-scale Privatisation Act, which repealed the Strategic Company Act and enabled transparent privatisation. Important progress was made also in the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* in the internal market area. The State Aid Act and the Public Procurement Act are fully compatible with the laws of the EU. These and many other activities were based on the *National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAAC)* the revised version of which Slovakia submitted to the European Commission in May of 1999. The NPAAC is of key importance for the process of getting closer to EU membership. However, it is not only an important document in connection with Slovakia's integration policy, it also outlines the Government's strategy up to 2002 and, as such, is the touch stone for fulfilling its programme.

In its *Regular Report*, published together with regular reports on other applicant countries, the Commission recommended opening accession negotiations in 2000 with all the candidates who fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria and are ready to adopt the necessary measures for fulfilment of the economic criteria. At its December summit in Helsinki, the European Council decided to approve the recommendations of the Commission and decided to open accession negotiations with Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Rumania, and Slovakia. As a result of this decision, the number of countries engaged in accession negotiations has increased to twelve, and the differentiation of candidate countries into groups was eliminated. This is an important point for our country. The only differences between the negotiating countries will be those that emanate from their abilities and readiness. This presents Slovakia with a realistic chance to catch up with the countries that are already in the third year of accession negotiations with the EU. Naturally, this will not be an easy task considering the head start that these countries have. Nevertheless, our entry into the EU together with our three neighbours - Visegrad partners - is our strategic foreign policy objective, and Slovakia is ready to do everything within its powers to achieve this.



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the existing gap with the other V-4 countries already engaged in negotiations does not widen any further. To demonstrate our readiness to proceed with negotiations as soon as possible, Slovakia has prepared position papers on fifteen chapters, in which it will not request any relief or exceptions, and will apply only for a small number of precisely delimited transition periods. We hope that the EU will be in a position to expand by the end of the term of office of the current European Commission, i.e. in 2004 or 2005. Although the countries in the initial group of candidate countries are contemplating 2002 or 2003, I am afraid that it would prove difficult to harmonise the level of preparedness of the EU and that of the candidate countries. The European Union will have to tackle its internal reform first and foremost. It would be regrettable - not only from the perspective of the needs of Slovakia, but also from the perspective of the needs of the EU itself, if the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference on institutional reform only continues dealing with the unfinished business from Amsterdam. It is necessary to approach the reform in a manner that takes into account the process of EU enlargement in its entirety, i.e. to implement fundamental reforms that will create the necessary prerequisites for its enlargement through the accession of all the candidate countries.

The above recapitulation might give an impression that integration into the EU means, above all, a race with our neighbours and partners from the V-4 group, and that it implies only strenuous efforts towards the fulfilment of certain criteria. This is false. It is true that the administrative style of reports and evaluations, or the technical nature of negotiations may make us lose sight of the forest for the trees, and that we might fail to perceive the deeper or primary importance of this process. The fulfilment of the criteria and requirements defined by the EU is not a self-serving exercise, or an exercise designed to please the EU. We do all this mainly for our own sake, in the interest of the modernization of our economy, and in the interest of the modernization of our legislation. For, the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* is not only a road leading to the EU, it is also a chance to take the fast track towards attaining something we would have to do anyway. Yet, without having the prospect of EU membership, it would all certainly take much longer due to the various detours on this road. The historical chance that has

The decision of the European Council at the Helsinki summit to open EU accession negotiations with Slovakia, fulfilled the fundamental objective that our country had set for 1999. It certainly represents a huge success for the country. However, the Helsinki decision does not mean that no more efforts are necessary - quite the opposite, it opens a new and even more challenging stage. The ministerial-level Accession Conference will be opened in February, and negotiations can be realistically expected to start in the first half of 2000. It is in our interest to open the Accession Conference as early as possible so that



presented itself to Slovakia in the form of European integration is represented by the opportunity to go through the inevitable stage of transformation as fast as possible, and also to get closer as fast as possible, to the advanced Western democracies and economies.

The aforementioned catching-up with our neighbours is also not merely a self-serving or prestige-seeking exercise. After all, previous waves of enlargement also contained logical groups of countries: thus, during the first enlargement in 1973, the United Kingdom entered the EC together with Ireland and Denmark. This step was quite natural for the latter countries in view of their close trade relations with the United Kingdom. The same can be said of the latest enlargement in 1995 which included most of the remaining members of EFTA. Slovakia has close links with all V-4 countries, especially with the Czech Republic, ranging from trade relations to historical, cultural and personal ties. Although our partners share this feeling, we cannot request that they wait. On the contrary, if Slovakia does not want to break these traditional ties, it will have to step up its own pace. Hence the rhetoric borrowed from racing terminology.

Naturally, just as in all previous waves of enlargement, the next one also brings with it the necessity of institutional reform; the struggle for such reform is the expression of a deeper struggle concerning the quintessence and character of the EU. Deep inside the discourse over the powers of individual bodies and on the weighing of votes, lie reflections over the direction that European integration should take next because its final target form has never really been defined. This absence has thus always created a space for dodging between the supranational and the international model, between the "European Federal State" and the "Federation of European States". The current structure of the EU displays features of both; this is not necessarily a negative phenomenon considering the high likelihood of a conflict of interests during an attempt at reaching some kind of final verdict. In any event, the forthcoming Inter-governmental Conference on institutional reform will have to bring a viable solution to institutional problems if the EU is to enlarge.

Slovakia and NATO

To ensure Slovakia's optimum development and prosperity, the country needs solid external security guarantees. NATO membership has been the declared foreign and security policy objective in the programmes of all Slovak governments since 1993, i.e. since the country was formed. Slovakia's failure at the 1997 Madrid summit represented an unpardonable waste of an historical chance. This simply will not be repeated again. Today's situation differs from that of 1997, and so it is clear that the second wave of NATO enlargement will be much more demanding than the first one. Nevertheless, my Government has, from the moment it took office, always seen membership in NATO as its clear priority. Our efforts are aimed at securing our preparedness for accession - in political, military and economic terms - at the moment NATO is ready to extend invitations to new members.

With the fulfilment of the political criteria for NATO membership and the clearly demonstrated political commitment to take also other preparatory steps, last year Slovakia assumed its place among other strong candidates for membership once further en-



largement is considered. In this context, Slovakia attaches great significance to the conclusions of the Washington summit at which NATO reaffirmed its open door policy. No less significant for us was the adoption of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which is a practical manifestation of the will to accept new members in the future. It was not by accident that NATO members came up with the idea of adopting certain guidelines that would facilitate the preparation of the candidates for membership. For it is the Member States who are most aware of, and who realise the problems of, candidate countries. They understand, based on their own experience with accession negotiations, that if the country's weak points and shortcomings are revealed only at the negotiation stage or even after entry, this is too late. It was with this in mind that the Alliance adopted MAP in Washington.

Following the Washington summit, the Government immediately launched a comprehensive process of preparing the country for membership. The objective is to use MAP as a tool for improving our political, defence, economic and legal structures and norms, so as to make them compatible as soon as possible and to the greatest possible extent, with the structures and norms of NATO. Based on MAP and on our experience obtained through preparing for membership, in June the Slovak Government adopted the *Programme for Ensuring the Preparation of the Slovak Republic for Membership in NATO (PZ PRENAME)*. Its adoption raised the process of our preparation to a qualitatively higher level. A governmental committee led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Defence, was created for preparing Slovakia for membership in NATO. Fourteen key areas of preparation for membership were defined, and a working group, composed of representatives of the relevant sectors, was formed for each of them. A Secretariat of the Government's Committee on Preparation of the Slovak Republic for Membership in NATO was created within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These bodies make up the national structure for effective management and co-ordination, functioning in harmony with the decision-making and management of NATO.

As a follow-up to the adoption of MAP and PZ PRENAME, a document of principle was drafted - the *National Programme of Preparation of the Slovak Republic for NATO Membership (NP PRENAME)*, and approved by the Government last October. In preparing NP PRENAME, we drew on comments and advice from NATO member states and, in particular, the experience and knowledge of the three new members. NP PRENAME is divided into two parts. The first general part, presents the target parameters of the state of preparedness for NATO membership; Slovakia should attain these parameters in 2001 - 2002, i.e. at the time it expects to be invited to join. The second part, the two-year programme PRENAME extending to the end of 1999 and throughout 2000, translates the target parameters into specific tasks, measures, dates, responsibility for their fulfilment and funding, in more detailed terms. Both parts of the document cover the key areas of preparation in harmony with how NATO defined them in MAP: i.e. political and economic issues, military and defence issues, resources, information safety and legal issues. NP PRENAME was submitted to representatives of NATO in October 1999, within the framework of the first round of discussions between Slovakia and NATO concerning political and economic issues, and was very well received.



Our interest in becoming part of the system of collective defence of the Alliance Member States must be accompanied by our readiness to participate in all the basic functions of NATO. We consider collective defence to be the key function of the North Atlantic Alliance and the only possible option for obtaining security guarantees for Slovakia. We also support new NATO missions, which constitute the only possible response to new challenges and security risks. In this connection, the determination of Slovakia

to become a full member of the NATO has already been demonstrated through concrete steps. During the Kosovo crisis, Slovakia behaved like a *de facto* member of NATO when it opened its air space to Alliance aircraft, and granted permission for ground transit through its territory, which was highly appreciated by the Alliance. Slovakia's response was equally positive when it was asked by SHAPE, as a partner country, to take part in the operation Allied Harbour in Albania. At present, we participate in the NATO-led KFOR forces just as we did earlier with SFOR and AFOR. Is there any better and more convincing proof of our will and capacity to contribute to the security and stability of Europe and to act in harmony with NATO objectives and principles?

Thus, last year Slovakia returned to the mainstream of integration not only in relation to the European Union, but also in relation to the North Atlantic Alliance. In 2000, the country will focus on further practical steps strengthening its preparedness for membership, and on the fulfilment of compatibility and interoperability criteria. After the expected spring review by NATO, the annual PRENAME programme will be modified, updated, and elaborated for the year 2001. The priority must be given to securing adequate financial, material and human resources for the timely fulfilment of the assigned tasks and for attainment of the defined parameters. An inseparable part of the PRENAME process will be the activities undertaken within the framework of the 2000 Individual Partnership Programme (IPP), and by the activities in the framework of the Planning and Review Process (PARP). Naturally, Slovakia will continue to take an active part in partnership co-operation and consultations within the framework of EAPC and reinforced Partnership for Peace programme, which we consider to be important tools which contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

Not even the systematic implementation of NP PRENAME however, will automatically ensure Slovakia's admission to NATO, whether to invite Slovakia for membership will ultimately be mainly a political decision. This will also depend on our ability to transform our society, to build its democratic institutions and to ensure that democracy in our country takes deep roots. Neither the level of our military preparedness nor other reasons, including geopolitical, will be a sufficient reason for Alliance members to invite us to join their ranks. For, in the first place, they must be convinced that our perspective of the world relies on the same values of democracy, freedom and protection of human

We consider collective defence to be the key function of the North Atlantic Alliance and the only possible option for obtaining security guarantees for Slovakia.



rights as theirs. We went through the bitter experience of the Madrid summit where we failed to obtain the invitation simply because the leaders of our country at that time acted contrary to the values on which the Alliance is based. No geopolitical considerations, or particular economic or military interests, were behind it. NATO is an organisation of free democratic states which have the will to unite in defence of their values, and to safeguard the security of their citizens. Slovakia wishes to be a member of this community, it wants to take part in its building and defence. This is the primary reason why we want to become a member of the Alliance, with other reasons being of a secondary nature. Participation in such a collective defence system is an optimum guarantee of security for the Slovak Republic from both the military and economic perspectives. It will enable us to achieve the same level of security and defence capability as is enjoyed by other countries of the Visegrad Group. And, finally, as a member of the Alliance we will have a better chance to influence regional and European security than if we tried to go it alone.

Conclusion

The central theme of this article was the year 1999, which represented a deep fault in the internal political developments and in the international political position of Slovakia. The achievements that Slovakia has recorded from the coming to power of the new Government, after the September 1998 elections, are important *per se* but, at the same time, they constitute a flexible launching pad for future action. Our integration goals - NATO, EU and the OECD (although I did not elaborate here on our membership in the latter organisation) are mutually complementary: striving for one of them does not deplete the energies and resources necessary for our attainment of the others. For the economy and security are connecting vessels. The ties between them are multifaceted and close. Thus, it would be of no use for Slovakia to pledge that it will allocate 2 % of its annual budget to defence if its economy stagnates. Conversely, even a lower percentage would represent more resources in absolute terms if economic performance improves.

Javier Solana referred to NATO as "Europe's institutional pacifier". However, in my opinion the European Union is also a similar kind of pacifier. Here we have the second level, another example of the close links between the economy and security. The EU plays an important security role in central and eastern Europe. Yet, more so than its drive towards European Security and Defence Policy, I have in mind the fact that the mere vision of possible membership of the countries of central and eastern Europe has a stabilising effect on the region. The Union has the necessary levers to "pacify", educate, and orient the candidates for membership in the right direction in a number of areas of their development, for example in ensuring they respect the rights of minorities (not only national minorities). The resulting reward in the form of membership has a strong motivating effect. This is why I see a strong security dimension not only in NATO enlargement but also in that of the EU.



In the minds of many people "Europe" had been viewed for many decades as Western Europe alone, with "that different Europe" - the label coined for our part of the continent by Jacques Rupnik - lying dormant somewhere behind the Iron Curtain. But the fall of the Berlin Wall brought an unprecedented chance to start creating a "single Europe", to start fulfilling the initial dream of the visionaries. The concepts of European unification that had been developed during World War II and in the post-war period, addressed the entire European continent. However, the Cold War limited integration to Western Europe. The status today of the integration process represents a true breakthrough in the history of European integration. A similar statement can be made as regards NATO. The Alliance, which was established to defend the Western community against the threat from the East, is also "spilling over" the former Iron Curtain. This is the basis of the tremendous historical and political significance of the process that we are currently experiencing.



SOŇA SZOMOLÁNYI

Political Elites and Slovakia's Transition Path

The objective of this paper is to highlight how the elites and institutions of the new Slovak Republic have functioned and determined that Slovakia has become "a region specific country" (Heinrich 1999) or is a "hard case to categorise" in one of the known ideal types of transition. (Kitchelt 1995:453) The unconsolidated state of the Slovak affairs particularly following the 1994 elections was considered as "puzzling if compared with the situation of the Czech Republic" (Elster et al., 1998 : 290)

A reason why it is not easy to unambiguously categorise Slovakia's case of regime change is that it represents a *borderline* case between that of more advanced Central European and lagging South-East European countries. Slovakia has followed a tortuous trajectory leading between that of Central European and East European types of transition, at one point of time resembling the former and in another election period getting closer to the latter.

What I refer to as the "Central European" way of transition is a common term to characterise transition paths of the four countries known also as the Visegrad group - the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Until 1995 these were the countries evaluated in various expert analysis as the most advanced both in the economic and political transformations. This variant was generally described as the development that indicates the irreversible systemic change in the economy, political system, and political culture while heading toward political democracy, rule of law, a functioning market economy, and emerging civil society.

The Eastern type of the regime change has been deduced from the study of the post-Soviet, Slavonic, countries and may be characterised by "a disrespect for the principles of constitutionalism, a tendency to centralise executive power, and movement towards

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the establishment of a powerful oligarchic property-owning class" (Duleba 1997, p.224). Further, to operationalize the Eastern type I would also add a tendency to understand and practice democracy as a populist-type of unchecked majority rule, and delegative type of authority rooted in a personalistic view of authority: "obedience is owed to persons rather than to formal and impersonal rules". (Elster 1998,p.302).

In comparison to its neighbouring countries there have been too many turning points in the post-1989 development in Slovakia. All four free elections - those of 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1998 - may be characterised as so-called "critical elections" representing turning points in the political development. While I identified the political consequences of the 1994 elections as the deviation from the Central European way of transition and getting closer to the Eastern type, in the aftermath of the last elections 1998, I would argue that there is relevant evidence for the "turning back" to the former path. Because the current ruling coalition is heading unambiguously toward the Euro-Atlantic structures after refusing the "Eastern" image of a autarkic and self-sufficient third-road for Slovakia.

This paper will develop the following arguments.

■ The key to the explanation as to why Slovakia's transition trajectory had been more difficult and discontinuous than that of other Central European countries lies in the robust cumulation of both less favourable conditions for democratic consolidation and the higher number of tasks that Slovakia has had to complete simultaneously. Slovakia has a higher degree of ethnic heterogeneity, greater subcultural segmentation, and an absence of a sustained, historical experience with statehood. The additional task of state-building that was a consequence of the mode of resolution of the "stateness problem" of the former Czechoslovakia has complicated regime change in Slovakia.¹

■ The mode of resolution of the stateness problem, the circumstances and events under which the independent state was established had a significant formative effect on the values and configuration of Slovakia's national elite. The origin of the independent state caused the disunity of political elites. In contrast to Hungary and Poland, Slovakia has not yet experienced such an elite settlement that resulted from the national round tables in those countries. In Slovakia, however, a process of gradual convergence of the political elite has started.

■ Focusing on the interaction between elites and institutions the author argues that the institutions may or may not allow a certain elite behaviour but it is still the political elite actors who shape and manipulate institutions in order to maximise and hold power.

¹ This is a similar view to that presented by non-Slovaks conducting comparative studies: "...Slovakia is the country which is exposed in the purest and most pressing manner to the difficult task which we described...namely to creating simultaneously a new nation, a new economic structure, and new legal and political institutions." (Elster et al., 1998 :292)



Resolution of Stateness Problem of Czechoslovakia and Its Impact on Regime Change in Slovakia

The stateness problem in the former Czechoslovakia resulted both in the "failed negotiated transition" of the federal multinational state and the emergence of the two independent successor nation states - Czech and Slovak Republics. Though there was no dominant tendency towards independence either at the elite or mass public levels a stateness problem was acute because of disagreement over the appropriate form of the state (Linz-Stepan, 1996; Leff, 1999, p. 206)

However, the final resolution of the stateness problem of the former Czechoslovakia determined also the process of 4 state building in Slovakia. The establishment of an independent Slovakia on 1 January 1993 and the building of a national state complicated the process of democratisation significantly. These two parallel processes of "nation-state building" and "democratisation" have been contradictory and have made the regime change in Slovakia more troublesome. The impact of the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the 1992 elections has meant that those two processes have stretched over a longer period in Slovakia and were more turbulent than in the neighbouring countries.

As it has already been pointed out, Slovakia is a puzzle to students of East Central European politics in the 1990s. Many patterns of social behaviour and attitudes that characterise Slovakia also characterise neighbouring Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, yet the post-communist political trajectories of those countries have been quite different. Slovakia displays a predisposition to populist and paternalistic politics similar to its neighbours, and its civic political culture is, like theirs, weak (Bütorová et al, 1993; Lukas and Szomolányi, 1996; Krivý, 1995; Miháliková, 1997; Central and Eastern Europe on the Way into the European Union, 1996)

One explanation of the puzzle lies in Slovakia's long immersion in divisive issues of the "national question" and state formation. Slovakia is the only country among the four Central European countries known as "Visegrad four" - Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia - without a sustained experience of statehood. Poland and Hungary had largely resolved the dual challenges of nationalism and state formation prior to the onset of state socialism. Likewise, the Czechs were able to secure their national identity, language and develop the associational culture under Austro-Hungarian rule, so that, after independence in 1918, they possessed one of the most robust civil and political

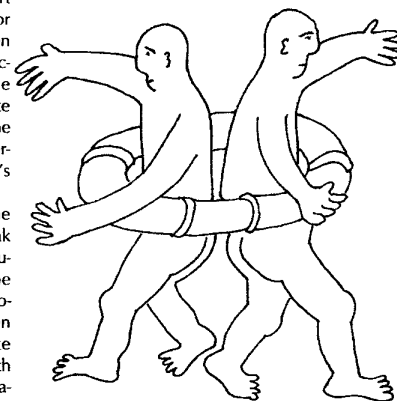
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societies in Central Europe. Slovaks, by contrast fell under direct administration from Budapest where, until the eve of World War I, the development of Slovak identity, language and culture developed under the pressures of Hungarian policies of Magyarization. It is likely that some of the defensive and exclusionary aspects of Slovak nationalism reflect these early struggles for recognition and survival amidst significant Magyar competition (Altermatt, 1996). With the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, Slovak elites split over a political project to create a "Czechoslovak" nation out of the Czech and Slovak peoples. Concurrently, Slovaks also disagreed over the appropriate political arrangement between the Czech lands and Slovakia. These issues were never resolved and contributed to the legacy of deep divisions among Slovak elites. Slovak elite divisions broke into the open following the Velvet Revolution in late 1989. Elites associated with the Slovak revolutionary movement, Public Against Violence, surprised and disappointed their Czech counterparts in Civic Forum by almost unanimously calling for a revision, first in the name, and then within a few months, in the form of the Czechoslovak state. During the fall and winter of 1990-1991, Slovak elites engaged in a competitive mobilisation of Slovak voters over how best to restructure Czech and Slovak relations.

The political salience of the Slovak national question and of Slovakia's place within the federal republic increased with the launch of a federal program of radical economic reforms on January 1, 1991. Declarations about the search for a Slovak national identity masked the vested interests of state managers of armaments-producing and other state-owned companies threatened by the federal government's programs for armaments conversion and voucher privatisation. Mečiar championed these industrial interests and in doing so he won their support (Duleba, 1997) The movement for Slovak secession, which until then had been confined to a small circle of intellectuals, acquired the strong economic backing of state managers. At the same time, the managerial elite became a powerful pillar of support for Mečiar's HZDS (Duleba, 1997).

Mečiar was by then easily the most popular and trusted Slovak politician, and he used his popularity to engineer a split with the leadership of Public Against Violence (VPN). This occurred when VPN leaders refused to tolerate Mečiar's destructive activity both within the movement and the ca-





binet and forced Mečiar from the prime ministership in order to form a coalition government with KDH, whose leader, Ján Čarnogurský, became Prime Minister. As leader of the opposition, Mečiar was free to intensify his populist strategy of out-bidding his opponents. He artfully created and played on fears and resentments among less secure and less sophisticated segments of the electorate and he was aided in this by insensitivity among VPN and Czech political and media elites to a wide range of Slovak attitudes and interests (Krivý, 1995; Bútorová et al, 1993; Innes, 1997).

In the 1992 general election, the rump of the original VPN that transformed into the Civic Democratic Union (ODÚ) did not even poll enough votes to clear the five percent threshold for entering parliament. The national issue also hurt KDH, which suffered from the breakaway of its nationalist and anti-radical reform wing and from the poor performance by its leaders during the campaign (Innes, 1997:429). Mečiar's HZDS emerged from the election as the strongest political force in parliament, and Mečiar once again became the head of government in Bratislava.

A pact between Mečiar and the new Czech Prime Minister, Václav Klaus led to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993. The pact was reached and implemented without a referendum and despite polling data showing that a majority of Czechs and Slovaks opposed the breakup of Czechoslovakia (Bútorová, 199 : 129-30). By 1993, moreover, the bitter fights over national identity, secession, economic transformation, and Mečiar's intolerant and somewhat undemocratic leadership style, had greatly divided Slovakia's political elites.

It was not until the creation of the independent state that a dispute concerning civil and political rights emerged within Slovakia and became the focus of political discourse. It is generally argued that the creation of a nation state opens space for mass civil emancipation. However, in Slovakia the situation was complicated by the fact that the creation of an ethnic nation state, in the context of considerable ethnic heterogeneity, brought, quite logically, the "Hungarian question" to the focus of political discourse, thus fueling the ethnicization of politics and mobilisation of nationalist feelings. The Hungarian minority represents about 11 percent of the country's population. The fact that a basic politico-cultural cleavage occurs along ethnic lines between the Slovaks and the Hungarians (see Krivý, 1997) also confirms that such heterogeneity increases the complexity of the building and safeguarding of liberal democracy. Although this divide does not represent a fatal obstacle, it nevertheless enables non-democratic politicians who strive for political and economic power to mobilise the potential of ethnic differences and historical resentments to serve their purposes.



The Elite Continuity and Institutional Design

Like in Prague, the transition in Bratislava started off with the collapse of Communist power. However, in Slovakia the old regime politicians preserved considerable control over developments in the period prior to the 1990 founding elections. At the level of the political elite, the assumption of power by the victorious HZDS represented an important strengthening of personnel continuity with the old regime. After the 1992 elections the top four constitutional functions were assumed by former Communist Party members, with two of them controlled by the former nomenklatura. President, Michal Kováč and Chairman of the Constitutional Court, Milan Čič were selected for the posts as loyal collaborators of Vladimír Mečiar in the process of the dissolution of the former Czechoslovakia. The constitutionally delimited powers, however, allowed both of them to behave independently and succeed to oppose the authoritarian tendencies of the second Mečiar led ruling coalition since independence (1994-1998). Despite the high level of personnel continuity (see Szomolányi, 1994a),² the former Communist party membership itself cannot be understood as an independent variable in an explanation of the new political elite behaviour. In Slovakia, the crucial political cleavage does not run along the communist/non-communist past of the elite members. More important, however, than the percentage of the former Communist party members in the new elites is how many of them asserted themselves in the nationalist-populist parties and in what constitutional design they execute their power.

The identified personal continuity of the political elite indicates both the absence of the revolutionary exchange of the elites after the collapse of old communist regime in Slovakia as well as the absence of the counterelite prepared to take over power. In comparison with more liberalized political systems in Hungary and Poland, we find in Slovakia a delay of many years, since a similar opening to the world, and contacts between the counter-elite and the communist power as it occurred there in the late 1970s and 1980s, began in Slovakia only after November 1989. In comparison with the Czech Republic, it is again necessary to emphasize especially the different course of the normalization period after 1969, and its effect on developments after 1989. In Slovakia, repression of the normalization was more moderate than in the Czech Republic, the party purge did not affect the Slovak intellectual and cultural community to such a large extent. This was so because the reform process here did not have such numerous support and the demand for federalization dominated over the demand for democratization.

In the 1970s and 1980s, opposition to the communist regime in the countries of Central Europe was weakest and least visible in Slovakia. In addition, this opposition

² This includes Slovakia's "68ers," although it must be noted that only a few of them (for example, Milan Šimečka and Miroslav Kusý) openly opposed the Communist regime before 1989. By and large, that generation of former Communists — especially the economists — opposed the federal economic reforms and had not given up the idea of reform socialism. Before the 1992 elections they generally backed nationalist-populist parties and supported the illusion of the feasibility of a specifically national, painless solution to the complex tasks of transformation. In the case of Slovakia, the "reform Communists" were no less influenced by the Marxist ideology than was the younger generation with a more pragmatic orientation.



was very fragmented. In comparison with the numerous Czech dissident movements, from which members of the new elite were recruited after November 1989, in Slovakia there were only small groups of nonconformist individuals, for whom the term "islands of positive deviation" has been adopted. (Bútora-Krivý-Szomolányi, 1989) The politicized protest and criticism of the intellectuals was rather isolated from the popular consciousness and unknown to the overwhelming majority of the population of Slovakia.

A certain level of elite continuity is generally considered to be a condition for democratic consolidation since it gives elites a sufficient feeling of security so that they do not have to perceive democratic competition in elections as a threat to their position. For this reason, the old nomenclature elite continuity in Poland and Hungary, which research puts at 50%, was not an obstacle to democratic transition (Wasilewski, 1998, p. 166). There is, however, a certain threshold, as in the case of Southeastern Europe and Russia (in the latter, 71% of the new elite are members of the old nomenklatura), beyond which the relationship between the rate of elite continuity and democratic progress becomes inverse (Higley et al., 1996). After the 1992 elections in Slovakia, the elite continuity at top political level approached the aforementioned threshold, beyond which there is a high probability of reversibility of the political transformation.

The high level of the elite continuity is also the reason why the transition paths of Slovakia and Bulgaria are often referred to as being of the same type (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Kitschelt, 1995; Olson, 1993). Such categorising, however, is not quite justified since the 1990-1992 institutionalisation phase of the regime change took place within the framework of the common Czechoslovak transition path and was controlled by the liberally-orientated VPN and the non-communist KDH, particularly under the Čarnogurský government. Parliamentary democracy and an electoral system based on proportional representation, which are considered to be part of an appropriate institutional framework for democratic transition, were introduced at that time and have been preserved also in independent Slovakia after the electoral victory of the nationalist-populist HZDS.

The Dissolution of Czechoslovakia and Continuity of Democratic Institutions

Although in the first Hungarian elections the attempt at bringing back anachronistic conservatism was successful, the party representing this stream in Slovakia – the KDH – failed to come out on top in both in the 1990 founding elections and in the subsequent 1992 elections. At the same time, while successors to the former communist party won the second elections in Poland in 1993 and in Hungary in 1994, they were not successful in Slovakia. In Slovakia the nationalist-populists prevailed, and after the 1992 elections they gained control over the transition at a time when the foundations were being laid for the country's independent statehood.

The changes brought about by the 1992 elections in Slovakia that ultimately led to the division of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic impeded the implementation of



systemic changes in the post-1989 period, contributing instead to the slowing down of privatisation, authoritarian tendencies of the new ruling elite, and fragmentation of the political scene. Those changes represented a detour from the Czechoslovak transition path. After the critical turning point that came about as a result of the HZDS election victory, the country had to re-embark on the road which it had already travelled, but this time in the framework of a separate Slovak political system. The building of institutional foundations of the new state was also connected with the problem of safeguarding the level of liberalisation and democratisation that had already been attained by the previous federal state. The writing and adoption of the Slovak Constitution, creation of the Constitutional Court, determination of the degree of independence of the National Bank of Slovakia from the executive branch, as well as the legislative enactment of the public service status of Slovak Radio and Slovak Television were marked by disputes concerning the character of the new statehood.

Despite all deficiencies, political development had been relatively stable until March 1994. This is partly due to the continuity of the fundamental democratic institutions that were established during the time of the Czechoslovak transition, particularly parliamentary democracy and a proportional electoral system. Because Czechoslovak-legal institutional reform moved rather fast, the independent Slovak republic also inherited from the former state the major elements of the legal framework of market economy. (See also Elster et al., 1998: 183) The institutional pillars of democracy were strengthened by the new institutions of the independent state, especially by the presidency and the Constitutional Court.

Constitutional "Hardware" and Informal Institutions

The situation in Slovakia became exceedingly complicated after the 1994 elections, which brought to power the third government led by Mečiar. This time, Mečiar's HZDS was joined by the SNS and the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS), and it was the first of Mečiar's three governments that managed to remain in office for the full term. The 1994 elections resulted in political regression and in Slovakia's departure from the promising Central European variant of transition that was followed by the three other countries which – together with Slovakia – make up the Visegrad group: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. This deviation was identified in the structural characteristics of the system of political parties, elite configuration, and political culture (Szomolányi, 1994c).

The aftermath of the 1994 elections brought not only a change in the government elite but also attempts by the incoming ruling coalition to alter the "rules of game" that were put in place by the post-Communist democratic regime. Apart from the changes that the incoming coalition pushed through the parliament during the historic all-night session of the National Council on 3-4 November 1994, other less successful attempts at changing the foundations of the constitutional framework were also registered. The HZDS wanted to replace the parliamentary system with a presidential one; however,



the government's simple majority was insufficient, and it needed another seven to eight deputies to approve constitutional changes. Although only a simple parliamentary majority was needed to change the electoral law, HZDS was prevented from carrying out its plans to switch from a proportional to a majority system because its junior coalition partners — as well as the opposition — saw such a step as unfavourable.

The impact of the HZDS style of politics resulted in Slovakia being left behind in the first round of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes. Exclusion from the group of increasingly Westward-looking Central European countries — a place where Slovakia belongs both historically and culturally — raised the risk that Slovakia would remain peripheral and isolated from the mainstream integration process. This can only be seen as a failure of Slovakia's national elite.³

The failure of Slovakia under Mečiar's rule to participate in the first wave of EU and NATO integration was clearly the result of the supremacy of the personal interests of those in power to preserve it over national interests.

The situation in Slovakia during the rule of the HZDS-ZRS-SNS coalition, combined with the absence of formally defined representation of opposition in running the parliament, clearly displayed "a tendency toward unchecked majority rule" (Malová, 1998, p. 55). Although O'Donnell's notion of the "delegative type of democracy" is applied to Slovakia to describe its defective democracy (O'Donnell, 1996), the notion of "illiberal democracy" better identifies the political style of Mečiar's third government (see Zakaria, 1998) since it failed to meet the political criteria for EU or NATO membership, particularly regarding rule of law.

Immediately after the 1994 elections it was clear that the democratic transition had not yet been accomplished because the holders of political power strove not only to defend their immediate interests, but also to introduce rules and procedures that would guarantee that the winners of the last elections would remain in power in the future (Szomolányi, 1994, p. 29). At that point, the consolidation stage was already underway, during which all actors began to accept the constitutional framework of the new state as the basic reference point for political conduct. Nonetheless, institutionalisation, or the

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struggle over how that framework is respected and implemented, was still progressing (O'Donnell, Schmitter 1986, p. 6). This continued to be true shortly before the 1998 elections.

Before the 1998 elections Slovakia was an unconsolidated, unstable democracy. It remained a democracy because fundamental — though fragile — democratic institutions persisted and functioned as restraints. The proportional electoral system prevented Mečiar's Movement for Democratic Slovakia from governing Slovakia on its own and forced it to form a coalition.

The constitutional provisions regarding the presidency have been subjective to frequent criticism for their controversial nature. However, the long lasting conflict with Prime minister Mečiar with President Kováč subjected that arrangement to a difficult test. The conflict began when Kováč showed the will to act independently of the leader of the party which had secured his appointment. The fact is, that despite the long conflict between the president and Prime Minister, Michal Kováč completed his five year term in office and opposed authoritarian attempts of then ruling coalition.

Despite the stability of the above mentioned democratic institutions the implementation of democratic procedures was often thwarted by the policies of those in power, and the continuing struggle over the rules of the game also reduced certainty and enhanced ambiguity. Thus, despite the ruling coalition's use of many authoritarian and undemocratic practices, the process of regime change led neither to democratic consolidation nor to the establishment of an authoritarian regime (Szomolányi, 1997). After the thwarted referendum on NATO and direct presidential elections in May 1997, Slovakia from a constitutional perspective deviated even further from a consolidated democracy and became known as an example of illiberal democracy.

The 1998 Elections and the Change of Ruling Elite

The replacement of the nationalist-populist governing elite responsible for the political regression in the previous period, by the grand coalition of the democratically oriented parties led by Dzurinda due to the results of the free 1998 elections increased the likelihood of the consolidation of democracy in Slovakia. What exactly was the sequence of events that ultimately lead to the peaceful replacement of the ruling elite in Slovakia in the aftermath the elections 1998? The following moments should be highlighted.

The fear of a constitutional crisis and the concentration of power in the hands of the authoritarian Prime Minister Mečiar due to the failure to elect a new head of the state in the parliament mobilized the center right parties and Hungarian coalition to impose the referendum on direct presidential elections onto their own political agenda. The obstruction of the referendum in May 1997 evidently played a pivotal role in triggering positive change (see Mesežnikov and Bútorá, 1997). The course of events that was triggered by the opposition's petition calling for a referendum on direct presidential elections brought an outcome that was not intended by any of the relevant actors. Nobody would have expected that rather than leading directly to the election of a pre-

³ The term "national elite" is used here in its generally accepted meaning, according to which national elites are "defined as top position-holders in the largest or most resource-rich political, governmental, economic, military, professional, communications, and cultural organizations and movements in a society." (Higley-Burton, 1989, p.18)



sident, the petition campaign would instead result in a thwarted referendum whose consequences were counterproductive for Mečiar and, conversely, favourable for the democratic players. Five democratic parties (KDH, DU, DS, SDSS, SZS) established the Slovak Democratic Coalition representing a real threat to the dominant position of the HZDS in the 1998 elections. The opposition leaders eventually learned how to aggregate articulated interests for political change in the country.

The results of Slovakia's 1998 parliamentary elections demonstrated also progress achieved in regard to the population's attitudes. The population's gradually increased support for democratic principles was observed as early as 1997, and this cultural shift was confirmed by the voting behaviour of a majority of the citizens in the 1998 elections (see: Bútorová, 1998; Bútor, 1998). The population's increased level of political maturity was undoubtedly influenced by the experience of personal confrontation with the arrogant ruling elite, which refused to launch a dialogue with civic and interest associations. Recent Slovak developments provide us with evidence to point out a positive function of conflict in democratic consolidation.

The population's trial-and-error method of political learning also resulted in gradually pushing Mečiar, the three-time prime minister, from the center of power. When Mečiar was first ousted from the post of prime minister in March 1991, the decision was made by a narrow political elite group — the Presidium of the Slovak Parliament — against the will of people (public opinion polls at that time showed that Mečiar was supported by close to 85% of the population). When Mečiar was toppled for the second time in March 1994, that decision was made by a plenary session of the parliament without provoking significant protests from the population. In the third case, Mečiar was removed from office by a majority of voters in the 1998 elections.

The Gradual Elite Convergence

In order to defeat Mečiar, his opponents co-operated closely along democratic lines during the campaign. The SDK co-ordinated the opposition effort, first by organising a "democratic roundtable" in June 1998 in which other major opposition parties (SDĽ, SMK, and SÖP), trade unions, the Association of Towns and Villages, the Gremium of the Third Sector (a peak organisation representing independent NGO's), and the Council of Youth participated. The roundtable produced plans for a "grand coalition" government that would include left and right parties and, importantly, the Hungarian Coalition. Common opposition to the Mečiar government and the democratic profiles of their member voters were the main factors that made this cooperation possible.

The post-Mečiar government may be described as a "coalition of coalitions" because two of its four components are themselves coalitions: the SDK consists of five parties, and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK) is composed of three parties. Achieving agreement among center-right and center-left parties required compromise and cooperation among their leaders. The coalition agreement, as well as the new government program that was elaborated by neo-liberals, centrists and social democrats (reformed



communists), indicate relatively strong consensus among the several elite groups. This may be seen as a significant reduction of fragmentation in what was the anti-Mečiar elite camp. Nevertheless, tensions in the new governing coalition remain strong. During the October 1998 negotiations that led to the new government's formation, the coalition almost came apart over ethnonational issues when the SDĽ balked at fulfilling its pledge to include the ethnic Hungarian parties in the government. SDĽ was pulled back into the coalition fold only after strong pressures were exerted on it by the non-governmental organisations (Bútor, 1998: 21).

The model of the gradual convergence of fragmented elites to consensual elites, a prerequisite for consolidated democracy, calls for at least one more repetition of the victory of non-extremist forces in elections. The repeated victory of those parties is required to pass a test of democratic consolidation.

The SDĽ's reluctance overcame, at least temporarily, one of the strongest barriers to a lasting elite consensus in Slovakia, which is the ethnonational question. The ethnic Hungarian parties received three cabinet posts and a vice-chairman position in parliament. This went far towards addressing the European Commission's concerns about the protection of minority rights in Slovakia. While the second step towards an elite convergence is by no means completed, the third step — marginalizing extremism — is already underway, however it is a long-term task for Slovakia.

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Transition from Mečiarism and Institutional Revision

The results of Huntington's two turnover test of the level of democratic consolidation can diverge depending on how the current stage of development of the regime in Slovakia is defined. If the creation of the independent Slovakia is taken as a starting point, two government alternations of democratically elected governments have already taken place. In this case, Slovakia has passed the "two turnover test." After Slovakia gained independence state, the first such alternation occurred after the fall 1994 elections, when Moravčík's caretaker government handed power to Mečiar. The power was transferred in a peaceful manner without any delays as soon as the HZDS had formed a new cabinet with the SNS and ZRS.

After the 1998 elections, the Mečiar government delayed calling the constituent session of the new parliament until the last possible day, 29 October 1998, and during that session it handed in its resignation as required by the constitution. The new cabi-



net of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda was appointed one day later. Despite fears that the HZDS would employ unconstitutional means to cling to power after its electoral defeat in 1998, the second peaceful turnover demonstrated that there were at least two major groups of leaders in Slovakia "sufficiently committed to democracy to surrender office and power after losing an election" (Huntington, 1991, p. 267).

If nothing else, this second peaceful turnover clearly demonstrates that Slovakia has fulfilled the minimal criteria of electorally-defined democracy, which both domestic and international observers feared was under threat prior to the September 1998 elections. Thus, real space was created for strengthening the procedural consensus between the post-election government coalition and the new opposition, which is a necessary prerequisite for calling the 1998 elections truly consolidating, even after the passage of time.

However, it can also be assumed that the process of consolidation started only with the 1998 elections since the previous period was one of political regression. In general, this regression has been labelled as "Mečiarism" or a "illiberal democracy" that may be characterised by pervasive clientelism (particularly in the privatisation process), delegative rule, and weak accountability, which have allowed a number of authoritarian practices to reassert themselves under the cover of formally existing democratic institutions.⁴

Therefore the consolidation of democracy presumes an institutional revision including a revision of the Constitution. This was necessary since the manner in which Slovakia's basic legal framework was drafted in 1992 was an example of how not to craft a constitution. The parties winning a majority in Slovakia's 1992 elections, the HZDS and SNS, in cooperation with the SDL imposed a constitution on the minority, a step that can be considered as a "birth defect" of the new state and its regime.

The deficiencies of the Slovak constitution is a reason why Darina Malová argues in her discussion of the so called "democratic deficit" attributed by the EU Commission's evaluation to Slovakia that "hastily and poorly drafted constitution allowed for the emergence of a uncivilised majority rule, when political forces representing hardly one third of the population dominated the country's politics." (Malová 1998) Malová, however, avoids institutional determinism because she asserts that the "constitution allowed" and not "determined" unchecked majority rule. Therefore I point out political elite configuration as an independent variable in the explanation of the so called "democratic deficit". An outcome of that disunity is also the fact that relevant elites of the post-independent Slovakia had not shared the perception that the adoption of "European norms" is the only viable alternative (Heinrich, May 1999). The configuration of relevant actors that resulted from the 1992 elections was a disunited national elite regarding the economic transformation, stateness problem, and one that eventually disagree-

⁴ In his attempt to describe the anatomy of Mečiarism Fish writes: "Mečiar built more than a government. He created a regime of a particular type. In organizational and institutional terms, Mečiarism was characterized by personalization and de-ideologization of the party and partyization of the state....Mečiar's utter contempt for regular procedures, norms, and rules was not limited to the realm of coercion and control. It was defining characteristic of his style of rule. Mečiar reveled in arbitrariness and in breaking even those rules that he had made, or acquiesced in, himself." (Fish 1990: 47-49)



ed on how to craft a new constitution. The victorious majority excluded the experts of the defeated political subjects to participate in the constitution crafting. Then the constitution turned into a divisive issue, not only because of what it contained within some of its provisions, but also due to how it was drafted and ratified.⁵

The maintenance of the constitutional design built during the former Czechoslovak state functioned as a constraint that limited the authoritarian inclination of the incoming ruling elite in the aftermath of the 1992 elections. To conclude the discussion it may be argued that the constitution of the Slovak Republic has had ambivalent quality or in other words it is a "perfect imperfect constitution". On the one hand, its deficiencies allowed Mečiar and his allies to execute power in the "winner takes all" style - because the spirit of democratic constitutionalism among the nationalist-populist governing elites was lacking - and on the other hand, it prevented Mečiar from imposing his autocratic intentions fully and Slovakia remained, even under his rule, a democracy though an "illiberal" one.⁶ Because the consensus of the relevant elites to exercise restraint was missing the imperfections were abused by powerholders.⁷

The institutional revision implies the need to repeat the processes which are typical of the institutionalisation stage. Successive Mečiar's governments eroded the centres of institutional authority and power: the President, parliamentary opposition, constitutional court, mass media. Because they took undemocratic actions in a formally democratic environment, many of their decisions, especially those concerning privatisation and internal security, were kept secret. By blocking the access of the opposition to the decision-making channels they succeeded in carrying out such measures which ultimately weakened the democratic institutions. In that sense, the country is only now starting its transition from "Mečiarism," and at least one other set of elections is needed to test the stability of Slovakia's democratic institutions and values.

Conclusion

The most significant institutional revision implemented by the new majority in the parliament is the constitutional amendment on the direct presidential election that took a place in May 1999. The direct presidential elections, seven months after the parliamentary elections do not meet fully requirements of the above mentioned test. However, the

⁵ The deputies and the parties - Christian Democratic Movement and Hungarian Coalition - that voted against the Constitution were later stigmatised and accused of working against the interests of the nation.

⁶ A comparison of the Serbian Constitution with that of Slovakia explains why Mečiar despite that he is frequently compared with Milošević as the same type of authoritarian politician has not installed an authoritarian regime in Slovakia. While the Constitution of Serbia already before its adoption in 1990 was described as a scenario for dictatorship and system of personal power (Stepanov, 1999: 13), the Constitution of the SR despite its imperfections provides a democratic type of the institutional framework.

⁷ Therefore I agree with a view that "The imperfections of the Slovak constitution may have contributed to the failure of consolidation, but it is equally plausible to assume thatalso a more perfect constitutional architecture might not have produced different outcomes of the transition process." (Elster et al., 1998: 291)



victory of Rudolf Schuster, the candidate of ruling coalition can be considered a first test of the legitimacy of both the regime and the Dzurinda government. It happened under unfavourable both domestic and international circumstances when the current coalition was facing both severe economic problems and the depolarisation of the society over the Yugoslavia crises. The new president has obtained the significant majority of 57 percent of votes, while Vladimír Mečiar, the candidate of the opposition camp was defeated for first time in his career in fair and free elections receiving 14 percent fewer votes. Both at the mass and elite levels the consensus-seeking behaviour has been preferred to confrontational style of politics that had dominated the Slovak political system before the 1998 elections.

Today it is still too early to fully evaluate the consequences of the two elections. However, there is already evidence that they created more favorable conditions for the stabilization of democracy and for the elimination of the democratic deficit that caused Slovakia's expulsion from the first group of candidates for accession to the European Union and NATO. Consequently, Slovakia's turning back to the Central European trajectory of democratic transition appears to be more feasible. ■

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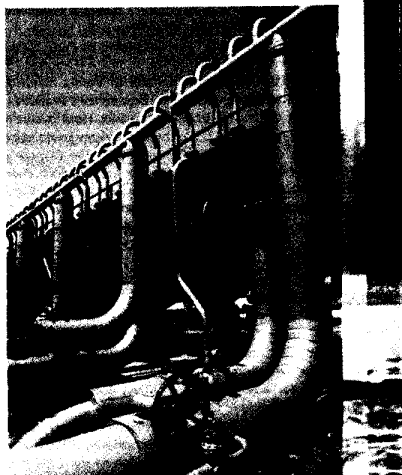
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KAREN HENDERSON



EVALUATING SLOVAK TRANSITION:

WHAT CREATES THE IMAGE OF SLOVAKIA?

KAREN HENDERSON

Evaluating Slovak Transition: What creates the image of Slovakia?

It is ten years after the fall of communism and a new millennium is beginning. What has happened to Slovakia in the last ten years? Where does it stand on the road to democratic consolidation? How is its progress perceived in the outside world?

Slovakia's image is created on at least four different levels. First of all there is the journalistic portrayal - which is where the "bad image" began. Then there are academic classifications comparing it to other post-communist states, which have tended to be nearly as negative as the newspaper cameos. Thirdly, there are the official assessments by international organisations, most notably the opinion and the progress reports of the European Union. And finally, one can attempt a political science analysis which measures Slovakia against the varying definitions of a consolidated democracy. Each of these four perspectives paints a slightly different picture in the eyes of the outside world.

Journalism has not been kind to Slovakia. Sometimes it appears to have moved on little from the 1987 National Geographic article by an American Pole which was copiously illustrated with pictures of quaint village peasants.¹ This one-dimensional image has been reinforced by the Czech/Hungarian stereotypes of Slovakia as the nice mountains where they enjoyed going on holiday. In the post-communist period, Slovakia first hit the western press in 1991. Foreign journalists came down from Prague looking for the Slovak nationalists they had been just told about, found some on Slovak National Uprising (SNP) Square, wrote down a few quotes and went home to write about, the Slovak problem'.

¹ Yva Momatiuk & John Eastcott, 'Slovakia's Spirit of Survival', *National Geographic*, Vol. 71, No. 1 (1987), pp. 120-146.

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Independence brought Slovakia little better in terms of sophisticated press coverage. Prime Minister Mečiar, who had originally captured the problem so succinctly with his memorable phrase about the "bad image of Slovakia", proceeded, tragically, to worsen the image, and the foreign press latched on to the symbol of the "boxer". Slovakia was not helped by the loudly articulated fears of Slovak Hungarians that their position of civic equality was being eroded. These disguised the fact that such civic equality had existed in the first place - no small achievement in post-communist Europe.

This one-dimensional image of Slovakia was not the fault of the foreign journalists. British journalists are singularly ill-equipped to convey the complexity of Slovakia. Their readership knows too little of Slovakia to grasp details of arguments. Stark images are easier to convey, and Slovakia presented just too many of them. Even in post-Mečiar Slovakia, where the pluralism of views cannot be disguised, this emerges at best as a governing coalition which squabbles all the time.

Some comparative academic studies of the post-communist world are little kinder to Slovakia. Like the journalists, comparativists often impose pre-conceived notions from elsewhere on Slovakia. Their analyses often work backwards. Slovakia must fit into a category. So they choose what looks like the most appropriate category and use it to explain. Slovakia is not like the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, then it must be like Bulgaria and Romania.² Guesswork suggests this must be because all three countries have ten per cent ethnic minorities of the same nationality as their former imperial rulers. One of the most damning recent analyses of Slovakia, by M. Steven Fish in *East European Constitutional Review*, even manages to compare it (albeit favourably) to Belarus and Kazakhstan.³

Why do academic pictures of Slovakia sometimes get so distorted? Again, there is no conspiracy. The reason is ignorance, or rather unfamiliarity. Slovakia was invisible in Czechoslovakia, as the proponents of the "hyphen" rightly pointed out. Few visitors went there. Independence was positive because they started to come. Bratislava gained its own diplomatic corps, and foreigners travelled outside Bratislava, whereas before it had been the one Slovak staging post on a visit from Prague. Yet most visitors had no Slovak; hence they spoke to English-speaking Slovaks, even if they went outside Bratislava. Such Slovaks were usually frantic about the less democratic developments under Mečiar's third government and tended, because of their own total (and quite laudable) preoccupation with this, to talk about

² See, for example, Michael Carpenter, "Slovakia and the Triumph of Nationalist Populism", *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 205-220; Milada Anna Vachudová and Tim Snyder, "Are Transitions Transitory? Two Types of Political Change in Eastern Europe Since 1989", *East European Politics and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1997), pp. 1-35.

³ M. Steven Fish, "The End of Mečiarism", *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol. 8, Nos. 1/2 (1999), pp. 47-55.



these faults incessantly, and thereby painted a rather negative picture of the country. The positive quality of Slovakia - that a critical mass of educated citizens cared enough about democracy to register and articulate every case of its undermining - got somehow overlooked. Slovakia's greatest strength ended up getting registered in negative terms.

In an ideal world, any comparative analyses of Slovakia should start from the realities within Slovakia viewed in all its complexity. It can only then be fitted into a comparative category - not the reverse. As knowledge of Slovakia becomes deeper, this approach will become more common. Meanwhile, however, Slovakia has to cope with two dangerous analytical misconceptions which took root during the Mečiar years, and which pervade much political science writing.

The first relates to "modes of transition" from communism. It is suggested that in Slovakia, there was not an implosion of the communist regime like in Czechoslovakia and the GDR. Rather, in Slovakia the old communist elites stayed in power like in Romania and Bulgaria.⁴ The evidence of this is tenuous at best: while the, ex-communist head count⁵ of the third Mečiar government superficially looks grim, rigorous analysis has to account for the fact that Mečiar himself spent but a few youthful years in the KSČ, while the post-communist SDK refused to enter a coalition with him. Slovak academics have generally failed to counter this false analysis with what is perhaps the most convincing counter-argument. The Slovak case can best be classified as "repressed negotiated transition". Some of the developments in 1989 indicate that Slovakia would, left to its own devices, have been like Poland and Hungary, where the ruling communists and the oppositional elites negotiated a smooth transition away from the communist monopoly of power. Slovaks were hindered from reaching this compromise by the domination of the Prague-based agenda, where hopelessly unimaginative communists were in a stand-off with dissidents who had been totally excluded from professional life. KSČ/SDK remained throughout the 1990s able to talk to anyone from VPN to SDK, but Slovakia's battle with Prague over economic and political resources allowed the nationalists to outflank them all.

The battle with nationalism has led to the second pernicious theory explaining Slovak politics. This is that Slovakia has a different political culture from the Czech Republic, or indeed Hungary or Poland. Put simply, this says that Slovaks think differently. Yet there is no unambiguous empirical evidence to suggest that Slovaks think differently from Czechs about fundamental issues of democracy such as the desirability of rule by a strong leader.⁶ The reality of the Prague-dominated post-communist political agenda,

⁴ See, for example, Herbert Kitschelt, "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions", *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 4 (1995), pp. 447-472, where Slovakia is regarded as resembling "transition by implosion, because it was driven by events in the Czech Republic from 1990 to 1992", but otherwise to show characteristics of "pre-emptive reform" as in Bulgaria, Romania and most of the Soviet Union.

⁵ See the New Democracies Barometers III-V, Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer, *Studies in Public Policy*, Nos. 230, 262, 306 (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, 1994, 1996, 1998). See also Stephen Whitefield & Geoffrey Evans, "Political Culture Versus Rational Choice: Explaining Responses to Transition in the Czech Republic and Slovakia", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 29, no. 1 (1999), pp. 129-154; Geoffrey Evans & Stephen Whitefield, "The Structuring of Political Cleavages in Post-Communist Societies: the Case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia", *Political Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1 (1998), pp. 115-139.



together with old insecurities about Hungary, merely forced Slovaks to think about different things. Slovaks who love Mečiar do so not because they revere him as a "sultan", but because he talks - often rather vulgarly - about things that make sense to them. Their basic mind-sets are pretty similar to any others in East-Central Europe.

Compared to journalistic or comparative politics images of Slovakia, EU assessments appear highly objective. In 1997, the European Commission's opinion on Slovakia⁴ was unflattering about political developments (but it is impossible, objectively, to be polite about a country where the government greets the kidnapping of the president's son with ill-concealed mirth, and an elected deputy is unconstitutionally ejected from parliament). There are, however, three huge advantages for Slovakia about the way the European Commission reaches its judgements.

The first is that the Commission, for diplomatic reasons, has to be as bland as possible. It has to avoid emotive rhetoric. There is no room here for vague recriminations about nationalists, thugs and boxers.

The second is that Commission reports are nothing if not complex. They laboriously plough through every category and sub-heading that is applied to every other candidate state for EU membership. Where there is nothing sensational to say about Slovakia, it dutifully says nothing sensational about Slovakia at approximately the same length that it would say something highly critical. This is balance.

The third, and for Slovakia hugely advantageous, facet of EU judgements is that they start from the fundamental assumption that change is both possible and probable. Whereas political scientists sometimes tend, unconsciously, to strive for permanent categorisations which provide a model for explaining behaviour and simplifying analysis, the EU assumes that every state can, and will, improve itself. Prejudice is an anathema. You judge only the present. It was immensely understanding of the transitional problems of post-communists when it stated, on issuing its original "opinions" on the Central and East European countries in 1997, that it would update these with annual progress reports. Despite what some western analysts inferred, the EU never divided the ten post-communist candidates into a "first" and "second" wave of accession. It preferred a process of "differentiation" whereby negotiations progressed according to the actual progress of individual states.

This leads us on to the final problem of how political scientists should best evaluate Slovakia's post-communist democratic transition. First of all, Slovakia genuinely does have some "specific" characteristics which tend to get overlooked in the many oversimplifications about its "nationalist" political culture. Here again, it is the complexity of Slovak society which need to be emphasised.

1. *Economic progress and level of modernisation.* Slovakia belongs to a small group of relatively prosperous, modern post-communist countries. On this measure, only Slovenia and the Czech Republic have been consistently ahead. The latest, October 1999,

⁴ European Commission, "Agenda 2000: Commission opinion on Slovakia's application for membership of the European Union", Bulletin of the European Union, Supplement 9/97.



European Commission reports are the first to show Hungary with a higher standard of living than Slovakia; but Poland - to say nothing of Estonia - are still well behind Slovakia.⁷ This should come as no surprise, since Slovakia is a country sandwiched between Poland and Hungary, but with an enormous cultural, historical and institutional affinity to its western neighbour, the Czech Republic. Yet most foreigners, who have never been to Slovakia, overlook this point. They don't know that Slovakia has a sound infrastructure and transport system, and a relatively consistent standard of living throughout the country. Any Slovak government should, of course, be concerned about regional disparities, but nevertheless, to a foreigner it is remarkable that having lunch in Vranov nad Topľou or Stakčín feels pretty much the same as being on the outskirts of Bratislava, and is a world away from nearby Ukraine. The tendency of the last government to overlay Slovakia's macroeconomic successes did ignore some important economic problems, but in multinational comparative terms, it had got the basic message right.

2. *Well-dispersed political elite.* The country is well-integrated politically as well as economically - despite being exceptionally long and thin and reaching from Vienna to Ukraine. In the last parliamentary elections, two of the six successful parties had chairs who were mayors of regional capital cities. This is clearly not an unbalanced state where the rural masses are dominated by a small intellectual elite in the capital.

3. *General western orientation.* The last government's occasional threats to 'go east' if the west didn't want it were highly effective in creating a negative image of Slovakia in international circles, but they were never backed up by the findings of public opinion polls about the views of most Slovaks.⁸ The Slovak point of reference is Austria. Prague may have been forgotten since the division of Czechoslovakia, but this is only because Vienna is so much nearer. The airport is in Vienna, the motorway to Germany starts in Vienna, the shops are in Vienna. What will happen to the border with the Ukraine when their country joins the EU does not seem to concern the Slovaks - unlike the Poles.

4. *Diverse and pluralist political opinions.* There was a mid-1990s tendency for Slovakia to be portrayed as a society split between Slovaks and Hungarians. The political scientists' remedy against this was to emphasise that the most significant political polarisation in the country was to be found within the Slovak community. Yet this, too, was a simplification. There is actually also firm 'middle ground' in Slovakia. This is now admi-

⁷ Commission of the European Communities, Composite paper. Reports on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries, COM(1999) 500 final.

⁸ In the European Commission's Central and Eastern Eurobarometer reports, where respondents in candidate states are asked where their country's future lies, in late 1995 (No. 6, March 1996), only Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia registered smaller number of responses stating Russia. In the subsequent two reports, Slovak respondents mentioning Russia are not mentioned - unlike in the case of the three Baltic states, Bulgaria and Romania. Institute for Public Affairs (IPA) figures show a somewhat higher, but still small, proportion of Slovaks - around 10 per cent - supporting military and political alliance with Russia. Zora Bátorová, Olga Gyarišová & Marián Veščík "Public Opinion", in Grigorij Mesežnikov, Michal Ivančák, Tom Nicholson (eds.), Slovakia 1998-1999 (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 1999), p. 155.



rably embodied by the president, who had enemies at both ends of the Slovak political spectrum, and also enjoyed massive electoral support from the Hungarian minority.⁹

5. *Lively and diverse civil society.* Slovak Television's track record leading up to the 1998 elections may have been truly dreadful, but at least there was a free press to make a critical mass of people aware of this. Slovakia also has a strong, but not politically dictatorial, church, as well as a wealth of non-governmental organisations - bolstered, ironically, by the number of natural state sector workers who found themselves excluded from their preferred sphere of employment by the policies of the last government.¹⁰

6. *Strong political institutions.* Slovakia has the good fortune to enjoy a parliamentary system with proportional representation - precisely the combination identified by political scientists, such as Arend Lijphart, as being most conducive for democracy.¹¹ Given that the European Commission's most damning criticism of the Slovak democracy in July 1997 related to "instability of Slovakia's institutions", it is a supreme irony that it was precisely the stabilising effect of its political institutions that curbed undemocratic tendencies in Slovakia. Slovakia is just about the only country in the world where we can state definitively that it is simply not possible for the president to be removed mid-term by a hostile government: no prime minister has ever been quite as determined as Vladimír Mečiar to oust a disloyal president, and none as singularly unsuccessful in doing so. Even when President Kováč's term of office was constitutionally at an end, Mečiar was still unable to foist his chosen candidate on the country for the next five years. The PR voting system also deprived him of the parliamentary majority necessary to change the constitution, and his coalition government, together with a tactically skilful opposition, prevented him from introducing a new electoral system that could perpetuate his power. The Constitutional Court has been criticised by both government and opposition, and therefore proved its credentials of neutrality. It is hard to conceive of a more robust constellation of "institutions guaranteeing democracy" than those that have protected the Slovak Republic in its early years.

7. *General understanding of the principles of the rule of law.* These have not always

*Does this all mean, then,
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⁹ Based on MVK survey figures as quoted in Šme, 18.5.1999, p. 5, which showed nearly 92 per cent of SMK supporters (Hungarians) voting for Šušter in the first round of the presidential election, which was higher than the 85 per cent vote among supporters of his own SOP.

¹⁰ A most favourable account of Slovakia is given in Mary Kaldor & Ivan Vejvoda, 'Democratization in central and east European countries', *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (1997), pp. 59-82, which notes (albeit with puzzlement), "that Slovakia has an extremely lively civil society and unusually active public participation in political debates" (p. 80).

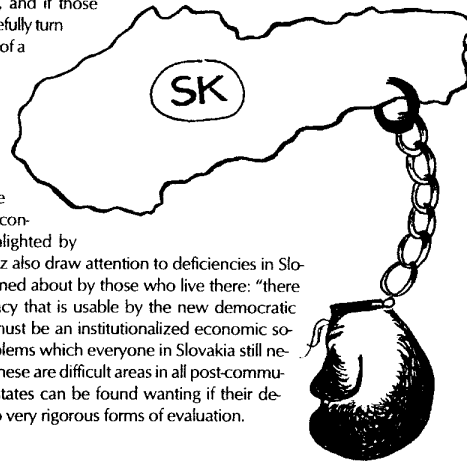
¹¹ Arend Lijphart, 'Constitutional Choices for New Democracies', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1991), pp. 72-84; 'Democratization and Constitutional Choices in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland 1989-1991', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1992), pp. 207-223. See also Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism', *World Politics*, Vol. 46 (1993), pp. 1-22.



been applied, and Slovaks have a lamentable tendency to expect that they will not be applied. Nevertheless, the law has remained the accepted point of reference for all the most acerbic political conflicts. This was why Slovak institutions survived the battering to which they were subjected in the mid-1990s. Even when Mečiar's government flagrantly violated constitutional principles, as in the Gauldier case, it felt obliged to concoct the most bizarre and complex justifications for its behaviour.

Does this all mean, then, that Slovakia is a consolidated democracy - a stable democracy likely to endure?¹² Not quite. It does well in fulfilling the criteria for "procedural" or "elective" democracy, which in Robert Dahl's writings consisted primarily of freedom of expression, association and of electing and being elected.¹³ Slovakia also, crucially, has now passed Samuel P. Huntington's "two turnover test", whereby "a democracy may be viewed as consolidated if the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election".¹⁴

Slovakia does less well if measured against the criteria of "substantive democracy", which look more closely at how a polity actually functions. Some of the characteristics of a consolidated democracy highlighted by Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz also draw attention to deficiencies in Slovak life frequently complained about by those who live there: "there must be a state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government" and "there must be an institutionalized economic society".¹⁵ These are the problems which everyone in Slovakia still needs to work on. But then, these are difficult areas in all post-communist states, and some EU states can be found wanting if their democracies are subjected to very rigorous forms of evaluation.



¹² Guillermo O'Donnell suggests that a political democracy is consolidated when it is "likely to endure": "Illusions about Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1996), pp. 34-51.

¹³ Robert Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 11; *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 221; also *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 3.

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), p. 266-7.

¹⁵ Juan J. Linz & Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore & London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 7.



Yet in the end, all foreigners "looking in" on life in Slovakia need - unlike Slovak politicians - to make sense of Slovakia by comparing it to something else, by assigning it to some sort of analytic category. Despite many differences between the two countries, the most fruitful pairing may be to compare Slovakia with Croatia - the other erstwhile part of Hungary which after 1990 decoupled itself from a "communist federation partner" to the west which had been in the Austrian part of the Habsburg empire. This is also the most positive comparison for Slovakia, since Mečiar, for all his faults, never managed to get Slovakia excluded from the European integration process quite as totally as Tudjman accomplished this for Croatia. Slovakia suffered being left in the waiting room to full membership of European structures, while the Croats were still-wandering half-heartedly around the corridor, with one foot outside the building. Slovakia suffered from being compared to the Balkan countries of Bulgaria and Romania, while the Croats were left forlornly protesting against the analyses of those who assumed that they were Balkan. Now that a new Croatian government is knocking at the doors of mainstream Europe, both Slovakia and Croatia are testing out how quickly the process of differentiation on merit can rearrange the list order of aspiring members. The analytical explanation for this "catching up" process is that a state can suffer from the "infantile disorder" of nationalism without this saying anything about the quality of its transition from communism, or its underlying political culture.

Slovakia's greatest advantage is that in the real world of international politics, it is the painstakingly boring analytical approach of the European Union which is most important in deciding its fate. Negative images are a disadvantage. But in the end, it is what a country really is and really does that is decisive. ■

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IVO SAMSON

Security Policy of the Slovak Republic: Meeting NATO Criteria before Madrid and after Washington

At the Madrid Summit on July 8, 1997, the General Secretary of NATO, J. Solana, announced that representatives and governments of the NATO countries agree that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland should be invited to join NATO. Slovakia, one of the applicant countries, was not invited to join NATO either in Madrid, or at the Washington Summit in April 1999, although hopes were expressed in Slovakia after the parliamentary elections in September 1998 that Slovakia would be invited to join. Even by 1996/7 given the long-term development tendencies in Slovakia it was extremely unlikely that Slovakia would be invited to join NATO in 1999. The refusal to invite Slovakia in Madrid and after the elections in 1998 to grant it a "special position" in Washington was not very surprising. The behavior of the Slovak decision-making institutions prior to the 1998 elections, their reflection of Slovakia's security position and of the security constellation in Europe did not allow any other result. After the decision of the Madrid Summit, the Slovak government reacted by announcing that NATO membership should remain the ultimate security goal of the country.¹ Since then, definitely, a lot of predominantly political deficiencies have come to the surface and these deficiencies were not automatically removed after the 1998 elections. The main thesis of analyzing the Slovak "double failure" is that mere parliamentary elections are not enough to persuade NATO about a long-term trustworthiness of any country. Slovakia already got her big chance after the division of the common state in 1993 having been accepted as a successor state to Czechoslovakia by NATO.² Nothing can substantiate

¹The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic on July 13, 1997.

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the theory of a "secret deal" between the USA and Russia to enlarge NATO with the exclusion of Slovakia.³

The political changes in Central and Eastern Europe in the late eighties and early nineties had created for all Central European countries (the later Visegrad Group)⁴ approximately the same outcome positions in their endeavor to be integrated into NATO. The chances of Slovakia joining NATO at the time of Czechoslovakia's dissolution were considered to be similar to Slovakia's former partner in the common state, the Czech Republic. After the official application for full NATO-membership (November 1993) there followed a period of a gradual lagging behind the other Central European countries.

The growing distance between Slovakia and the other Central European countries in terms of domestic policy and the growing uncertainty of Slovak security orientation weakened the Slovak - NATO link. Between 1994 - 1998 Slovakia witnessed its transition from a democratic state to a category of countries with heavy democratic deficiencies. The orientation of Slovakia's security policy is closely linked to factors of domestic policy, of democratic traditions and traditional links to Eastern Europe.

There are several reasons why Slovakia, even by 2000, has experienced problems to meet fully all the basic criteria for NATO-membership. Whereas some criteria can be met satisfactorily (compatibility of the armed forces, gradual transition to market economy), some others (transformation from an authoritarian society to a democratic one, good relations with neighbors) could not be fulfilled for a number of reasons in the past few years. The deficit that continues to be acute in the year 2000 is the lack of trust in Slovakia's political future.⁵ It would be irresponsible of NATO to rely on the formal side of the political process in Slovakia

³J. Moravčík, the former Foreign Minister (1993-1994) and later Prime Minister (1994) of Slovakia is of the opinion that the USA represented by the president George Bush gave the consent to the division of Czechoslovakia to the Czechoslovak president Václav Havel during a meeting at the Third Summit of the CSCE in Helsinki in June 1992. See in: Beblavý, M.; Šalner, A.: *Tvorcovia obrazu, obraz tvorcov* (Creators of Image, Image of Creators), Bratislava 1999, p. 49.

⁴During his time as Prime Minister, V. Mešiar supported this "conspiracy" theory.

⁵By referring to Central European countries, i. e. Central Europe (CE), the author means the loosely formed Visegrad Group, which was founded in 1991 (Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. After the division of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic replaced Czechoslovakia). Gradually, the group ceased to cooperate and with the enlargement of NATO lost its meaning definitely. The broader context of the post-communist Europe is covered by using the name *Central Eastern Europe* (CEE).

⁶The open conflicts in the largest government party SDK (Slovak Democratic Coalition) at the beginning of 2000 are less notable than the "non-standard" composition of the government ranging from Christian-Democrats on the right via national liberals, greens, Social Democrats and two post-communist parties. Such a coalition hints at a long process of "normalizing" the political scene in Slovakia.



(elections) and to neglect the political support for the previous government by the voters during its time in office, i. e. the long-term political will of the population. The roots of the possible relapse into the past have to be seen in society, which elected the authoritarian regime voluntarily, freely and democratically. In 2000, Slovakia is still in the process of transforming basic values that concern the self-reflection of the society and the decision about a future orientation. This problem might have been only partly resolved by the parliamentary elections at the end of 1998. The projection of the controversial development within the society, the looking for basic "civilisatory" orientation and the attitude of the population helped to create a special type of postcommunist democracy that could be found especially in Southern-Eastern Europe in the mid-nineties (Croatia, Serbia, partly Bulgaria, Romania).

The analysis of the development in the mid-nineties in Slovakia (a deep difference between political declarations, declamations and the real political output) should give more specific and precise answers to our question of the security oscillation between East and West. Slovakia will have to live with the burden of her recent political history at least until the next one or two parliamentary. Her entering the Central European security policy scene was not very convincing and Slovakia will have to wait to win back the confidence of NATO.

After 1993 Slovakia's security policy towards both parts of the former bipolar world was not clear. In spite of its declarations, in 1998 Slovakia would have obviously welcomed the retention of the status quo, i. e. a further postponement of the NATO enlargement in order to stabilize its international position in the region. However, due to the fact that the neighboring Visegrad countries were admitted to NATO, Slovakia needed to avoid isolation and to be integrated, too. Meeting the domestic policy criteria (democratic deficits) were, however, a dilemma for the former (up to the end of 1998) government coalition, because it equaled to the loss of power in the country.

The enlargement of NATO without Slovakia involved a change of strategic position of the Central European region in which Slovakia wanted to play so desperately the role of a "bridge" between East and West. The special "Eastern policy" of Slovakia was, contrary to some partial amelioration, not abandoned fully in 1998 - 1999. Even one year after the elections in 1998 there exist no signs of a substantial change in the foreign policy towards Russia and the Slovak government failed in creating a clear strategy in this respect.⁶ A non-admission to NATO might have complicated the security relations with the neighbors, especially Hungary. One of the leading (and popular) and most dangerous Slovak options which remained was to look for neutrality. In this case, Slovakia could rely on the support of the neighboring Austrian partisans of neutrality, whose status in Austria has been a big help for the Slovak neutrality seekers. The change of

⁶See in: Duleba, A.: *Veľká vízia na začiatku a ilúzia na konci alebo vzťahy s Ruskom ako slovenská vnútorná otázka* ("A Grand Vision at the Beginning and an Illusion at the End or the Relations to Russia as the Slovak Domestic Problem"), in: *Lisť SFPA*, November 1999, p. 8.



government in Slovakia after the parliamentary elections in 1998 does allow us to draw the conclusion that in relation to the security orientation of the country there does not exist any contradiction between political declamations and the real policy any more. This is, however, only the level of the governing elites. At the end of 1999, opposition to NATO membership had increased.⁷

From this point of view, the hypothesis of durable deficiencies can be tested against official statements of the government in the course of 1993 - 1998, against the real political output of the state foreign and security policy at the same period and against the opinion of the population in 1998 - 1999. Two things are startling. First, the political leadership failed to evaluate the unsuccessful attempt to enter NATO by having disregarded the warning signals and, second, the reaction of the "second half of Slovakia" to the highly precarious security position of Slovakia. (As the "second half", as a rule, the opposition parliamentary political parties before the parliamentary elections in September 1998 were mentioned.) Following the parliamentary elections in September 1998 and the forming of a new government a month later, the political forces of the hitherto government turned to be the "second half" of Slovakia. In a deeply divided society, the public opinion differs sharply as to the security orientation of the country.

It is a generally known fact that after 1993 Slovakia slipped from one of the forerunners of admission to NATO to the country, which turned out to be the least trusted member of what was once called the Visegrad Group. In 1997 it found itself behind such countries as Romania and Slovenia concerning chances of NATO-admission. The Washington Summit in April 1999, did not meet the expectations the new Slovak government had expressed at the end of 1998. The question why Slovakia experienced such an unprecedented integration collapse can be scrutinized from several aspects. Again, it is not very difficult to identify several important reasons that contributed to Slovakia's exclusion from the enlargement process in Madrid and to her unsuccessful attempt to be reintegrated into the enlargement process "additionally" in Washington.⁸ It is, however, much more difficult to select the most important factor standing behind the historical Slovak failure to meet the basic NATO criteria prior to 1997/1998, or, as the case may be, to select the more and the less important factors.

⁷According to one of the many opinion polls, only 29.9 per cent of the population would support the integration of Slovakia into NATO, whereas 31.4 per cent are against. See in: Sme, 4. 10. 1999. In an differently formulated question 50 per cent of the adult population does not see the NATO-membership of Slovakia as necessary and 15 per cent more don't have any opinion at all. See in: Domanovský, D.: *Vstup do NATO a verejná mienka* ("Integration into NATO and Public Opinion"), in: *Listy SFPA*, November 1999, p. 7.

⁸The belief to be included additionally and individually into NATO, was objective of several schemes, one of them known as 3 plus one (which should mean that Slovakia will be added to the three successful Visegrad countries) or "completion of the first wave". The Slovak Prime Minister M. Dzúrida called it "integration 1b", as the present Foreign Minister E. Kukan said in: *Listy SFPA*, March 1999, p. 5.



Perception of the NATO Criteria

In the first round of the NATO Eastern enlargement process the membership in NATO depended mainly on five basic criteria Slovakia had to meet, being:

- completing the democratic transformation of the society
- free market economy
- civil control of the army
- compatibility of the Slovak Army with NATO armed forces
- friendly relations with neighbors

These criteria coincided partly with the conditions for being admitted into the EU (democratic transformation of the society, free market economy, friendly relations with the neighbors) and produced the impression that both integration processes were deeply interconnected.⁹ From the point of view of the deficits Slovakia displayed, one could, however, discover a lot of secondary deficits. These secondary deficits mostly concerned the perception of the democratic transformation and the outmoded evaluation of the political and strategic priorities in Europe after World War II. The factors accompanying the nature of a newly independent state and its strong nationalist orientation produced further specific deficits. Admittedly, sometimes it is difficult to discern between deficits and serious problems. Generally, one can describe the political side of the development in Slovakia as deficient, whereas in the sphere of economic development and of the integration of the armed forces one can speak about problems. Maybe the most serious deficit of Slovakia's NATO integration should be seen in the overestimation of its own importance for NATO.

Slovakia's Overvaluation of its geopolitical Position

Since the beginning of the 1990s, geopolitics has become probably the most popular (sub)discipline of political science to be thoroughly studied in Slovakia. Slovakia's foreign political position immediately after 1990, and particularly after 1993 can be described as *geographical determinism*. The most important methodological principles of Slovak foreign political behavior concerning the future integration in the EC and NATO - still in the framework of Czechoslovakia - betrayed a firm belief in the importance of its own geopolitical position one assumed that would be taken into consideration in Brussels when passing the integration verdict.

Theoretically, Slovakia departed from quite false premises misjudging the developments that should follow the end of the bipolar world. "The new world order" being

⁹This impression was strengthened by the decision of the European Council in Luxembourg on December 13, 1997. At the summit Slovakia was not admitted in the first group of EU candidates due to deficits in all three mentioned criteria as they were found out and summarized before. See in: *Agenda 2000, Volume I - Communication: For a stronger and Wider Union*, Doc./97/6, Strasbourg, 15 July 1997, pp. 50 - 53.



introduced to the post-bipolar world by the Bush administration, included many geopolitical components. Although at the beginning of the nineties there was a marked diversion from macro-geopolitical (it is from global) thought in direction of micro-geopolitical factors, the Slovak theoreticians interpreted this trend too unilaterally as favoring the neutral status of small international subjects. In the first place, of course, of small national states like Slovakia. Methodologically, however, the priority of geopolitics in security policy thinking still steered to a bipolar and "catastrophic" vision of the world that was common in Russian security and foreign policy discussion between 1992 and 1997.¹⁰

At the beginning of the nineties, the geopolitical research was concentrated in two scientific institutions that worked for the government. Both of them supplied the government with a lot of fresh geopolitical reflections and both of them had based their research on obsolete classical geopolitical theories. They tried, in fact, to apply the traditional geopolitics of the beginning of the 20th century to complex geopolitical relations after the end of the bipolar conflict. The modern geopolitical research in Slovakia tried - by means of classical geopolitical terms - to harmonize the power relations that prevail in CE, in Europe and in the world at the end of the millennium with the modern Slovak geopolitical research. Due to the alleged (and still widely believed) exclusive geographical position of Slovakia in Europe and especially in CE, the phenomenon of space has played a key role in the geopolitical research. Unfortunately, the geopolitical study produced by the *Center for Strategic Studies* was taken by the Slovak government as a guideline for foreign policy.¹¹

Deficits of Nationalism in Slovak Security Policy

According to official statements of the government representatives, integration into NATO always remained the basic priority of Slovak foreign and security policy.¹² In the statements, however, many contradictions could be discovered. Many expressions made by the top government and government parties representatives ran contrary to this declared goal. As a rule, the views opposed to NATO membership were interpreted as merely private statements. The crucial foreign policy deficiency became obvious in the practical steps that were undertaken by the three government parties (1994 - 1998) in relation to such sensitive issues as collective defense and the consensus of the contracting (NATO) parties. They were repeatedly doubted and a parallel to a "dictate" of the



West has been drawn. From the end of 1994 to 1998 the state policy towards integration was handicapped by the composition of the Slovak government: leftist nationalists; left-wing neo-communists; extreme right-wing nationalists. Whereas the attitude to a common NATO oriented security policy has been very confused and contradictory in the case of the strongest political force (HZDS), the other two government parties have openly opposed NATO membership of Slovakia. The fact that they have been bound by the still valid Program Declaration of the Government¹³ (pledging allegiance to both NATO, and EU) were interpreted in an unsatisfactory way.

Undoubtedly, Slovakia's stumbling block in approaching NATO continued to be in domestic politics, more specifically in the national pointedness of domestic politics. Both in the *Constitution of the Slovak Republic*, and in the *Declaration of Sovereignty*¹⁴ a different approach to citizens of non-Slovak ethnicity is obvious: Slovakia is a nation state and the Slovaks are declared a state-forming nation. The notion of "nation" in Slavonic languages, however, has a strictly ethnic connotation and excludes citizens belonging to minorities. Following the partition of Czechoslovakia, the Slovak Parliament declared the Slovak language as the language of the state and the Slovak nation and Slovak identity were placed under state and, theoretically, even under police protection.¹⁵ The tedious negotiations concerning the adoption of a long promised and still put off Act on National Minority Language Use during 1999/1996 has shown that Slovak public opinion is still adverse to granting full language rights to the minorities.

An important factor on the Slovak political scene, of utmost significance concerning the prerequisites of the Slovak Republic for NATO integration, is the way the government power is being applied. It is connected to some extent with the imbalance of political forces, most evident in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections in 1994 and evident later in 1997 (the case of the NATO referendum) and in 1998 (the case of the Prime Minister using the presidential powers). The representatives of the government

An important factor on the Slovak political scene, of utmost significance concerning the prerequisites of the Slovak Republic for NATO integration, is the way the government power is being applied.

¹⁰See in: Duleba, A.: Geopolitika a zahraničnopolitická debata v súčasnom Rusku ("Geopolitics and Foreign Policy Debate in Contemporary Russia"), in: *Listy SPPA*, October 1998, pp. 9 - 10.

¹¹The expertise elaborated by the Center for Strategic Studies of the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic under the title *The Geopolitical and Geoconformal Development in the World and the Position of the Slovak Republic* was submitted to the Slovak Government in February 1, 1994. See in: Ziak, M.: *Slovensko od komunizmu kam?* ("Slovakia on the Way from Communism Where?"), Bratislava 1996, pp. 178 - 190.

¹²Leško, M.: *Pribeh sebadiskvalifikácie favorita* ("The Story of a Selfdisqualification of a favour candidate..."), in: Bútorá, M., Šebek, F.: *Slovensko v šedej zóne* ("Slovakia in a Grey Zone"), Bratislava 1998, p. 74.

¹³See in *Programové vyhlásenie vlády SR* ("The Program Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic"), in: *Sme*, 16. 1. 1995.

¹⁴The "Declaration of Sovereignty" was adopted in the Slovak Parliament in July 17, 1992.

¹⁵As the national minorities form about 14% of the population officially (1991) and as far as 20% by assessment (1999), theoretically, a large proportion of the population was excluded from enjoying the full civic rights.

¹⁶The act entered into effect in September 1, 1999. See in: *Zbierka zákonov /Collection of Laws No. 184/1999*, part 81, pp. 1418 - 1419, Bratislava 1999. Although severe criticism has been expressed not only by the Party of the Hungarian Coalition but also by independent analysts and by Slovak representatives of the government, the positive effect of this act on the opinion abroad has been undisputed.



resorted to methods whose assessment in democratic countries ranges from being unethical and uncultured to being incompatible with the principles of democracy. The number of bills that had been adopted by Parliament and were afterwards found to be contrary to the constitution, is probably unparalleled in CEE. During his presidential term (up to March 1998) the Slovak president referred more than 30 bills back to the Parliament. In 15 cases the Constitutional Court classified the bills as unconstitutional. In one of the last cases the governmental majority in the Parliament repeatedly refused to observe the Constitution and the findings of the Constitutional Court.

A united approach to a common security policy has been severely disturbed by the lack of clearly-defined security goals by the three decisive security policy institutions: the State Defense Council¹⁷, the Parliamentary Committee for Defense and Security¹⁸ and the Ministry of Defense. Since March 1998 another complication has entered into the decision-making institutions. After the expiry of his election term, the president of the country being the formal head of the Slovak armed forces was temporarily replaced by the Slovak Prime Minister, who was, however, already the head of the State Defense Council at the same time. After prolonged political discussions, a new Slovak president was elected directly by the people, which ended the 14 month long presidential "interregnum" in Slovakia.¹⁹

Problems of Security Policy Development

At this time Slovakia is not in a position in which it would be endangered by armed attack. Economic coercion and/or political pressure, however, is conceivable and Slovakia has to balance national security interests with a secure political and economic coexistence among its direct or indirect neighbors in order that the society can pursue its development. According to the former and now suspended *Defense Doctrine of the Slovak Republic*²⁰ national security is guaranteed when, in the opinion of the national leadership there does not exist any threat of a military attack or threat of force or coercion in any form whatsoever. The hidden security threats are not taken into consideration explicitly, although the key structural components of national security mention also political, economic, social, geographic, environmental and demographic aspects besides purely military security. As a consequence of the failed NATO integration, a basic reform of the theoretical framework of the defense policy has been introduced. Important and publicly acces-



sible defense policy documents that had symbolized the bold reform plans of the Slovak Army after 1993 were no closer to being implemented in 1999.²¹ At the same time, at least eight new defense policy documents were announced.²²

The defense philosophy of the Slovak Republic consists in looking for answers to the crucial question: what is necessary and what is it possible to do to guarantee the country's security in the critical period after the bipolar world ceased to exist and the involuntarily received guarantees given by the WTO²³ (having fulfilled exclusively the internal function anyway) disappeared. Security risks for Central Europe have not been as fundamental as they have been for south-eastern Europe but they do exist as a lasting possibility until security integration into any vital alliance has been reached.

The Washington Summit has left the door open to a future NATO enlargement and has introduced the MAP (Membership Plan Action), but without any firm obligations.²⁴ In considering the new military strategic conception of defense for Slovakia one has to take into account the fact that the contemporary security system in Europe does not need an immediate follow-up of the first round of Eastern NATO enlargement. Slovak defense forces, undergoing another attempt at reform, would obviously not meet all technical criteria of NATO integration at the beginning of the year 2000 in terms of compatibility.

The compatibility of the Slovak armed forces with the NATO/West European military has several aspects. One of them, obviously the most difficult, is the compatibility of *military thinking*, the change of defense philosophy. This change can be brought about only by active personal contacts with NATO/WEU and by a consequent personal rebuilding of the armed forces, by adding people that have not been linked to the previous WTO period. The contacts with western armed forces, especially thanks to the Partnership for Peace contacts, are absolutely necessary.²⁵ The preparations for Slovak peacekeeping are in full progress. Besides this, Slovakia keeps a military mission in the NATO HQ in Brussels and cooperates closely, especially with the USA, which finances the reform program for the Slovak Army and launched education programs for Slovak army officers in the USA. Since 1995, Slovak soldiers have increasingly taken part in several peacekeeping trainings in the Central European region and in the West.

¹⁷Základné ciele a zásady národnej bezpečnosti SR ("Basic Goals and Principles of National Security"). Obranná doktrína SR („Defense Doctrine ...“), Konceptia výstavby armády SR do r. 2000 ("Concept of Building-up the Slovak Army until 2000") and Dlhodobý plán rozvoja armády SR do roku 2010 ("The Long-term Plan of the Development of the Slovak Army until 2010"). See in: *Zámer spracovania základných koncepcií a legislatívnych dokumentov* ("The Scheme of Elaborating basic concept and Legislative Documents"), Bratislava 1999.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Warsaw Treaty Organization.

²⁰Jakabšín, V.: *Informácie o Washingtonskom summite NATO* ("Information about the Washington NATO Summit"), in: *Bezpečnostná situácia v Strednej a východnej Európe po Washingtonskom summite NATO* ("The Security Situation in Central and Eastern Europe after the Washington NATO Summit"), Bratislava 1999, pp. 7 - 11.

²¹See in: *Exchange of Experience in Partnership for Peace Program Implementation*, Bratislava 1998, pp. 8 - 13, 14 - 16, 61 - 68.

¹⁷Rada obrany štátu

¹⁸Branno-bezpečnostný výbor NR SR.

¹⁹In direct elections, Mr. Rudolf Schuster (originally from the Party of Civic Understanding), an explicit supporter of Slovakia's NATO integration, was elected president in the second round of presidential elections in May, 1999, having defeated the former prime minister V. Mečiar.

²⁰Intentionally, one avoided the denotation "military doctrine". The "Defense Doctrine of the Slovak Republic" was approved by the Slovak Parliament on June 30, 1994.



Another problem Slovakia has experienced up until 1999 can be found in the matter of a "common speech", i. e. in the *terminological compatibility*. The traditional terminological instruments that are still used in the Slovak armed forces very often have their origin in the terminology of the WTO. The problem becomes even more marked, because even amongst NATO members there does not exist unanimity about many principal terms concerning security: strategic interests, security, security policy (grand strategy, national security strategy in the USA), military strategy, military doctrine, etc.²⁶ Among the American, French and German terms we find several differences in meaning and Slovakia has to look for fitted equivalents that correspond to Slovak specific conditions. After several considerations, for example, the term "military doctrine" was rejected and given the denotation "defense doctrine", which might be changed in the new documents the Ministry of Defense is working on. There still exists a slight confusion about the proper meaning of "security". In the case of Slovakia, however, an efficient security cannot be guaranteed the moment the country is attacked and one can reckon only with potential enemies. Slovakia would rely on prevention and deterrence only (this could be elaborated in several examples). Official statements declare that Slovakia realizes that certain requirements must be met if Slovakia wants to be integrated. Through U.S. and British assistance and analysis, Slovakia intends to develop its program in the following deficit areas: Command and Control Techniques; the Air Force; Defense Planning and Spending; Long Term Finance Planning; and Restructuring of the State Reserve System.²⁷

Another important item in the case of "compatibility" is, of course, the *compatibility of arms and armaments*. In this regard Slovakia has performed well due to the fact that the heavy armament industry was concentrated in Slovakia during communist times, although in the second half of the eighties and also due to the historical changes in 1989, production was drastically reduced. So the former Czechoslovakia, historically among the WTO's chief armourers, reduced its arms output to about one tenth of pre-1989 levels in 1990. In the mid-nineties, Slovak arms executives and government officials made it clear that the industry be given a second chance. Slovakia succeeded in modernizing the arms industry and to gain new markets in the course of 1993-1995.²⁸ With the collapse of the WTO, as well the failure of Soviet-typed arms in the Gulf war, the traditional market for Slovak weapons like the Soviet-designed T-72 was almost lost. The Slovak objective to raise production of arms to at least 25 percent of output prior to 1989 capacity within a few years²⁹ was very ambitious and could not be achieved. The

²⁶See in: Samson, I.: *Národná bezpečnosť* ("National Security"), in: Mesežnikov, G.; Ivantýšyn, M.: Slovensko 1998 - 1999. *Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* ("Slovakia 1998 - 1999. Global Report on the State of the Society"), Bratislava 1999, pp. 377.

²⁷See in: U.S. - *Slovak Security and Foreign Policy Roundtable*. Report, Washington, D.C., 26. October 1999.

²⁸According to the former Deputy Defense Minister A. Sobol (in office until the beginning of 1995) "we do not want to be known as the gun suppliers of Europe, we just want to supply our citizens with jobs... It is a strategic fight for the arms market out there, and every tactics and means is fair game. We will do what the rest of the world does". See the Interview for "Reuter", Bratislava, 24 November, 1994.

²⁹The former Defense Minister Pavol Kanis to "Reuter", Bratislava, 24 November 1994.



former quantity should be replaced by quality that corresponds to western arms. Slovakia also modernized³⁰ its classic T-72 tank in the form of the T-72 M2, which is also on the market. According to experts there were an estimated 8 000 T-72 tanks in use around the world in the mid-nineties. So the modernization of the Slovak arms industry contributes to the compatibility of the Slovak Army with NATO armed forces and has been a frequent theme for discussions with the western army officials during 1995.³¹

The deficiencies concerning the Slovak armed forces have been regarded as minimal in comparison with the political deficits in the course of the Slovak NATO integration process. The engagement of the Army of the Slovak Republic in the peace keeping operations has been above average and the Slovak military has often given these activities as an example of a positive security policy development of the country.³²

The place of Slovakia in the typology of post-communist states

Like the other countries of Central Europe, of course, the Slovak government also thought that Slovakia was entitled to be in the first round of the widely announced enlargement, be it for proclaimed cultural, historical, geographic, geopolitical and geo-strategic, or for economic and political reasons.

One has to admit that the security position of the Visegrad countries (and Slovenia)³³ was not quite comparable. In security matters, their outcome positions are different in such a divergent measure that the way to cooperate effectively had to be seen as blocked *a priori* in all spheres except the economy. Bringing the Central European countries into one bloc following one identical global orientation resembling that of the original EFTA-countries in the last decade before entering the EU has been unrealistic. The security connotations of foreign policy betrayed conflicting interests. By substituting several variables we can scheme nothing more than several two-bloc conceptions within the Visegrad/CEFTA group furnishing proof of internal affinities or mutual inconsistencies that could influence the possibility of a "bloc admission" to NATO (and/or EU/WEU)³⁴. Whereas the bloc concept failed in the case of NATO, a block admission of

³⁰In the arms industrial complex ZTS Martin in Central Slovakia.

³¹The former (1994 - 1998) Defense Minister Ján Šitek with the British Defense Minister M. Rifkind on 15 February 1995, see in: *Národná obroda*, 16 February 1995 and with the US Defense Minister W. Perry on 18 September 1995, see in: "Sme", 19 September 1995.

³²Marguš, J.: *Aktivita Armády SR v operáciách na podporu mieru OSN a ďalších medzinárodných organizácií* ("The Activities of the Army of the Slovak Republic in Peace Keeping Operations of the UN and Other International Organizations"), in: Samson, I. (ed.): *Riziká a ohrozenia v strednej Európe v 21. storočí. Vplyv na úlohu ozbrojených síl* ("Risks and Threats in Central Europe in the 21st Century. Impact on the Role of Defense Forces"), Bratislava 1999, p. 89.

³³Slovenia, although not a participant to the Visegrad agreement of 1991, has developed to a partner of Central European countries during the mid-nineties.

³⁴The "bloc approach" vis a vis EU and NATO was at the basis of the original Visegrad Three. Soon Poland and Hungary (in 1991) and finally the Czech Republic (following the Copenhagen Summit in July 1993) ceased to cooperate with the other member-countries. Poland and Hungary returned to the group immediately, the Czech Republic has remained "stubborn" until the Madrid Summit in 1997, following a "solo" trip to Western economic and security structures.



the former Visegrad partners (and Slovenia) is an imaginable, although not a very realistic scheme.

The ambiguous orientation of Slovakia lied with *specific features* of the development. The orientation strategies were unstable - they proceeded very quickly and Slovakia could be regarded as hardly liable to concrete typologizing among the post-Marxist states.³⁵ According to the level of achieved transformation, of domestic political development and of transformation processes of Central Eastern European economies we can differentiate between at least two groups of postcommunist states in CEE. First of all, we have the *former communist countries* that have already passed the crucial point in both domestic, and foreign policy, as well as economic policy. The countries that represent this group already have the political system stable and strong enough to accommodate even significant shifts of political orientation within governments. They can allow the usual right-left shifts on the domestic political scene without casting doubts on the sincerity of their security orientations. We speak about the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. Slovakia, that has logically belonged to this group, too, has got somewhat isolated in the last seven years due to developments in domestic policy. This is the principal reason why three out of those four countries have been in NATO since 1999 and why all four still have better chances of EU membership. Apart from the first group, in CEE we have the *former post-Communist countries* that have not reached political stability and are still fighting for economic macro-stabilization. These countries experience security handicaps owing to large ethnic minorities of their own living abroad or to foreign minorities living on their territory. We speak about the NATO candidates Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania, whose position is different from that of the Baltic states.³⁶ The domestic policy of these countries is developing in a somewhat turbulent and incalculable way despite the formally correct democratically performed election procedures. In the second half of the nineties, Albania took a special position among the CEE countries and kept it during the Kosovo crisis in 1999.

The remaining post-Communist countries (post-Soviet and post-Yugoslav) form a complicated and heterogeneous group.

Slovakia's position has differed from both groups. On the basis of good macro-economic results in the years 1995 - 1997, Slovakia belonged to the first group; domestic political developments, however, put it in the second group, in particular with Romania and with the group, in which we can include Serbia and Croatia; whereas the foreign policy resembled that of Bulgaria.³⁷

³⁵Gabal, I.: Five Years after. The Post-Communist World. Crisis or Evolution? In: *Perspectives*, No. 5/1995, Prague, 99. 47 - 48.

³⁶The outcome position of the Baltic states vis a vis the EU is more favorable than the position of the South-Eastern postcommunist Europeans. NATO-integration, however, is probably less probable.

³⁷Pantev, P.: *Security for South Eastern Europe: Bulgaria*. Conference paper (free to quote), Munich, September 1995.



Owing to the present position of Slovakia in the Central European region and owing to the evolution of the security orientation, the following alternatives to treat this question can be considered. Alternative No. 1: to continue the endeavor of the Slovak Republic (SR) to enter the Atlantic Alliance. Even after the SR was not mentioned preferably in Washington in April 1999, the standpoint of the SR remains unchanged in the sense of the accomplishment of the "Government program of the Slovak Republic"³⁸ - the endeavor to enter the Atlantic Alliance in the process of NATO enlargement. The Slovak Republic supports the standpoints which are based on the prospect of its membership, as the basic foreign-policy priority and orientation for the next few years and believes that the year 2002 will be the year of invitation for Slovakia.³⁹ From the political viewpoint, this alternative is unique and unchangeable; it is closely related to the principle of transition from individual defense to collective defense. All the other opinions related to the problem regarding the membership or non-membership of NATO/WEU can move only on the level of subjective considerations. One encounters many opinions on the level of oral expressions of politicians, or on the level of theoretical contributions in the expert press on the fact, that the process of enlargement also has its paradoxical background. The paradoxes may have an evident existing nature; on the other hand, hypothetical to speculative paradoxes can also be found. In relation to them it is important that further development should confirm their speculative and hypothetical character, and it is necessary to prevent them becoming really existing paradoxes or hypotheses.

In becoming a member of the European security structures, Slovakia should emphasize the fact, that for the SR, the principle of collective defense is especially important, not only from the military point of view, but also from the economic viewpoint. The Slovak Republic must be ready to take part in the tasks, risks, responsibilities, advantages, and costs resulting from common security in the Alliance and from collective defense. It is expected that Slovakia will develop a strategy anchored in the NATO New Strategic Concept. The ability to make a military contribution to the collective defense and to the new tasks of the Alliance will be a criterion for decision-making about beginning discussions aiming at entry into the Alliance. An important element of the military contribution will be the engagement to take part in the targets of standardization, which is a basis for strategy and operational efficiency. Above all, it will be necessary to concentrate on interoperability and to accept such procedures related to standardization, which will enable the Slovak Army to reach a sufficient level of training and equipment for an effective operational common activity. The activities of the SR are oriented to the facts within the framework of the Partnership for Peace Program, including the Process

³⁸Renewed by the Government of M. Dzurinda at the end of 1998.

³⁹See in: Stanovenie priorit zahraničnej politiky SR na roky 200 - 2003 ("Formulating the Foreign Policy Priorities of the SR for the Years 2000 - 2003"), in: *Materials on the Foreign Policy Committee of the National Council of the SR*, National Council of the SR, September 2, 1999.



of Planning and Evaluation. To reach at least a minimal level of interoperability within as short a period as possible is an important military requirement owing to securing military efficiency. According to NATO representatives, the Slovak Republic is progressing very responsibly and purposefully in this sense.⁴⁰ There is also a political demand for the internal solidarity of the Alliance, in the sense that its new members, and those expected to join in the near future should feel that they are equal participants having equal rights in collective defense.

The entry of Slovakia into NATO would, undoubtedly, mean increased expenses for defense. At present, each member country has higher defense expenses than Slovakia.

higher. This results from the common planning system operated by NATO with the whole system based on budgeting. Further expenditure is related to normalization and standardization of the armaments and material by the national armaments industries.

If Slovakia remains outside NATO, the following scenario is possible:

Alternative No. 2: A neutral Slovakia. This is, however, a pessimistic scenario. This alternative has no prevailing support in intellectual, political and academic circles. The present globalization, and the associated integration processes, now include all domains of economic and social life (new high technologies, information age). In direct connection with the laws of social development, and the repeated tendencies of rise and fall, anybody who does not accept this global trend, will very soon (2000 – 2005) be unable to take advantage, on the European economic and socio-economic scene (EU, OSCE, WEU), of the economic growth and positive economic indicators recorded in Slovakia in recent years. Slovakia must clearly and especially with political unity declare this fact (if it wishes to be part of Europe). Thereafter, neutrality has no justification and does not solve the alternative of Slovakia's security from the military point of view. Theoretically, neutrality is impossible without self-sufficiency in armaments. Neutrality loses its theoretical and military-political meaning in the international-political context. Not only in relation to the statements cited above, but also as military-security attributes of classic neutrality or "positive" neutrality, or "dynamic" neutrality⁴¹, have lost their

The entry of Slovakia into NATO would, undoubtedly, mean increased expenses for defense. At present, each member country has higher defense expenses than Slovakia. The annual contribution of each member country to the running of the Alliance must also be considered.

One has to consider the process of balancing the differences in armaments and the readiness of the Slovak Army with those of the Alliance countries, which could last 10 to 15 years, and in this period, defense expenditure would be



sense in present day Europe. In global politics, one does not expect a revival of antagonisms of any character. The new model of collaboration of the world and European economical and military political groupings assumes (and this is the aim of general globalization of economic and political life) a steadily deeper knowledge and scientifically substantiated prognostic outcome of strategic partnership between the subjects.⁴² And finally, there is another, also essential argument. Even based on a gross pragmatic viewpoint, a lively discussion is being led in all the neutral States on the simplest way, and above all in a constitutional legislative form, to get rid of neutrality, which is very costly, and morally and politically obsolete.

The alternative No. 3: Security of Slovakia based on the security policy cooperation with Russia is not a pessimistic, but a catastrophic scenario for Slovakia and the support of this scheme in Slovakia is minimal. In the past, the nationalist Slovak government repeatedly used the security co-operation with Russia more as a means of blackmailing the West than as real option.

The first alternative, far from being easily realizable in the future, seems to be the only realistic one despite the astonishing negative attitude of the Slovak population. The response of the society to the security integration will depend on the deepening of the security links among other European nations. The weakening of the position of the European "non-aligned countries" (particularly of Austria) might have a decisive impact on Slovak society. In this respect, the Slovak public opinion is very "elastic".

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⁴⁰The attitude of the Slovak government during the Kosovo crisis was clearly pro-Western. Without any hesitation, Slovakia opened both the air space (and, subsequently, the land space) for NATO military technology).

⁴¹These notions occurred as parts of East-West relations during the mid-nineties.

⁴²Russia, NATO, see "The Founding Act" - Paris 1997.



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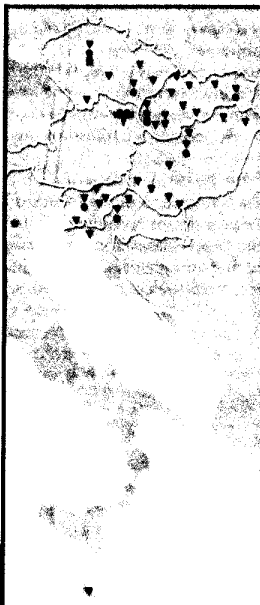
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EU ENLARGEMENT AFTER THE HELSINKI SUMMIT
AND SLOVAKIA AT THE START OF NEGOTIATIONS

VLADIMÍR BILČÍK

EU enlargement after the Helsinki summit and Slovakia at the start of negotiations

On the surface it might appear that the EU Helsinki summit in December 1999 represented a milestone on the way to an enlarged Europe. However, despite the broadening of a pool of negotiating states, the summit offered little concrete strategy or vision with respect to the prospective enlargement. Today, there exists no consensus on how and when to widen the European Union. Instead, general incrementalism and ad hoc decisions best characterize the enlargement process. This article argues that these developments have important implications for Slovakia which is striving to enter the European Union together with its neighbors – Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Following the fulfillment of the political criteria, unless Slovakia improves the workings of its domestic institutions, accelerates economic reforms and the pace of legislative changes, it stands little chance of joining the European Union in the foreseeable future.

This article proceeds in five parts. The first assesses enlargement in the context of the Helsinki summit. The second examines how incremental decision-making and general gradualism reflect on EU enlargement policy. The third looks at Slovakia's situation at the start of negotiations. The fourth section examines the shortcomings of Slovakia's integration policy and outlines the key areas that need improvement. Finally, the fifth part provides a brief conclusion.

Helsinki and enlargement

The events in Helsinki and the conclusions of the summit indicate that, however important, enlargement is presently not a clear top priority of the current EU agenda. They also point to the fact that there exists no definite agreement on how to move forward with the process of widening after the meeting in Helsinki. Although the Helsinki summit may in the future mark an historic cornerstone that will have brought the two

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Although the Helsinki summit may in the future mark an historic cornerstone that will have brought the two halves of Europe together, other issues besides enlargement dominated much of the summit's discussion.

ce not to allow British beef onto France's domestic market. Germany held a similar stance due to legislative delays in the country's upper house – the *Bundesrat* – that was yet to agree on lifting the ban. Second, the Union did not agree on questions of tax harmonization. Britain fervently opposed any moves in this direction. Whilst downplaying the British disappointment with Germany's positive attitude toward EU-wide tax harmonization, Robin Cook's statement in the aftermath of the Helsinki summit rang a note of truth, "Britain is certainly not marginalised."¹ Indeed, the matter is more complicated. Several other countries, most notably Spain, are against tax harmonization and ready to use their veto.² In two specific policy areas the summit thus pointed to apparent difficulties with implementation of common decisions and with further pooling of sovereignty.

At the same time however, EU member states reached a very solid consensus in other statements. These reacted to recent political and military developments. First, the Union presented a coherent outline of an initiative to build up its military capacity. The direct impetus for such a step came from Europe's relatively marginal involvement during the Kosovo crisis whereby up to around 85 percent of military operations were carried out by U.S. forces. The plan adopted in Helsinki builds on the guidelines established by the Cologne European Council and assumes the formation of common forces of up to 50,000 to 60,000 persons capable of the full range of Petersberg tasks by the year 2003.³ Second, the European Union drafted and agreed on a strong declaration condemning the intense bombardment of Chechen cities and the threat levelled at the residents of Grozny.⁴ The EU also called for a review of its Common Strategy on Russia and a suspension of some of the provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agree-

halves of Europe together, other issues besides enlargement dominated much of the summit's discussion.

To begin, two short-term topics on which no consensus emerged overpowered the proceedings in Helsinki. First, the summit did not resolve the problem of beef imports from Great Britain to the rest of the Union and in particular to France. Despite the positive decision taken by the Council that effectively ended the ban on British beef and the subsequent statement by the Commission urging France to comply, the French leadership remained staunch in its stance.



ement. The declaration on Chechnya demonstrated the Union's recent resolve to seek a united position in matters of foreign and security policy.

Next to these themes, enlargement was indeed high on the summit's agenda. Yet, it represented an issue of partial consensus only. Most importantly, the issue of Turkey's candidacy dominated much of the discussions. At the summit in Luxembourg in 1997 Turkey was denied the status of an official candidate for EU membership due to its inability to comply with the political criteria. Although much has changed since and the Commission's *Regular Report* issued in October 1999 recommended Turkey's candidacy, the Helsinki summit illustrated the political sensitivity of this move, exposing some disagreements among the current member states on the extent of Turkey's inclusion in the Union. In the course of the two day summit Javier Solana, the recently appointed EU's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, traveled to Ankara to strike a deal on the candidate status, acceptable both to the Turkish leadership and the EU as a whole. In the end both sides reached a common position, but the last-minute shuttle diplomacy is indicative of a lot of uncertainty that surrounded the recognition of Turkey as a candidate country.

Although the Helsinki summit marked an historic breakthrough for Turkey (albeit with several political conditions attached to the country's candidacy) the EU leaders did not take a similarly decisive move toward countries of the so-called first wave that have been negotiating with the Union since March 1998. The member states were unable to set a target date for enlargement or even suggest when the accession process might come to an end. The disappointment was especially strong in the three members of the Visegrad group⁵ – Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic – that expected a clear positive message and a timetable for their respective accession arrangements.⁶

Meanwhile, the European Union invited additional six countries, including Slovakia, to join the accession negotiations.⁷ The decision was partly inspired by the events in the Balkans earlier in 1999 when both Bulgaria and Romania showed a great deal of solidarity with the rest of the EU by supporting the NATO action against Yugoslavia. In line with the Commission's *Composite Paper*, a summary of reports on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries, published on 13 October 1999, the conclusions of the summit emphasized the principle of differentiation. Accordingly – this principle also called the regatta – calls for every candidate country to be judged individually on its own merits. Thus, the newcomers to negotiations stand a chance to catch

¹The Visegrad group is composed of four members: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It was initiated in February 1991 when Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland had signed the Visegrad declaration pledging mutual support for the objective of integration into: "the European political, economic, security and legislative order."

²The EU's inability to commit to a schedule for enlargement received a lukewarm reaction in these candidate states that see enlargement further away than originally expected. See for instance, *Lidové Noviny*, "EU vzkázala kandidátům: se vstupem v roce 2003 nepočítejte", 11 December 1999.

³These include five countries of the so-called second wave that came out of the Luxembourg summit in 1997 (Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania) plus Malta.

⁴*Irish Independent*, "Blair dilemma over deadlock in Helsinki", 13 December 1999.

⁵*The Independent*, "Never mind the beef, it will be a new game in Lisbon", 16 December 1999.

⁶For details, see *Presidency Conclusions: Helsinki European Council*, 10-11 December, 1999.

⁷See "Annex II", *Presidency Conclusions: Helsinki European Council*.



up or even overtake the countries of the first wave, given their sufficient political, economic and legislative progress. The summit in Helsinki therefore brought the enlargement process to a wholly different level. The number of candidates has increased to thirteen and the number of negotiating partners has doubled to twelve. Yet, as much of the rest of the agenda at the summit, the conclusions were scarce on details as to further concrete steps in the process of widening. Most importantly, the summit itself showed that the Union's energies are spread broadly and enlargement is not at the center of its focus.

The Union's incrementalism and eastern enlargement

The breadth of the agenda in Helsinki is symptomatic of long-term trends in European integration. Enlargement is part of a larger process of significant changes inside the Union. The experience of the 1990s does suggest that the EU is changing only slowly and gradually. At present the Union lacks a basic political vision comparable to the re-launch of the common market in the 1980s. Rather, the Union is overwhelmed by decisions made on an ad hoc basis. These reflect heavily on the present enlargement policy.

European integration reached a particular zenith with the conclusion of the Treaty of Maastricht. The agreement signed in 1991 fundamentally deepened the integrative efforts and was characterized by a general political consensus of member states. In its first pillar the Treaty of the European Union underpinned the project of the common European market that began in the mid-1980s. In the other two pillars the Treaty offered new possibilities for cooperation and future integration in the areas of common security and defense policy and in justice and home affairs. European renewal and new centralizing tendencies of the integration project culminated in Maastricht. In 1986 the twelve EC countries agreed to complete the project of the Single European Market (SEM) in order to ensure a successful economic future of the Continent. By 1991 the commitment moved toward a unified economic space with common currency and free capital flows. Alongside a favorable diplomatic and economic context, throughout the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s the EC had a strong and a visionary Commission capable of setting new agendas.⁶ The Community budget increased sharply during this period. The two Delors packages of 1988 and 1992 financially solidified the Union's new re-distributive functions and enhanced competencies in the area of regional development. Financial resources available to the less prosperous parts of the Community were set to double between 1988 and 1993 and the revenue ceiling set to rise to 1.27 percent of EU's GNP by 1999.⁹

However, since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the Union has undergone a period of internal consolidation that appears much less smooth. Keeping the consensus



of the previous years has become a lot more demanding. The agreement from Maastricht experienced its first test in the ratification crisis in Denmark when the Danish voters cast their vote twice, having rejected the Treaty the first time around. Support in other countries also proved lukewarm. The French referendum scraped through only with a minimal majority. While 51.05 percent voted in favor, 48.95 percent voted against in a 70 percent turnout. In Britain, John Major's weak domestic position and opposition to the Treaty from within his own ranks delayed final approval until August 1993. In Germany, the Federal Constitutional Court upheld the Treaty but criticized the EU's democratic credentials.¹⁰ In the end it took almost a decade for the signatories to agree on the implementation of EMU. Although the project did begin on time (albeit at the latest possible date), the road to the launch of the euro on 1 January 1999 proved difficult. Challenged in the German Constitutional Court, heavily politicized in the dispute over the appointment of the first head of the European Central Bank (ECB) and accompanied by the British, Swedish and Danish opt-outs not to participate, the final stage of monetary union was met at best with a cautious welcome.

More recent initiatives illustrate the present limits of European integration. The 1996 Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) resulted in just marginal and largely cosmetic additions to the original Maastricht Treaty. While qualified majority voting was extended to fourteen new areas, these proved largely uncontroversial. During the discussions of the Commission's proposal - Agenda 2000 - Germany's attempts to renationalize at least part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) pointed to a reversed trend away from policies at the central level in Brussels.¹¹ While at the summit in Berlin in March 1999 the CAP remained mostly untouched, the new budgetary agreement for the following period of seven years clearly delineated the Union's spending cap set at the current 1.27 percent of the EU's GDP. Very recently, the case of France's staunch position in the dispute over the imports of British beef challenges the established set of common European rules. More importantly, France's non-compliance raises serious questions about the authority of the European Commission.¹² Indeed, if five years ago Jacques Delors left behind a legacy of a strong and a relatively closed and a secretive institution, Romano Prodi, the new Commission President, today heads a team that is bound to be less trusted and be subject to more scrutiny by member states. The new European Commission, in office since September 1999, does not only suffer from recent corruption scandals that brought down Jacques Santer and his colleagues. More significantly, it is understaffed and lacks adequate resources for it to manage successfully all those tasks that had been assigned to it in the run-up to Maastricht.¹³

¹⁰Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1999, pp. 148 - 156.

¹¹Attempts toward partial national co-financing of the CAP were officially proclaimed by some representatives of the German Federal Government and supported especially by the southern and some eastern Länder. See for example, Staatsministerium Baden-Württemberg, *Agenda 2000 - Bewertung aus Landessicht*, November 10, 1998.

¹²See for instance *Financial Times*, "Blair attacks French refusal to lift beef ban", 10 December, 1999.

¹³Anand Menon, "Unloved but most Wanted", *London Review of Books*, 9 December 1999.

⁶George Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, p. 229.

⁹Brigid Laffan and Michael Shackleton, "The Budget", Helen Wallace and William Wallace (eds.) *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford: OUP, 1997, pp. 79 - 83.



The post-Maastricht slow-down and the present lack of political vision bear a strong mark on the EU's enlargement policy. The argument here is not about whether the agenda in Maastricht was wrong.¹⁴ It seems at best questionable to say that in the context of 1991, the priorities set for the Treaty of Maastricht could have been different. After all, plans for the completion of the single market with a common European currency were drawn up before the end of the Cold War and the political momentum toward EMU could hardly be reversed by the events in late 1989. On the other hand, the goals of Maastricht consumed much of the Union's political energies. Whilst the process of enlargement did not stop and the EU welcomed three new member countries in 1995, the rhetoric of "the Europe for all Europeans"¹⁵ could not materialize in relation to the members of the former communist block. Indeed, the enlargement to Austria, Finland and Sweden was qualitatively different and fundamentally easier due to their favorable economic position and initially high degree of legislative integration with the rest of the Union.

The EU strategy toward eastern enlargement has been characterized by much uncertainty and only incremental steps forward. While the time until 1993 has been described as a period of "introspective rhetoric" for the EU, still searching for most adequate answers to the collapse of the Berlin wall, the era since 1993 has been coined as one of "ambiguous activism".¹⁶ Although the bilateral "Europe Agreements" signed between the European Community and Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland in December 1991 signaled closer ties with the Community, the Copenhagen summit in June 1993 opened the possibility of eastern enlargement by setting the criteria for the candidate countries. Next followed the agreement at the Essen European Council meeting in December 1994 that negotiations for the accession of the new member states could not begin until after the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference reviewing the workings of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) had been completed. The Madrid summit in December 1995 confirmed that enlargement negotiations would begin six months following the completion of the 1996 IGC which concluded in June 1997. The Luxembourg summit in December of the same year invited the first group of six countries (the so-called 5+1 group) to start negotiations while five other countries were offered the possibility of a screening of the acquis.¹⁷ Yet, the conclusions of the Luxembourg summit did not preclude the possibility that countries of the second group could in fact overtake states invited to the negotiating table in the first group. The EU has maintained its position of negotiating entry on an individual rather than a bloc basis. Consequently, the five countries of the second group plus Malta invited to

¹⁴Timothy Garton Ash states that instead of further deepening, at the end of the Cold War the European Community should have focused on enlargement to the east, thus ensuring stability and the spread of western liberal order in the post-communist states. Timothy Garton Ash, *History of the Present*, London: The Penguin Press, 1999, p. 326.

¹⁵Tony Judt, *A grand illusion?: an essay on Europe*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 42.

¹⁶Martin A. Smith and Graham Timmins, "The European Union and NATO enlargement Debates in Comparative Perspective: A Case of Incremental Linkage?" *West European Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 3, p. 24.

¹⁷The so called 5+1 countries comprised the first group of negotiating states. These were Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia. The second group of five countries was composed of Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria.



the negotiating table in Helsinki can indeed catch up with the first group in talks with the EU since March 1998 following the decision in Luxembourg.

However, as much as the Union's gradual steps have brought together to the negotiating table a pool of twelve states, the EU itself has been unable to effectively use the time it has bought by setting the criteria that enlargement should not undermine the momentum in the EC integration process.¹⁸ The Amsterdam Treaty has been a failure at least in one important respect: it did get the Union's institutions ready for enlargement. The governments and in particular governments of major member states did not agree on the new institutional deal.¹⁹ Subsequently, after the summit in Helsinki the EU has launched another IGC in February 2000. The aim of the current conference is to address precisely the issues that the Treaty of Amsterdam did not resolve. These concern principally three areas: the size and the composition of the Commission, the weighting of the votes in the Council and the increase of the qualified majority voting in an enlarged Union. The goal of the EU is to complete the IGC by the end of the year 2000 and conclude a new treaty under the auspices of the French Presidency.

The incrementalism of the Union, well captured by the sheer running of three IGCs just over the past ten years, combined with a more general lack of political will to push for enlargement and a clear time constraint do suggest a rather minimalist outcome of this year's IGC. This implies that while the Union may be ready to enlarge after the ratification of a new treaty, this enlargement is likely to be limited only to some of the negotiating countries. In other words, enlargement to all twelve countries is bound to take place in stages.

That however, creates a potentially huge problem, "the main obstacle on the way to enlargement is that the process will stop short after a first group of countries have joined the Union."²⁰ Any future rounds of enlargement will naturally require further institutional adjustments and probably also reforms of budgetary arrangements and other common policy tools, such the CAP. Indeed, the danger is that "with the first group of Central European countries having joined the Union, the fragile balance between member states advocating enlargement and member states in favor of deeper integration could shift towards the latter."²¹ This poses a particularly demanding task for countries, such as Slovakia, that find themselves in an asymmetric position in relation to the first group of 5+1 states. I therefore next turn to the analysis of the Slovak position after the Helsinki summit and the problems the country faces in the run up to its negotiations.

¹⁸This argument of 'buying the time' is used in Lykke Friis and Anna Jarosz, "When the Going Gets Tough: The EU's Enlargement Negotiations with Poland", *DIPI Working Paper* 1999/5, p. 7.

¹⁹Andrew Moravcsik and Kalypso Nicolaidis, "Explaining the Treaty of Amsterdam: Interests, Influence, Institutions", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, p. 75.

²⁰Martin Brusic, "Internal problems of the EU that might obstruct an enlargement towards the East", Helena Tang (ed.) *Winners and Losers of EU Integration: Policy Issues for Central and Eastern Europe*, Washington D.C.: The World Bank, 2000, pp. 280-281.

²¹Ibid., p. 13.



Slovakia at the start of negotiations

The decision of the EU summit in Helsinki to open official accession negotiations with Slovakia represents the country's single most significant foreign policy achievement since gaining independence in 1993. Notwithstanding, questions are already arising about Slovakia's readiness for such negotiations. Placed in a comparative perspective with the countries already negotiating with the EU, Slovakia faces a number of

In light of the assumptions about the 2000 IGC it is important that the country speeds up its preparations for enlargement and improves its domestic integration policy if it is to stand a fair chance of joining the EU together with the other Visegrad states.

important challenges in its attempt to accelerate the enlargement talks with the European Union. In light of the assumptions about the 2000 IGC it is important that the country speeds up its preparations for enlargement and improves its domestic integration policy if it is to stand a fair chance of joining the EU together with the other Visegrad states.

The country's success in Helsinki stems principally from recent domestic political developments that have broken the legacy of Slovakia's international isolation under the government of Vladimír Mečiar between 1994 and 1998. The new government, that assumed power in November 1998, has taken important steps aimed at overcoming the political deficits due to which the EU did not invite Slovakia to begin membership negotiations

after the Luxembourg summit in 1997.²² The European Commission cooperated closely in these efforts. In November 1998, the Slovak Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda and EU Commissioner Hans van den Broek jointly decided to create a European Commission - Slovakia High Level Working Group. Its purpose was to help Slovakia regain momentum in the process of preparation for accession to the European Union following the political changes. The European Commission - Slovakia High Level Working Group met five times between November 1998 and September 1999. The group contributed to the establishment of an atmosphere of trust and good working relationship. It consulted on several accession-related matters, ranging from various political, economic and legal issues to specific subjects, such as effectiveness of PHARE financial support and questions of nuclear energy.²³

The style and the nature of domestic politics have changed in some key respects. The EU Commission's 1999 regular report on Slovakia praises some of these positive



achievements. They include the renewed institutional stability of the political system following the parliamentary and the municipal elections in 1999 and the presidential elections of 1999. They also highlight the new law on the use of minority languages. Furthermore, the domestic changes have been complemented by vast diplomatic efforts directed toward improved foreign contacts. During 1999 the Slovak Prime Minister alone took part in 35 bilateral foreign visits prior to the summit in Helsinki.²⁴ This track record contrasts strongly with former Prime Minister Mečiar's international isolation.²⁵

Despite notable progress under the heading of political criteria, there are two areas that remain especially problematic. The first concerns the country's judicial system. The Commission has repeatedly criticized the selection process for judges, who according to the current rules, are subject to a probationary period of four years. The independence of the whole system is thus not completely guaranteed. This question should be settled as part of a comprehensive revision of the Constitution that is expected to pass sometime during the year 2000. The second problem concerns the position of the Roma minority in Slovakia. The situation of this minority poses a long-term challenge that may yet turn out a pressing political point on the way to the European Union.

By starting to negotiate with the European Union in February 2000, Slovakia has a comparative gap of almost two years in relation to the countries of the first wave that began their accession talks in March 1998. While in March 2000 the Slovak government begins negotiations in eight out of the total of 31 negotiating chapters, other states have already opened 23 chapters. At the same time, the Czech Republic has provisionally closed ten chapters, including a very difficult chapter on the free movement of goods. Other neighbors - Poland and Hungary - have closed nine chapters. All states of the so-called 5+1 group are due to open all outstanding chapters by the beginning of the French Presidency in the second half of 2000. Given Slovakia's officially stated goal to be prepared to enter the European Union by 1 January 2004, the government faces an enormous task of closing all chapters by the end of 2002.²⁶ In light of the experience of the more advanced negotiating countries that have not managed to begin talks with the Union in all chapters within two years, the idea of closing all 31 chapters in less than three years seems indeed daunting.

Going beyond the experience of the first group, the tempo of negotiations with the additional six candidates can be expected to slow down for at least two reasons. Even an optimistic statement by Commissioner Verheugen in charge of enlargement echoes a note of caution, "I cannot say when Slovakia might join the EU but I do not see closing more than seven to ten chapters this year as very realistic."²⁷ First, during the year 2000

²²Pravda, "Za Pyrenejami a pred Helsinkami", 6 December, 1999.

²³For an example of Mečiar's international isolation see for instance the discussion of his inability to secure a meeting with the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Marián Leško, Mečiar a mečiarizmus: Politika bez škupúl, politika bez zábran, Bratislava: VMV, 1996, pp.166 and 188-189.

²⁴One has to assume that the enlargement ratification process will take at least one year. This also assumes the completion of the current IGC by the end of 2000 and the ratification of a new treaty by the end of 2002.

²⁵The Slovak Spectator, "Slovak EU entry talks", 21-27 February, 2000.

²⁶Slovakia's political deficits were highlighted in the Commission's report that proceeded the decision at the EU summit in Luxembourg. See The European Commission, AGENDA 2000 - For a stronger and wider Europe, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997, pp. 40 - 41.

²⁷See Conclusions: EC-Slovakia High Level Working Group, 8 September, 1999.



the European Union will spend most of its energies on the problems of the institutional reform. The Intergovernmental Conference is bound to divert some of the resources and some of the attention of member states away from enlargement negotiations. The French presidency is determined to conclude a new treaty at the summit in Nice and the primary focus during the second half of 2000 will shift toward reaching a consensus on institutional changes. Second, it is questionable whether the EU does possess sufficient capacities to negotiate simultaneously with as many as twelve countries. Enlargement negotiations under the 5+1 model already exhibited some definite strains on the fifteen member states. After all, prior to this round of enlargement the Community carried out parallel negotiations with only up to three countries.²⁸ The current experience involving four times as many partners is unique and bound to produce more potentially problematic areas and generally slow down the whole process.

In sum, Slovakia finds itself in a relatively more difficult position. And while the tempo of the accession process depends in part on the European Union, Slovakia's position and prospects for a speedy advance rest principally with several key domestic factors. Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan sums up the overall task "...integration is not just a matter for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is an issue for all Ministries and all society, because we are going to open chapters for negotiation on agriculture, business, information and so on. This will be the less exciting part of our road to the EU, very boring I would say, because we will have to change legislation, a lot of bureaucracy, a lot of hard work. Nice political statements about our political orientation is all a matter of yesterday, and now we are expected by our partners to support these statements with concrete results."²⁹

Slovakia's readiness to negotiate

Slovakia's successful path to the EU accession will first be determined by the legislative readiness of the country. Due to the exclusion from the first wave of negotiations, Slovakia faces a bigger legislative gap in comparison with the other Visegrad states. František Šebej, chairman of the parliamentary committee for European integration, states clearly, "the quantity of legislative work that awaits the country at the time when we are beginning to negotiate in the first chapters, cannot be compared with anything we have experienced thus far."³⁰ In almost every single one of the opening eight negotiating chapters, Slovakia is yet to adopt some important piece of legislation in accordance with the *acquis*. These include competition laws, laws on state statistics, universities and higher education as well as broadcasting laws. Unless adequate legislation in these are-



as can be passed, Slovakia is bound to have difficulties closing some of the initial chapters it opens. Simultaneously, the parliament may be unable to deliberate on other laws that are equally significant for the successful completion of the subsequent chapters. Although in February 2000 the Slovak parliament passed a resolution expressing support for Slovakia's negotiations with the EU that showed a rare display of agreement between the coalition and opposition MPs, the swift progress with new legislation is not exclusively in the hands of the elected representatives.³¹

The extent of Slovakia's successful progress in negotiations with the EU is largely dependent on the readiness of existing and emerging institutions. First, there is a problem of institutional coordination. Negotiations and preparations of new legislation are matters for the political executive. Three key posts manage Slovakia's integration policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in charge of negotiations with the fifteen member states and the State Secretary at the Ministry acts as the country's chief negotiator. Two Deputy Prime Ministers are responsible for domestic preparation of Slovakia's negotiating positions and of drafts of relevant legislation. One Deputy Prime Minister coordinates these efforts with all other ministries while the other oversees the Institute for the Approximation of Law whose aim is to bring Slovakia's legal framework in line with the EU standards. In 1999 the Slovak parliament failed to pass the target number of new laws in accordance with the country's annual National Program for the Adoption of the *Acquis* (NPAA). The legislative gap was largely a result of lacking coordination between the three actors chiefly charged with integration policy as well as due to inadequate preparation by specific ministries, in particular the Ministry of Finance.³²

There are two other shortcomings with respect to the institutional base of Slovakia's integration policy. The first is a problem of adequate capacities. This is a more general issue of capacities at the level of individual ministries some of which appear incapable of preparing new laws in a timely fashion. More specifically, the issue of capacities also directly affects the smooth running of Slovakia's diplomatic Mission to the European Union in Brussels. At the inception of negotiations, the Mission that presently operates with ten diplomats is understaffed.³³ The national budget for the year 2000 assumes an increase of diplomatic corps in Brussels up to a total of eighteen. Most of the additional staff is expected to come from various specialist areas, such as finance, economy and agriculture rather than from among professional foreign service officers. Finally, an incre-

²⁸See *Uznesenie Národnej Rady Slovenskej Republiky* 726/2000, 16 February 2000. 113 members of parliament out of the total of 150 supported the resolution.

²⁹Interview with a Slovak diplomat, March 2, 2000. For a detailed breakdown of the institutional basis of Slovakia's integration policy see Juraj Alner, "Integračné procesy na Slovensku" in G. Mesežnikov and M. Ivantýšyn (eds.) *Slovensko 1998-1999: Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* (Bratislava: IVO, 1999), pp. 311 - 332. The weak coordination reflects in part also the political differences between the key players and their differing individual political agenda. State Secretary and chief negotiator Ján Figeľ is a Christian Democrat while Deputy Prime Minister for European integration Pavol Hamšík heads the Party of Civic Understanding and Deputy Prime Minister for Legislation Ľubomír Fogaš represents the Party of the Democratic Left.

³⁰Comparable Czech or Hungarian missions have around twenty diplomats.

²⁸The 1973 and the 1995 enlargements involved three countries each - Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark and Austria, Sweden, Finland respectively. Greece joined the EC in 1981 while Spain and Portugal became members in 1986.

²⁹Interview with Foreign Minister Kukan, *The Slovak Spectator*, "Time past for 'nice political statements'", 10 - 16 January, 2000.

³⁰Interview with František Šebej, *Pravda*, "Už včera bolo neskoro", 28 February 2000.



ase of institutional capacities directly reflects on successful implementation of new laws. For example, in 1999 Slovakia passed a very important law on public procurement. However, the law assumes a creation of a brand new office designed to ensure the actual application of this piece of legislation in practice. The creation of such an institution poses a challenge for several years ahead. The case is similar with numerous other new laws that call for further practical implementation. Simply speaking, the approximation of the *acquis* requires not just a solid institutional basis but it also necessitates the building of additional institutions.

The next area where Slovakia has clear scope for development is the economic readiness to comply with the standards of the Union. With respect to the existence of a functioning market economy, the Commission's 1999 *Composite paper* of reports on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries reads that Slovakia like Lithuania "are close to being functioning market economies and if the reforms, which have been decided or are in the pipeline, are consistently implemented in the coming year, both countries should fulfil this sub-criterion in the course of next year."³⁴ At the same time, the report states that the capacity to withstand competitive pressure and market forces within the Union is contingent upon "the adoption and implementation of Slovakia's current legal and structural reform programme". The problem of economic restructuring presents one of the most important challenges for the current Slovak government. Unlike Hungary and Poland, Slovakia is yet to undergo basic structural changes and thus tackle some of the essential problems of economic transition.³⁵ While already the 1998 Commission's report identified all countries of the first negotiating group as functioning market economies, the Slovak position remains different and only shows potential to reach level with the economic situation in the other Visegrad states. To offer a different perspective, Slovakia is expected to join the OECD sometime during the year 2000, while the Czech Republic became a member of this exclusive economic club already in 1995 and Poland and Hungary gained membership a year later. Slovakia therefore faces an important task in improving its current state of domestic economic affairs.

Finally, the country's successful headway in negotiations obliges active work with the general public. Slovakia's accession treaty will be ratified in a national referendum. Although the latest opinion polls indicate a majority support for membership in the European Union that oscillates around 70%, the experience of neighboring states in talks with the EU since 1998 suggests a small but steady decline of public support for EU membership.³⁶ For instance, while in March 1998 60% of Poland's population suppor-

³⁴The European Commission, *Composite Paper: Reports on progress towards accession by each of the candidate countries*, October 13, 1999.

³⁵Jurzyca, Eugen, Anton Marcinčin & Daniela Zemanovičová, *Reštrukturalizácia podnikov v Slovenskej republike. Odporúčania pre hospodársku politiku*, Bratislava: Centrum pre hospodársky rozvoj, 1998.

³⁶According to a recent opinion poll conducted by the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs between 26 February and 6 March 2000, 70 percent of Slovaks support the country's entry into the EU. This represents an increase of four percent compared with the results of a comparable survey in October 1999. See, *SME*, "IVO: 70 percent občanov podporuje vstup do EÚ", 28 March, 2000.



ted the country's membership in the European Union, it was just 55 % in June 1999. Different opinion polls show even lower figures. A similar tendency can be observed in the Czech Republic.³⁷ One may only speculate on possible reasons for such drops in public support. Nonetheless the mere correlation in other states between the progress in negotiations and declining public enthusiasm for EU membership serves as a reminder of what Slovakia potentially faces given the even more accelerated course of domestic legislative, institutional and economic changes compared to its neighbors.

Conclusions

The exposition of the proceedings and the conclusions from the Helsinki summit illustrate that while an essential issue on the agenda, enlargement is not a clear priority for the Union. Furthermore the EU does not share a single strategy on how to bring the process of enlargement to a close. The position is emblematic of broader trends in European integration throughout the 1990s that indicate more difficulties in seeking EU-wide consensus among member states. This reflects directly on the strategy toward the current eastern enlargement that is largely characterized by ad hoc decisions and general incrementalism. The present Intergovernmental Conference on institutional reform promises relatively minimalist results. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the next enlargement is likely to include a limited number of new member states. Any future enlargements are bound to take place only following additional adjustment periods and further political and institutional reforms within the Union. In this context Slovakia finds itself in a more asymmetric negotiating position in comparison with the other Visegrad states. As a result, it faces an enormous task in its attempt to enter the Union together with the neighboring states. The fulfillment of the political criteria represents an important start on the way to full EU membership. However, from now on the country's progress will be judged by other technical requirements. What is important today are the domestic abilities to cope with strong demands for fast legislative changes, pressures for more a effective and new institutional base and calls for irreversible economic reforms. Last but not least, the success of the accession process depends on continued public support for EU membership. Unless Slovakia advances quickly on all these fronts, it may be in a comparatively weak position to enter the European Union compared with the other Visegrad states. ■

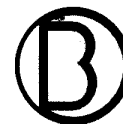
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MIROSLAV BEBLAVÝ - ANDREJ SALNER

Ugly duckling, ugly swan - - Foreign perceptions of Slovakia

The issue of Slovakia's perception abroad has been one of the hottest topics in the country's public discourse since the creation of Slovakia in 1993 and, indeed, even before that. Like almost all issues of concern to the country's public, it has become widely politicized and polarized. While one side of the political spectrum claimed that Slovakia has suffered from a negative image abroad as a consequence of malevolent activities against the country on the part of its enemies both at home and abroad, others say Slovakia's perception was an accurate reflection of the country's grim reality. Consensus exists only that the image was negative for most of the decade.

This study, based partly on our book, *The Creators of the Image and Image of the Creators - Perception of Slovakia in the West 1989 - 1999*, looks at the main areas that make up the country's perception based on analysis of mainstream media in three key countries (USA, Great Britain, Germany) and on interviews with journalists, politicians and diplomats. It also analyses how media and diplomats work to cover Slovakia for Western audiences.

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Media Coverage of Slovakia

In this section, we look at the functioning of correspondents of key Western media who cover the Slovak Republic. Principal findings are that Slovakia, due to its size and the character of the news agenda of Western media, is at the margin of their interest. In many cases, correspondents of foreign media cover the country out of Prague, Vienna, Budapest or Warsaw. On the other hand, many foreign correspondents point out how hard it was for them to communicate with Slovak officials, particularly during successive governments of Vladimír Mečiar. They found the style of many top figures difficult to comprehend, frozen in another era. Moreover, they had difficulty gaining access to government representatives, many of whom also did not speak foreign languages.

Unlike in Prague or Budapest, there are very few foreign correspondents in Bratislava. Only Reuters has its own bureau with three full-time journalists. Few other news media employ stringers (e.g. Associated Press, AFP, Bloomberg), but most cover Slovakia from some other capital - usually Prague or Vienna. This partially explains the importance of Reuters and AP for the foreign coverage of Slovakia - their reporting is reprinted in many media outlets, particularly in Western Europe, who do not have their own reporters covering Slovakia and these two large agencies, to a certain extent, set the agenda for other foreign journalists covering Slovakia, not resident in the country. The other very important group of writers resides in Prague - e.g. reporters for the Financial Times, The Economist, BBC Radio, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Dow Jones Newswires.

In analyzing foreign media coverage of Slovakia, there are two crucial questions that need to be answered: what are foreign journalists interested in and who do they talk to in Slovakia? The first question has an easy answer - Slovak politics has been the issue that overwhelmingly dominates their reporting. There are several reasons - particularly the importance of politics for the economy and any other sphere of life in the country. As Andrea Lörinczová from AP said: „It is difficult to write about anything in Slovakia without having to explain, for example, who Mečiar is... Politics is a crucial factor in everything.“¹

When answering the second question, one has to distinguish journalists working for foreign media who speak Slovak or Czech and those who do not. The first group contains all Czech and Slovak nationals, but also several foreigners who learned either language through a lengthy stay in one of the two countries. The second group has to rely on interpreters or sources that can communicate in English (or, in some cases, German).

In analyzing foreign media coverage of Slovakia, there are two crucial questions that need to be answered: what are foreign journalists interested in and who do they talk to in Slovakia?

¹ Andrea Lörinczová, interview, Bratislava, December 30, 1998



This is where we come across a phenomenon that hurt Mečiar's administrations and could be called "the Slobodník phenomenon". Top officials from these governments were generally not enthusiastic to speak to foreign journalists. It was very difficult to get access to either of the top politicians from HZDS - Vladimír Mečiar, the prime minister in the 1992-94 and 1994-1998 periods, and Ivan Gašparovič, the speaker of parliament between 1992 and 1998.²

This applies even to the most prestigious global media, such as Reuters, New York Times or BBC and to other news outlets alike. A senior foreign correspondent who asked not to be named expressed understanding for this approach: "When I called HZDS, they usually knew it was something bad for them."³ Refusal to speak to foreign journalists did not shield Vladimír Mečiar, for example, from "distorting or abusing this information"⁴ by journalists, as he thought. Isolation simply does not help. The only result was that most foreign journalists paid even closer attention to HZDS rallies, for instance, where they could get authentic Mečiar quotes. His utterances there certainly hurt his image more than any interview he has granted because of the radicalism, used by Mečiar to work the crowds.

In other cases, journalists, unable to talk to top HZDS and government officials, turned to the politicians from that side of the political spectrum who were willing to talk to them. Because he speaks and has always been willing to speak in several languages, Dušan Slobodník, chairman of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee in the 1994 - 1998 period, became a relatively abundant, frequently cited source and lent his name to the above-described phenomenon. He was "accessible, courteous and willing to talk,"⁵ but "did not sound like a reasonable person and did not understand how to work the media in a democracy".⁶ In the words of a former AP correspondent, Jana Dorotková: "Slobodník does not understand that when you let both sides speak and one looks like an idiot, it's not the journalist's bias or fault."⁷ The so-called Slobodník phenomenon was not an issue of a single politician, but a symbol of a whole group. The senior foreign correspondent quoted above said in this regard: "This elite clearly did not feel comfortable in a democratic environment and did not understand the media."⁸ Even though representatives of the present government (who were at the time in opposition to Vladimír Mečiar) were by no means perfect, they often spoke English, were extremely accessible and exuded a different, more modern feeling.

² undisclosed Western journalist, interview, Bratislava, August 6, 1998, Jana Dorotková, interview, Bratislava, August 7, 1998, Robert Anderson, interview, Bratislava, September 23, 1998, Andrea Lórinčová, interview, Bratislava, September 24, 1998 and others - see *New York Times*, October 11, 1998

³ undisclosed Western journalist, interview, Bratislava, August 6, 1998

⁴ *New York Times*, October 11, 1992

⁵ Ray Furlong, interview, Prague, August 3, 1998

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Jana Dorotková, interview, Bratislava, August 7, 1998

⁸ undisclosed Western journalist, interview, Bratislava, August 6, 1998



The most important person in Slovakia's perception abroad in the 1992 - 1998 period was undoubtedly Vladimír Mečiar. He conformed to the general trend of being uneasy with foreign media and not understanding their psyche and needs. He attended press conferences with foreign journalists "with a bowed head and stiff shoulders"⁹ and seemed to be "afraid".¹⁰ Other observations included "shaking hands and major nervousness"¹¹ or his "sitting insecurely, not knowing what to do with his huge hands".¹² On the other hand, when he decided to talk, he resembled Slobodník in his long-winded monologues. Experience of Stern reporters is a good example: "During an interview that lasted four and a half hours, he poured endless monologues at (reporters), exhausted the interpreter, filled up even our spare tapes and elicited undiplomatic yawning fits from his attractive spokeswoman."¹³

It is not a claim of this paper that better handling of foreign media could have substantially helped Mečiar's or Slovakia's perception abroad. However, personal clumsiness and systematic impotence in working with the media deepened a critical perception that would have existed anyway. Eduard Kukan, the current foreign minister and an outspoken critic of Mečiar, told us in the summer of 1998, shortly before the elections that brought him to power: "The perception of Slovakia is even slightly worse than reality."¹⁴ However, as this section has shown, it was mainly the fault of Slovakia's rulers during the Mečiarist period.

Diplomatic Coverage

This section is devoted to the functioning of Western diplomats in Slovakia with a particular focus on the information-gathering function of embassies. It is based on a chapter of our book, which used interviews with foreign diplomats and representatives of important foreign ministries, with an emphasis on questioning the widespread notion of information imbalance. According to this idea, popular mainly among representatives of the previous government, foreign diplomats preferred, as contacts, representatives of the Slovak opposition and people close to it. Diplomats themselves categorically deny the idea, showing that their contacts range across the political spectrum but also in other spheres of life such as self-government, NGOs and the corporate sector.

One notable feature of foreign missions in Slovakia is that they are usually smaller than those in neighboring countries. Aside from the obvious explanation that Slovakia is itself a far smaller country, diplomatic sources explained that there was a lesser need for sizable representations due to the lack of investment opportunities in Slovakia in com-

⁹ undisclosed Western journalist, interview, Bratislava, August 6, 1998

¹⁰ Ray Furlong, interview, Prague, August 3, 1998

¹¹ undisclosed Western journalist, interview, Bratislava, August 6, 1998

¹² *Christian Science Monitor*, January 26, 1995

¹³ *Stern*, September 24, 1998

¹⁴ Eduard Kukan, interview, Bratislava, August 5, 1998



parison with its neighbors. In a world where the focus of diplomacy is gradually increasingly shifting toward the promotion of countries' commercial interests abroad, Slovakia is "completely uninteresting from a commercial perspective,"¹⁵ in the words of one diplomat who asked not to be identified. "There are some minor opportunities in the areas of telecommunications, steel-making or banking, but from the viewpoint of large multinational firms, it is very little," adds the source. Another likely reason lies in the stage of Slovakia's integration into Western structures. As several diplomats noted, as negotiations would progress, more staff would be needed in various areas to deal particularly with European Union accession details. Thus already in the next months and years, we may see the size of diplomatic missions increase.

In terms of the range of contacts in Slovakia, diplomats listed representatives of a number of sectors that they communicated with regularly, including state institutions, political parties, entrepreneurs, local politicians, NGOs... "All Western embassies have created and maintained a broad range of contacts throughout the political spectrum... In one word, it is untrue that we only get information from the opposition, we get it from all sides,"¹⁶ said former British Ambassador to Slovakia Peter Harborne in summer 1998. The American ambassador at that time, Ralph Johnson, added: "The image we form is not based only on what we are told, but also on what we see... We are not only after an image, but after true understanding."¹⁷ Moreover, diplomats, in the interest of maintaining a semblance of bi-partisanship, communicated even with political parties of little consequence, including those with orientation, which was fairly distant from the aims of these countries' foreign policies.

But diplomats also made similar observations as journalists about the ability and willingness of Slovak officials to communicate in foreign languages and Western style. One diplomat, who asked to remain anonymous, said: "Whenever we had to organize a meeting with HZDS for a visiting delegation, we ran into the problem of who to meet with. Who will be able to speak to them with reason and lives in the real world? Perhaps Slobodník?"¹⁸ This showed that what we call the Slobodník phenomenon was present also in communication with diplomats. Harborne said: "Our mutual communication was often ineffective. We do not speak on the same wavelength."¹⁹

One other important point about the information-gathering function of foreign diplomats is their coordination with Western journalists. On both formal and informal grounds, diplomats and journalists communicate frequently, with diplomats often providing one of the most credible sources on the situation in Slovakia. For many visiting journalists, the embassy of their country is their first stop, affecting their overall perception.

¹⁵ The source of this quote requested not to be identified.

¹⁶ Peter Harborne, interview, Bratislava, August 28, 1998.

¹⁷ Ralph Johnson, interview, Bratislava, January 22, 1999.

¹⁸ The source of this quote requested not to be identified.

¹⁹ Peter Harborne, interview, Bratislava, August 28, 1998.



From an Unknown in 1989 to Slovakia After Mečiar in 1999

An attempt to trace the key points on the trajectory of Slovakia's image abroad naturally has to pre-date the very existence of the country, as events before 1993 often had a profound effect on later perceptions had happened.

The Slovak question did not exist at all in the perception of foreign media immediately after the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Slovakia gradually entered the picture after the "hyphen war" of 1990, a war over whether Czechoslovakia's name would change to Czechoslovakia. But even at this point, the fear of Slovak nationalism was only slight. As the forces calling for division of the country gained momentum, the coverage of Slovak separateness from the Czech Republic intensified. The breaking point came after a crowd in Bratislava assaulted President Václav Havel, a potent symbol of the highly respected peaceful transition from Communism. Western media nonetheless perceived the situation as not so hot, citing public opinion surveys showing lack of support for a division.

Due to his true dominance in Slovak politics, Vladimír Mečiar, was a staple in Slovakia's image. He gradually became known as somewhat of a mythical figure, a master of political comebacks, an incalculable man who is inconsistent in what he tells various audiences, a budding dictator. His media depictions in early years of his political career derived from perhaps imprecise accounts of his past. "His suggestive radiance works on the crowds and his past as a boxer is more visible than that of a lawyer," wrote the daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in the middle of 1992.²⁰

A detailed analysis of perceptions and coverage of the separation process goes beyond the scope of this study. Suffice to say that the West did appreciate the peacefulness of the split although it was scarcely viewed as a happy event. The unfortunate thing that left Slovakia's image slightly scarred for the next few years was the combination of its perceived dominant role in the split at the time along with the instinctive fear of ethnic tensions triggered in the West by the situation in the Balkans in the early 1990s.

The first years Slovakia independent existence of after the Czechoslovak split in 1993 left the country with an image "full of" serious doubts over its political and economic viability. Furthermore, the image of the country, with the brief exception of a caretaker government of Jozef Moravčík in 1994, gradually deteriorated as Mečiar's steps, seen as backtracking on democracy, were viewed by Western media and diplomats with growing suspicion and even alarm.

In its inception, Slovakia suffered from unfavorable comparisons with its former sister, the Czech Republic, which was seen as a rising star of the region in terms of stability, democracy and economic growth. "The problems of the new country... are in stark contrast with growing signs of economic and political stability in the Czech Republic," wrote the *Washington Post* in April 1993.²¹ The theme of the day for Slovakia was the perceived lack of stability.

²⁰ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 4, 1992.

²¹ *Washington Post*, April 10, 1993.



In particular the economy gave little reason for optimism and Mečiar was perceived as someone who would slow down economic reforms or bring them to halt. Thanks to government rhetoric on postponing important reforms and to its decision to stop privatization, the need for a convincing reform policy was seen as the main problem. In addition, Mečiar's declining popularity, combined with a lack of a visible feasible political alternative, led to serious skepticism about whether the decision to separate from the Czech Republic was right. "Slovaks wanted conditional independence and are not quite happy with being 'completely' independent... It is fatal poor luck for Slovak reforms that the political and economic elite is just as small as the new national bank's foreign exchange reserves. Leaders, whom one could mistake with Western politicians or statesmen in Bratislava, can be counted on the fingers of one hand," wrote the German daily *Franfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in December 1993.²²

As the inner political conflict between the Prime Minister and President Michal Kováč intensified, the latter's foreign prestige grew. Kováč appealed to Western media thanks his avoidance controversial political statements similar to Mečiar's, open support for Slovakia's integration efforts and paradoxically, thanks to his very conflict with the premier. Mečiar on the other hand, continued in touching insensitively upon topics perceived by the West with great sensitivity, such as minorities and EU and NATO accession. Kováč, in the words of an American journalist, knew "how to play the game in the international arena."²³

Nonetheless, Slovakia in this period remained a realistic candidate for Western integration, on a par with its neighbors, as illustrated by successful Visegrad group cooperation, its smooth accession to the Council of Europe despite Hungary's efforts to the contrary and the continuation of the Czechoslovak association agreement with the EU after the split. According to Ján Čarnogurský, "Mečiar was at most a dark spot on Slovakia's image," that could not seriously hurt it in that period.²⁴

But at this point, foreign media already signaled far more openly some problems in the integration arena that may lie ahead of Slovakia under Mečiar. There was a perceived, dichotomy between the media image and the image that Western politicians had of Slovakia at the time. Unfortunately, rather than seeing it as a natural difference, given the varying roles of media and politicians, the Slovak politicians often saw it as a sign of unjust treatment of the country. In our view, despite showing warning signs, Western media evaluation of Slovakia's international image was still realistic. In early 1994, several leading foreign papers, like the *Financial Times*, the *Washington Post* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* still saw Slovakia as an equally likely candidate for NATO membership as other Visegrad countries.²⁵

²² *Franfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 30, 1993.

²³ Douglas Lytle, interview, Prague, August 2, 1998.

²⁴ Ján Čarnogurský, interview, Bratislava, September 3, 1998.

²⁵ *Washington Post*, January 5, 1994; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 13, 1994; *Financial Times*, January 13, 1994.



The short-lived fall of Mečiar and the brief stint in power of Moravčík's government in 1994 brought some relief to Slovakia's battered image as domestic political strife temporarily subsided. Western media noted a significant change in atmosphere. But these positive perceptions were limited by the well-known fact of how short this respite may last and by its obvious fragility as an anti-Mečiar coalition was one of "Catholics and former Marxists"²⁶

After yet another victory of Mečiar's HZDS in the 1994 election, most Western observers failed to perceive the lesson he had drawn from his previous fall. But already the first steps of the newly formed broad coalition of HZDS with nationalists and the unreadable ZRS (Association of Slovak Workers) put the country's image on a downward track which later culminated in serious integration setbacks, aptly dubbed by local commentator Marián Leško "the story of a frontrunner's self-disqualification."²⁷

In the ensuing period of Mečiar's four years in power, image became somewhat of an obsession in Slovak politics. In our view, however, the slide in Slovakia's image was a reflection of the deterioration of Slovakia's political reality, rather than a result of concerted efforts of the country's enemy's to discredit her. Beginning with the November 1994 "Night of the Long Knives", when the new governing trio solidified its power in ways seen by the Western media as undemocratic, media and diplomats grew progressively pessimistic. The extensive change in all positions elected by parliament raised alarm.

The New York Times called this night the return to the "bad old times"²⁸. Two main themes on which the media focused were the fears of a slowdown in reforms and in integration efforts. The interest in Slovak developments intensified as the European Union and NATO began to speak out more openly on Slovakia's political shortcomings in the form of diplomatic demarche. But even at this point, according to many local and foreign politicians, the aim was simply to warn Slovakia of steps it had to take to remain on track to its proclaimed aims of EU and NATO integration. "The aim of the demarche was to attempt to change the behavior of the Slovak government," one senior official at the British foreign ministry said.²⁹ "However, Mečiar still had a chance, although many,

Despite showing warning signs, Western media evaluation of Slovakia's international image was still realistic. In early 1994, several leading foreign papers still saw Slovakia as an equally likely candidate for NATO membership as other Visegrad countries.

²⁶ *Financial Times*, April 5, 1994.

²⁷ Martin Bútora, František Šebej, eds.: *Slovensko v šedej zóne? Rozširovanie NATO, zlyhanie a perspektívy Slovenska*, IVO 1998.

²⁸ *New York Times*, November 10, 1994.

²⁹ Senior official at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, interview, London, November 12, 1998.



particularly the Americans, had a strong opinion of him; but he had one more chance to act differently," said Eduard Kukan.³⁰

Journalists in this period often reiterated these diplomatic warnings in even clearer language. The New York Times warned that Mečiar was taking steps that were disqualifying Slovakia from membership in both EU and NATO.³¹ The message was: not only do we dislike what you are doing, but unless you change, do not try to gain membership in our exclusive clubs.

Gradually, however, Western politicians became more open about their reservations. Slowly, reservations were transformed into unequivocal rejection as more and more undemocratic steps were taken by the government without adequate explanation. The 1995 kidnapping of the president's son led to further diplomatic protest notes, as the government obviously lingered on and hindered attempts at a full investigation. "What the hell is going on in Slovakia?" asked The Economist late in 1995.³²

The West, represented by media sources and diplomats, grew increasingly frustrated over alleged heavy-handed attempts to restrict the freedom of the media, the warming of relations between Bratislava and Moscow, the case of expulsion of HZDS's disobedient parliamentary deputy František Gaulieder and finally, the thwarted 1997 referendum on NATO membership. But after two demarche late in 1995 these came no more, not as a sign of the situation improving, but as a sign of the West gradually giving up on the country's fate under Mečiar. According to Ambassador Harborne, despite partial steps at appeasing criticism, the way politics was being done simply became unacceptable, as reflected in the country's worsening image.³³ The press spoke more and more openly about the growing probability that Slovakia would lag behind its neighbors in joining Western institutions and the reality of Slovakia's expulsion from the first wave of NATO expansion confirmed the image presented in the media.

Mečiar simply became an obstacle to Slovakia's international efforts, although his persona was not the cause. He became unacceptable due to the actual policies implemented under his cabinet, not the perception thereof. The distrust was such that many press reports openly voiced fears of election manipulation before the 1998 ballot. One of the reasons was, however, also in the perceived inability of the Slovak opposition to actually oppose Mečiar in an effective way. Therefore, even after an arguably crushing defeat at the polls, his person and the risk of his return remained one of the foci of Slovakia's coverage in Western media, along with the fears of instability in the new, extremely broad governing coalition.

³⁰ Eduard Kukan, interview, August 5, 1998.

³¹ New York Times, March 7, 1995.

³² The Economist, December 2, 1995.

³³ Peter Harborne, interview, Bratislava, August 28, 1998.



Perceptions of the Slovak Economy

While its economic prospects were seen as extremely bleak before independence, the Slovak economy was one of the few areas where Slovakia achieved favorable coverage in recent years. Macroeconomic successes of independent Slovakia were widely reported, but were always marred (as were Slovakia's foreign investment inflows) by the political situation. Paradoxically, the improvement of the political image of the country after political changes brought about by the 1998 election was accompanied by a breakdown of the Slovak economic miracle. This section will present examples of all main trends and analyze them in more detail.

The Slovak economy became important in the country's perception abroad when it began to be associated with the growing nationalism in early 1990s. Evident economic difficulties and separatism were, according to observers, related in two ways. The first saw causality between the economic pain of transition and the fight against Prague - the worsening Slovak economy and shock therapy led to more separatism. The second approach was more forward looking: Would an independent Slovakia be economically viable and if so, what would be the price?

The economic difficulties became prominent after a major reform package was launched on January 1, 1991. The following quote from The New York Times can be regarded as typical of that period: „Reforms... (have) a particularly harsh impact on Slovakia, which has many arms factories and is strongly connected to the decaying Soviet economy.“³⁴ All quotes from this period - and there are tens of them - mention the same phenomena - armaments, heavy industry, loss of Eastern markets and high unemployment. That is why observers understood that „most people agree that the reforms from Prague are too fast for the ailing Slovak economy.“³⁵ (Financial Times) However, no one abroad believed that slower reforms would solve anything.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung wrote, both ironically and seriously: „Even Mečiar cannot save the country from the burden of arms industry.“³⁶ Future prosperity could be assured only by bold and clear reforms steps. That is why it was possible to understand „opponents of the economic reform... who have come together under the national flag“³⁷

³⁴ New York Times, May 6, 1991.

³⁵ Financial Times, November 8, 1991.

³⁶ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, March 16, 1991.

³⁷ Die Welt, June 9, 1992.



(Die Welt), but as rulers, they did not warrant any confidence in their ability to bring sustainable growth.

The 1992 elections made these potential rulers a real government and the mirage of independence turned into reality. The question of Slovak economic viability became, logically, the key one. Forecasts, with the exception of some more outlandish ones (such as 100% devaluation of future Slovak currency vis-a-vis the Czech one expected by *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in June 1992),³⁸ did not change much until the recovery of 1994 began. According to the generally accepted analysis, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was supposed to add a substantial burden to an already difficult economic situation. In January 1993, the *Economist* published a depressingly long list of worries of the new government: „Number of inefficient and polluting industrial companies that lack any paying customers since the collapse of CMEA, unemployment reaching nearly 11%, outdated infrastructure, stopped privatization, lack of domestic capital and foreign investment.“³⁹ According to foreign observers, the government had an even bigger problem than all of the above, namely a lack of vision. On January 1, 1993, *Washington Post* wrote: „Unlike Czechs, who want to speed up privatization, the Slovak government has no program, apart from liberating five million Slovaks from Czech dominance.“⁴⁰ During the following 15 months of the second Mečiar government, the media repeatedly argued that „the government has not been able to formulate a consistent economic policy“⁴¹ (*Economist*) and that its economic management was faulty.⁴² (FAZ) Also, the new government stopped one process that was usually considered a litmus test of reform ardor - privatization.

When the second Mečiar government was replaced, in March 1994, by an interim administration of Jozef Moravčík, its limited term of office and „rainbow“ nature did not provoke much confidence in its ability to solve the economic problems. When it was leaving office at the end of the year, however, it was widely praised. No doubt, it was helped by an economic recovery that started in the first quarter even before its accession. Observers also stressed „more stringent macroeconomic policy“⁴³ (*Economist*), unlike its predecessors who „made decisions spontaneously based on political expediency.“⁴⁴

Vladimír Mečiar, who returned to power in December 1994 after early elections, continued to govern over an expanding economy, which became, for two to three years, probably the only major positively perceived feature of his government. The prime minister ruled a country where, according to *New York Times* from March 1995, there was

³⁸ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 10, 1992

³⁹ *Economist*, January 16, 1993

⁴⁰ *Washington Post*, January 1, 1993

⁴¹ *Economist*, August 7, 1993

⁴² *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 18, 1994

⁴³ *Economist*, August 13, 1994

⁴⁴ *ibid.*



“cheap and qualified labor force... a place in the heart of Europe and an emerging class of young entrepreneurs assure... its economic success.”⁴⁵ In contrast to the 1993-1994 period, when the political instability was related to economic decay, “political conflicts in Bratislava... have not destroyed the fundamental improvement in the economy. The results... stand well in comparison with any transition country.”⁴⁶ (*Financial Times*)

In the Slovak case, however, the economy could not overcome politics. When analyzing a country where there was a fundamental struggle for the character of its political regime and where, in words of Ray Furlong, „an R.I.P. sign was often made above the supposed grave of the Slovak democracy“,⁴⁷ the economy simply did not play the most important role. With cases such as the kidnapping of the president's son or Mečiar's amnesty, the economic figures lost their appeal. They could be mentioned as something that is not a problem, but that was it. As Doug Lytle, a bureau chief of *Dow Jones Newswires* in Prague, said: „From the economic point of view, the interest in Slovakia just seeped away. Everyone just got tired of the situation there.“⁴⁸

Moreover, by 1997, the Slovak economic miracle started to shatter as macroeconomic figures began signaling severe imbalances in the economy. Already in August 1997, *The Economist* predicted that the Slovak miracle might outlast the Czech one only by a very short time.⁴⁹ In October 1997, *Financial Times* quoted analysts from *Deutsche Bank Grenfell* who claimed that the “current account and government budget deficit are unsustainable”⁵⁰ and predicted: “To overcome the critical situation, a rescue package and devaluation of the currency will be needed... together with sharp decrease in the economic growth and increase in inflation.”⁵¹ This angle prevailed until the elections in the fall of 1998, which coincided with all of the predicted phenomena. Afterwards, not a stone was left in unturned the positive foreign perception of the Slovak economy. *Die Welt*, who had published articles full of praise as late as November 1996, wrote two days after the 1998 election: “The treasury is empty, unbelievably high interest rates prevent any reasonable investment, debts are mounting, 15% of people are unemployed, with the figure reaching 30% in some regions.”⁵² The end of the third Mečiar government thus brought a strange change - a problematic political situation was replaced by a troubled economy. Therefore, in January 1999, the American ambassador uttered a sentence that would have seemed impossible two years before: „I expect the overall image of Slovakia to improve rapidly in the near future, but there will be an asterisk - economic problems.“⁵³

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, March 19, 1995.

⁴⁶ *Financial Times*, December 20, 1995

⁴⁷ Ray Furlong, interview, Prague, August 3, 1998.

⁴⁸ Doug Lytle, interview, Prague, August 2, 1998.

⁴⁹ *Economist*, August 16, 1997.

⁵⁰ *Financial Times*, October 28, 1997.

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *Die Welt*, September 28, 1998.

⁵³ Ralph Johnson, interview, Bratislava, January 22, 1999.



Conclusions

This paper briefly summarized the main results of our research into Slovakia's perception in the West during 1990s. Its principal findings were:

■ Slovakia's image was generally negative on most issues, with notable exceptions of the economy in the 1994-1998 period and the caretaker Moravčík's government in 1994.

■ The principal reasons were the grim reality of Slovak politics during most of the period and the Western fear of ethnic conflict in the region, which caused it to view anything nationalist with great suspicion.

■ However, Slovak leaders, most of all Vladimír Mečiar, strongly contributed to the negative perception by their inability to understand how Western media and governments work. Inflammatory statements, refusals to talk to the press, vocabulary and speech reminiscent of communist politicians of the 1970s and 1980s and other mishaps were all part of this.

■ Even though the country's economy was viewed in early 1990s as very weak and with questionable viability on its own, later - from early 1994 to early 1998 - it became one of the country's few positive features perceived from abroad. This macroeconomic success, however, could not significantly dent the overall problematic perception as the latter was based on a perceived struggle between democratic and at least semi-authoritarian forces. ■

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JOZEF BÁTORA, JR.

Challenges and Opportunities: Slovak Diplomacy in the Information Age¹

"There was a time when establishing a new embassy or diplomatic post took weeks, even months. Now it takes a plane ticket, a laptop and a dial tone. And maybe a diplomatic passport. We can hit the ground running: this has huge implications for the mobility of our operations and what I call 'just in time and place' operational effectiveness."

Gordon Smith²

The citation above is based on the experience of establishing the Canadian embassy in Zagreb, Croatia at the height of the Bosnian conflict, when a Canadian diplomat rented a hotel room, connected his cellular phone to his portable computer, logged-on to the global electronic network used by the Canadian Foreign Service, and the new embassy was operational within a few hours, the flight-time included. Surprisingly enough, there was no need for a safe residence, no need for fancy furniture or cars or a large staff. I say "surprisingly", because the first things most of us happen to think of when we hear the words 'diplomat' or "diplomacy", are fancy cars, soirées with glasses of champagne, elegant embassy buildings or mysterious ways of speaking and expressing opinions. However, as demonstrated in the example above, what is crucial in this day and age, is the establishment of communication links enabling information to flow between the embassy and headquarters, as well as with counterparts in the receiving country. In the Canadian example, this was accomplished quickly with the help of an important new element in the life of organizations - the use of information technology (IT).³

¹ For comments on an early draft of this article I am grateful to Vladimír Bilčík of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.

² The former Deputy Minister of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. This citation is from his paper presented at the Virtual Diplomacy conference at the U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, April 1-2, 1997.

³ Today, computing power doubles every 18 months, its price continues to fall (currently it is less than one percent of what it cost in 1970), and Internet traffic doubles every 100 days (Keohane and Nye 1998:83).

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This article is a study of the effects of information technology (IT) on the organizational basis of diplomacy - the Foreign Service, with particular emphasis on the relevant experience of the Slovak Foreign Service. In the following pages I will first discuss the challenges that diplomacy in general is facing in the globalized environment on the verge of the Information Age. Then I will provide some evidence on the current situation in the Slovak Foreign Service with respect to the use of information technology.⁴ Based on the evidence, I will argue that due to the fact that it is still in the process of institutionalization, the Slovak Foreign Service has a unique opportunity to establish an innovative organizational basis for Slovak diplomacy.

Time to redefine diplomacy?

Diplomacy has throughout history been a function and a determinant of the international order (Hamilton and Langhorne 1996:238). The historical and institutional basis of diplomacy, as we know it today, was developed first in the city-states of Medieval Italy in the late 15th Century, when they bilaterally established permanent embassies to keep their sovereigns updated on the latest developments in the respective courts. Diplomacy, defined as "a mediation of estranged peoples organized in states" (Der Derian 1987:42), was for centuries dominated by aristocrats. Traditionally, a strict hierarchy, a high level of secrecy and one-way public information management (information provided by the diplomats to the public, and not the other way around), have characterized the Foreign Service as a type of organization.

The process of globalization defined as an "increased integration of the world's economies through trade, finance, transportation, and information technology" (CSIS Study⁵ 1998:28) influences state-to-state relations and hence also diplomacy as such in a number of ways. Traditionally, relations between states were government-to-government and were conducted exclusively by the Foreign Services. However, states are no longer the only actors in what is still referred to as 'international relations'. There are completely new entities, such as the European Union, which is neither a state (nor a federation of states) nor an international organization, but is still undoubtedly an actor in the international arena (Fossum and Robinson 1999). Furthermore, differences between foreign policy and domestic policies are gradually disappearing and hence there is a growing proliferation of actors in the international arena, ranging from private enterprises and NGOs to regional governments and the media. The Foreign Services have to

⁴ This will be based on the data that I collected in the period from October 1998 until August 1999, when I conducted a series of data collections (including interviews and questionnaire surveys) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava, at the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Oslo, and at the Slovak embassy in Oslo. The data was originally used as background for my M.Phil. thesis (see Bátora 1999).

⁵ "Reinventing Diplomacy in the Information Age", a study done by a team of 63 distinguished individuals from government service, academic circles, journalism, and the business and NGO communities over a period of 15 months, and released by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, DC, on November 1, 1998.



mediate in relation to and on behalf of these new actors in addition to the traditional government-to-government mediation (Neumann 1999).

Today, perhaps more than in any past era, knowledge is power. As suggested by Nye and Owens (1996:20), so called *soft power*⁶ is an important strategic asset. An attractive set of values exposed to outsiders is a crucial factor for the success of a society in the global perspective.⁷

Due to ever-increasing public involvement in foreign policy issues, it is no longer possible to conduct diplomacy in secret. Extensive public diplomacy (including Cyberspace), the fostering of involvement of the public, academics, NGOs and the private sphere in debates and fora to shape foreign policy priorities and legitimize foreign policy decisions, are some of the new elements that Foreign Services have to incorporate into their daily routines.⁸

Information technology in the Foreign Service

Today, the main task of the Foreign Service remains the conduct of foreign policy. To do this effectively in the Information Age, the extensive use of information technology is inevitable. This was well recognized by the team of authors of the 1998 report⁹ *'Equipped for the Future'* (further referred to as EFF Report). As they pointed out, although the human factor remains the most important element of diplomatic work, the use of advanced IT can be seen as a way to improve policy, not merely as a communication tool.

IT provides new opportunities for information dissemination at various levels in the Foreign Service. Access to information has been enhanced and responsibility can thus be moved to the lowest appropriate level and new managerial styles have to be applied (Smith 1997, Jauch 1997, Schmitz 1997). With the use of electronic mail, electronic chatrooms and videoconferencing tools, virtual teams of diplomats can work jointly on a task even if they are physically located on different continents.¹⁰ Individual solutions or actions are often no longer sufficient. In a fast changing environment effective action involves a coordinated effort by several actors working towards common goals.

⁶ Nye holds that *soft power* is the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion. It works by convincing others to follow, or getting them to agree to, norms and institutions that produce the desired behavior. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books 1990 (cf. Nye and Owens 1996:21).

⁷ The latter point has been well recognized by the Canadians, who made presenting Canadian values in the international arena and pursuing 'soft power' a foreign policy priority. (From an address by Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, in Ottawa, December 1996. To be found on the Internet at: http://www.dfait-ma...6_state/96_053e.htm)

⁸ E.g. The National Forum in Canada, as mentioned by Lloyd Axworthy (his speech to a meeting of The National Forum on Foreign Policy (December 13, 1996) to be found at: http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/english/news/statem-1/96_state/96_057e.htm

⁹ The full title of the document is *"Equipped for the Future: Managing U.S. Foreign Affairs in the 21st Century"*. The report was published at the Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington, DC, in October 1998 and the contributors were: Frank Carlucci, Warren Christopher, Carla Hills, Max Kampelman, Ralph Larsen, Donald F. McHenry, Sam Nunn, Phil Odean, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, George Schultz, Robert Strauss, Cyrus Vance and John Whitehead.

¹⁰ The practice of virtual teams is in an increasing manner used by the Canadian Foreign Service. They experiment with using videoconferencing to connect members of 'Team Canada' trade missions; or during the 1997 crisis in Zaire, when they formed a virtual team with members in Africa, Ottawa, New York and Washington (Smith 1997).



Already some 35 years ago, Karl Deutsch (1966) compared Foreign Services to "assembly lines of thoughts". For a diplomat, access to information is crucial and IT is useful for ensuring accessibility. In addition, IT helps one prioritize information and makes it available on an almost instantaneous basis. Quick updating of information with the ability to instantaneously counter misinformation to journalists and decision-makers is another crucial asset. When IT is used properly, it can improve the organization of information within embassies and at headquarters. Embassy web sites on the Internet can take on some of the major representation functions (public diplomacy) in a foreign country and provide well-prepared information to visitors in Cyberspace, when created with sensitivity to the local culture.

Finally, there is one more issue that deserves attention - secrecy. Concerns about the secrecy and security of communication have been typical of diplomacy ever since its early days. There is hardly any strategic report on IT-issues produced by the Foreign Services, which would deny the importance of these concerns. However, instead of *risk avoidance and information policing*¹¹ typical of traditional diplomacy, the diplomacy of the future should pursue *risk management and information providing*¹² (EFF Report, p.23).

How then does the Slovak Foreign Service respond to the challenges of the evolving Information Age?

The Slovak Foreign Service: "Islands of innovation" in a turbulent setting

The Slovak Foreign Service is a relatively young organization, which has only existed since 1993. It was founded in a dynamic environment and immediately faced a set of challenges including the transformation from a communist regime to a democracy, establishing a nation state, and finally, the effects of the information revolution and globalization. The still ongoing process of setting strategic priorities for Slovak foreign policy (Lukáč 2000:8), going hand in hand with insufficient human resources, political turbulence (the minister has changed 7 times since 1993), lack of financial resources (see

¹¹ Both of the concepts were pointed out by the authors of the EFF Report (1998:23) as features of Classic diplomacy. *Risk avoidance* implied that ensuring secrecy had an absolute priority in the Foreign Service, and risks of losing classified information are to be avoided wherever possible to the highest possible degree. Thus, classified documents are not exchanged in the electronic form and diplomatic computer networks are not connected to the Internet due to the risk of possible attacks by hackers. The concept of *information policing* implies that even in relation to foreign service employees access to (both classified and unclassified) documents is limited, controlled and policed.

¹² These concepts were defined in the EFF Report (1998) as alternatives to risk avoidance and information policing. *Risk management* is based on the realization, that in an information intensive environment, where effectiveness depends on the ability to create knowledge from timely and updated information, it is not possible to remain unconnected to global electronic information flows. The risk of losing a particular piece of information to hackers is outweighed by the benefits of having access to timely and updated information. The concept of *information providing* is based on the same logic and suggests that the body of unclassified information should be broadly available to employees in order to foster the full use of their knowledge base.



table 1), and unresolved logistical problems (such as moving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic [MFASR] several times before moving into the current residence in 1998) have been occupying the attention of previous and current decision-makers at the MFASR. Hence, due to the multiple uncertainties, IT implementation throughout the Slovak Foreign Service and related strategic aspects came to be perceived as somewhat less important and only to be added to the agenda once the "more pressing" problems were resolved.

Once established, the MFASR mainly adopted the traditional administrative procedures practiced by other Slovak ministries. These procedures in many respects corresponded to the classical Weberian bureaucracy with clear lines of authority and hierarchy, and paper-based document handling and filing. In terms of the specific routines typical of a Foreign Service, the MFASR was strongly influenced by the experience of the Slovak diplomats who had previously served at the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, and had "brought" with them a number of organizational procedures and routines. In terms of structure and functions, the Slovak Foreign Service corresponds to what is commonly understood when one refers to the term 'Foreign Service', i.e. a Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a set of missions around the globe acting according to the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.¹³ However, it is so far difficult to speak of an established organizational culture, identity or *esprit de corps*, which are still in the making. In other words, the organization is still not institutionalized or "infused with value" in Selznick's terms.¹⁴ There are indications that in light of the uncertainties of the evolving Information Age, the MFASR has the potential to standardize a new type of organizational culture. But this is also dependent upon what IT is implemented, how it is implemented, where and when it is implemented and what effects these actions will have.

¹³ On October 31, 1999, the Slovak Foreign Service had 1121 employees (466 at the headquarters) (Lukáč 2000:8) and was divided into 5 sections, which included 28 departments.

¹⁴ Some of the terms used here and further in the text deserve further explanation. *Institutionalization*, a process that happens to an organization over time, reflects the specific organizational history, mirrors the personal imprints that were left behind by former and current organizational members, as well as captures the way the organization has adapted to its environment (Selznick 1957:16). Capturing all of these traces, the organization then is not merely a formal structure designed to achieve certain aims, but becomes infused with the personal imprints, former and current personal interests, conflicts over courses of action, and individuals become personally attached to it. In Selznick's famous definition an organization hence becomes "infused with value" and is a source of 'personal satisfaction' for committed individuals, rather than an expendable technical tool (ibid., pp.16-17). The degree of institutionalization thus largely depends on "how much leeway there is for personal and group interaction" (ibid.). In this manner action is institutionalized through the development of *rules and routines*, while values and beliefs are institutionalized through the development of meanings (March and Olsen 1989:53). The result of the institutionalization process is a unique *organizational culture or identity*, a "character ... crystallized through the preservation of custom and precedent" (Selznick 1949:182; cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1991:14). Hence, *recruitment policies and socialization procedures* of an organization are seen as particularly essential in the build-up of a self-image of an organizational member. Selznick holds that a self-image, which is being transmitted through socialization, is a tool facilitating communication in an organization. It ensures that an individual absorbs a given set of norms and values and through it as well a way of perceiving and evaluating his/her experience (ibid.). March and Olsen (1989:160) defined *institutions* as "collections of interrelated rules and routines that define appropriate actions in terms of relations between roles and situations". In other words, an individual socialized into an institution has acquired a logic of appropriateness, which steers his/her actions in given situations.

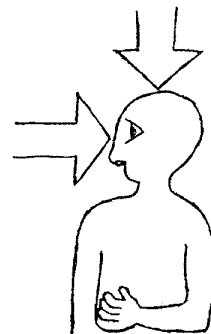


IT in the Slovak Foreign Service

In 1993, a common IT backbone system for the Slovak government, called GOVNET, was introduced.¹⁵ The MFASR was not able to make full use of all the advantages of the newly established system. This was due to the negative effects of the above mentioned multiple uncertainties requiring it to adopt provisional solutions especially when it came to building-up its own IT infrastructure. There was thus at headquarters a lack of motivation to buy the most modern and efficient IT equipment, and paradoxically, the IT innovations in the Slovak Foreign Service were perceived instead as coming from its missions abroad, which did not face the kind of turbulence that the MFASR had to deal with.¹⁶ After moving into its current residence in 1998, the situation stabilized and conditions for developing the IT infrastructure have significantly improved.

The first steps towards the present IT-strategy of the Slovak Foreign Service were taken in February/March 1999. One of the main organizational results was that the Department for Special Communication (OŠSP) and the Department for Information Systems (ODIS) were merged and the *Department for Informatics and Special Communication* (OIŠS) was created in order to improve coordination both at the strategic and executive levels.¹⁷

The IT infrastructure of the Slovak Foreign Service involves all networks, electronic linkages, central computers, communication facilities and workstations. There are different types and generations of hardware, using various types and versions of software, which sometimes causes problems in transferring files. A number of portable computers are available to diplomats whenever they have to work outside the MFASR (conferences, negotiations etc.). There is a local area network (LAN) linking most of the workstations at the MFASR. The network is used for internal electronic mail (e-mail) and electronic exchange of documents. In March 1999, the LAN of the MFASR was linked to GOVNET. Despite possible problems with speed of access, in late August 1999, the Internet and external e-mail were technically accessible from all workstations lin-



¹⁵ GOVNET was established according to governmental resolution nr. 310/1993. It is a network linking the Prime Minister's Office, Office of the President, The National Council (parliament), all the ministries and other governmental agencies located in Bratislava. It is used for electronic mail communication, provides World Wide Web access, enables the transfer of files (FTP), connection to distant computers, interactive communication between network users, as well as supporting the creation of and access to electronic archives on its nodes. Single ministries and other governmental agencies have their own Internet web-sites. GOVNET as a whole is connected to the Internet, but not accessible to outsiders (firewall protection).

¹⁶ Based on interviews with MFASR staff.

¹⁷ It is possible that the Department of Special Tasks (ODZÚ) responsible for information security will merge with OIŠS later and an IT-Section will be created. As suggested by one of the sources, this would provide a better platform for IT issues at the leadership meetings. So far however, it is not clear whether that will happen or not.



ked to the internal network of the MFASR. However, there are administrative limits on access for various types of users mostly dependent on the individual's position in the hierarchy.

There are no common standards for IT equipment acquisitions at the Slovak missions abroad. Thus both hardware and software incompatibilities between the missions and the MFASR occur. The goal is to standardize software at the headquarters and at the missions abroad in the shortest possible time, so that diplomats can work in the same electronic environment whether using the workstations at headquarters or at the missions abroad, or using the portable computers at conferences or negotiations. The achievement of this goal is seriously constrained by the lack of financial resources.

When it comes to LANs at the missions abroad some changes can be noted. If in November 1998 there were still no LANs at the Slovak missions abroad, by August 1999 4 were functioning (at the permanent mission to the EU in Brussels; and at the embassies in Moscow, Vienna and Prague) and 3 others were planned (at the permanent mission to the UN in New York; and at the embassies in Berlin and Washington).¹⁸ However, the MFASR does not have plans to establish LANs at small embassies (3-5 employees). A source explained to me that at the small missions there is no point in establishing LANs, because the officers each have a different agenda and they are usually able to communicate in person. Internet access at the missions abroad is usually provided by a computer designated especially for that purpose. In the winter of 1998/99, 45 (of 59) missions had Internet access and the number was increasing. Having or not having access to the Internet is a decision left to the staff at each mission, but is strongly recommended by the expert staff from headquarters. It is assumed that currently each mission has access to the Internet through at least one computer.¹⁹

There are a variety of technologies used for communication with missions abroad. Fax and encrypted fax are fairly widely used. Also, a private satellite system (for both data and telephony), hired on a commercial basis, is used for communication with almost all Slovak embassies on the European continent and in Israel. This system is used for sending documents written in standard text editing programs and is perceived as highly cost effective. It can also be used for telephony providing a direct connection between the missions abroad and the MFASR, as well as with key members of the Slovak government in Bratislava.

Communication with missions outside the European continent is conducted mainly via fax and encrypted fax, which is not cost effective and thus some documents are sent to just one mission, which then disseminates them to other Slovak missions in the region.²⁰ Alternative communication solutions are being evaluated by the MFASR, but if

¹⁸ Based on interviews with MFASR staff.

¹⁹ One of the sources mentioned a recent occasion on which he was "really surprised" when he received a request from the Slovak embassy in Rome asking for a recommendation as to whether or not Internet access should be installed. As he explained, he took it for granted that they had access a long time ago.

²⁰ For example, documents are faxed to the Slovak embassy in Washington, DC., which then faxes them to the Slovak embassies in Ottawa, Mexico City and Havana. This is the case particularly for longer documents, which are not urgent, in order to save money. Savings appear to be quite significant as the cost of faxing a page from Bratislava to Ottawa costs about USD 2., while faxing a page from Washington to Ottawa is just 7 cents.



fax communication is maintained (as was suggested by some of the sources, this will be the case because paper-based communication will not be completely eliminated), it will be reorganized in the future, so that in each geographical region there will be a so-called "knot embassy", which will be the central communication point for further dissemination of information from headquarters (this would be particularly important in an emergency situation like a war or a similar threat to national security would occur).²¹

An internal discussion at the MFASR is currently going on as to the future IT strategy of the Slovak Foreign Service and following completion, a report will be produced (expected later in 2000). A possible future communication solution would be to link the MFASR and all Slovak missions abroad into one global network providing online access to the Internet and electronic archives of the MFASR, telephony etc. It is seen as a rather costly goal and is difficult to achieve due to an ongoing lack of financial resources in the Slovak Foreign Service. The earliest possible time line for putting this solution into effect is estimated at 2004-2005.²²

Organizational effects

In addition to the above described inadequacies in technical equipment (which are being dealt with and it is only a matter of time before they will be eliminated), there are three more serious factors that have so far been slowing down the overall effects of IT on the organizational structure of the Slovak Foreign Service: 1) the paper-based routines in document handling; 2) insufficient user skills; and 3) the centralized system for external communication at the MFASR.

Although there are plans to switch over to electronic handling of documents, most of the documents exchanged at the MFASR were still on paper in late 1998. This is due to the fact, that even though documents can be exchanged electronically through the LAN, they are not considered official unless on paper with a clear signature. When it comes to MFASR employees' IT user skills, some sources stressed that such skills are considered a part of general knowledge and it is expected that each employee will have at least basic IT-skills. Some of the officers do have well developed IT skills, which is often due to their previous experience, or their personal interest. These officers, their organizational units, or embassies they are assigned to, can be more active and innovative in using IT than the rest of the organization and further in the text I will refer to them as *islands of innovation*. There is not yet any common IT-competence standard at the MFASR. One of my questionnaire respondents estimated, that IT is used by only 50% of MFASR staff due a lack of training and awareness. The percentage is just the personal assessment of the respondent, but insufficient user skills were mentioned to me in several interviews.

²¹ Based on interviews with MFASR staff.

²² Based on interviews with MFASR staff.



The Department of Informatics and Special Communication (OIŠS) is currently the central point in the communication infrastructure of the Slovak Foreign Service. Virtually all official external communication of the MFASR have to flow through the OIŠS, and so far there have not been any other communication infrastructure solution officially suggested or planned, although there have been some unofficial proposals.

Hierarchical considerations have played a role in drafting the new set of rules for access to the Internet, which has been possible from all MFASR workstations since late August 1999. Directors General of sections and all other officers above them in the hierarchy up to the Minister have unlimited access to the Internet from their own workstations (or rather from their staff). Other Foreign Service Officers can also access the Internet from their own workstations. However, the access is need-based, and thus limited to certain web-sites, which are relevant to their work. They have to submit a list of URL addresses to the Department for Informatics and Special Communication (OIŠS), and after evaluation access is made available to them. This list can be updated at anytime. OIŠS thus has the right to control Internet users at the lower levels in the hierarchy.²³ This solution can be fairly problematic, especially if we realize that a great deal of primary information collection and analysis is in fact done by the lower ranked officers, who due to limited access to the Internet again find themselves constrained and unable to access all necessary information. Furthermore, with access limited to certain URL-addresses it might be rather difficult to learn about other web-sites that one should add to his/her list of accessible places on the Internet. However, it has to be noted, that this is a start-up solution, which will be evaluated over time and adjustments will be made.

Despite the inertia caused by the paper-based routines, insufficient user skills, the centralized external communication infrastructure, and the hierarchy-based distribution of IT, it is possible to discern some effects of IT on the organizational procedures at the MFASR and some possible future tendencies. Due to the existence of the internal network at the MFASR, information exchange has increased in speed and in volume. As observed by some of the questionnaire respondents, this fosters teamwork, provides diversification of information sources, and augments the personal effectiveness of individual employees, thus decreasing the number of people needed for carrying out specific tasks or projects.

When it comes to office-automation, there are efforts to automate financial agenda both at the MFASR and at the missions abroad. One of the main elements of the current Information System Conception of the MFASR is the introduction and use of new software for automating the financial agenda. About 40% of the embassies send their financial agenda as data in an electronic form to headquarters. This is quite a new process, and thus its effects are still to be evaluated. What we can likely expect is a similar experience to that of the Canadian Foreign Service with electronic economic agendas at its missions. The result was a decline in the need to send qualified accountants to the embassies, and instead the economic agenda of all embassies is managed from headquarters (Smith 1997). This would increase the integration of all parts of the Foreign Service.

²³ Based on interviews with MFASR staff.



Another observation is that due to the radically diminished communication costs, the volume of communication has risen, thus increasing the complexity of the issues that are dealt with. When communication costs were still relatively high (maybe a decade ago), instructions to ambassadors had to be formulated clearly and concisely to keep the transmission costs low. Today however, with the use of satellite or electronic mail transmissions, it makes no difference in terms of costs, whether what is being sent is a document of two pages, or a hundred pages. As a result of this, it is thus often increasingly difficult to get clear instructions, and the analytical work previously done at headquarters is now more often done by diplomats at the missions abroad.

As shown in the latter observation, due to decreased transmission costs, information available at headquarters is increasingly made available to diplomats at the missions abroad on an instantaneous basis and more often in a "raw" form (with little or no analytical input). The traditional division of work – diplomats in the field gather information, forward it to headquarters, headquarters carries out an analysis and based on the analysis provides instructions to diplomats in the field – seems to be challenged by the new communication options. The headquarters is now not only carrying out analysis, but is increasingly becoming an "information provider"; while the embassies no longer only provide information, but increasingly carry out a substantial part of the analysis. The technological leap forward has caught the actors somewhat by surprise – i.e. embassy staff expecting clear instructions based on thorough analysis from headquarters instead receive large amounts of information that needs to be analyzed in order to be used effectively.

This overlap of responsibility for information providing and analysis between the headquarters and missions abroad, opens up possibilities for the further integration of all parts of the Foreign Service into a flexible network. The establishment of a global electronic network (which after all is the goal that the MFASR strives to achieve in the future) would diminish differences in time and facilitate the flexible cooperation of all parts of the Slovak Foreign Service irrespective of geographical location and organizational position. However, these possibilities have not been explored and exploited by the Slovak Foreign Service yet. So far, communication patterns remain centralized. There is official communication between headquarters and individual embassies, but not between embassies themselves (which would enable better coordination of Slovak efforts towards countries in the same region), even though technology would permit it. Thus for example the official contacts between the Slovak embassy in Oslo and other Slovak embassies in the Scandinavian countries are quite limited, if there are any.²⁴

To sum up, in a situation of non-existent institutionalized organizational culture and identity, and only limited conditions for a solid hierarchy due to rapid personnel turnover

²⁴ There are some informal contacts between the Slovak embassies in Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm, which are used when for example a Slovak art exhibition is on tour around Scandinavia and transport from one country to another needs to be arranged. However, all official contacts (if any) between the Slovak embassies in Scandinavia go through the MFASR in Bratislava.



In recent years, there seems to be a potential, for a new IT-based set of rules and routines to promote the link-up of all the atomized parts of the Slovak Foreign Service into a network structure. Due to the non-existence of common socialization procedures the Slovak Foreign Service is currently a collection of individuals, rather than a coherent institutionalized body. There is a great deal of individualism and atomization, specifically loyalty to one's own organizational unit, one's own embassy etc., instead of a set of commonly shared rules, values and norms ("esprit de corps"). The MFASR employees have various organizational backgrounds and institutional foci, which means that the current routines and procedures, including paper-based practices, do not have a firm institutionalized basis throughout the organization yet. The fact, that the organizational procedures and routines still do not have an established character leaves space for alternative conduct, including IT-based routines and practices. The effect of IT is thus largely dependent on the IT-savvy and know-how of individual personnel both at headquarters and at the missions abroad. Thus, it is characterized by a SCATTERED INFILTRATION OF IT-BASED CONDUCT INTO THE ORGANIZATION through *islands of innovation*, rather than the general influence of IT from the outside, that the organization as a whole would deal with. Due to the atomized character of the Slovak Foreign Service and the active 'islands of innovation', there appears to be a fair potential that instead of a hierarchy in the classic diplomacy sense (with its paper-based practices and clear lines of authority) the Slovak Foreign Service will adopt and institutionalize a more flexible network structure. This kind of structure would seem well suited for the effective integration of the atomized parts of the organization and provide it with a legitimate base for building an identity and a culture.

The turbulent conditions, along with an absence of legislation on public access to government information, have resulted in severe uncertainty with regard to the handling of information at the Slovak Foreign Service. The uncertainty as to what information can be made public, results in the virtual non-existence of public documents at the MFASR, and that in turn means that virtually all documents produced by the MFASR are considered internal or classified.²⁵ In this situation, virtually all information at the MFASR is potentially secret (or at least internal), which affected the introduction of IT. When purchasing new IT equipment information security concerns have always played a crucial role. It is thus quite understandable that in this kind of situation the MFASR had practically no

²⁵ For example even the current organization chart is an internal document not available to outsiders. It is normal practice in other countries to make the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' organization chart public (Consult for instance Hocking, B. (ed.) (1999): *Foreign Ministries. Change and Adaptation*. Macmillan Press, London).



Internet access or external e-mail access until early 1999. Hence, at first glance it is surprising that the Ministry has moved from a "no access to the Internet" solution to the "Internet access from all workstations" solution within a couple of months in 1999, without trying to provide Internet access from, for example, computers designated specifically for that purpose and which are not connected to the internal network. However, this kind of "radical" move only suggests that what may have seemed to be an exaggerated level of secrecy prior to 1999 was not an expression of an established set of secrecy rules, (because these are currently in the making), but rather a way of dealing with the severe uncertainty.

Information security rules are currently being developed and they should also address the electronic dimension.²⁶ This, however, will not have any effect upon documents classified as "secret" or "top secret", which are handled exclusively on paper and as suggested by the sources this is likely to remain the case. Consequently, the IT effect will not have any relevance with respect to highly classified documents. This is not the case with unclassified and internal documents because by connecting the internal network of the Ministry to GOVNET and through it to the Internet, the documents available in the databases of the MFASR could potentially become a target of hackers. Thus, an electronic dimension will be added to the usual protection means. The new logic is based on the realization that the enemy now no longer has to be physically present to steal information. More important, though, is the fact that the electronic archives are likely to follow the same rules as the paper-based archive, using the "need to know" principle.²⁷ This would suggest that the Slovak Foreign Service is adopting secrecy standards in accordance with the classic diplomacy paradigm. What remains to be seen is whether the new law on public access to government information (currently being prepared by the Slovak parliament) would not undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of the "need to know" principle (as it did for instance in Norway in the early 1970s [Høgetvet 1981]).²⁸

Public information management at the MFASR has serious inefficiencies. "On paper" it is virtually non-existent at present. There is instead some sort of information management in Cyberspace at the MFASR web-site. However, the creation of the web-site was a temporary activity, and once the tasks laid down in MFASR-Directive nr. 23/1998 were fulfilled (the web-site was designed according to that directive, and the contents were added in accordance with it as well), there has hardly been any follow-up activity, or what one could call continuous updating. The web-site seems instead to be updated on an ad-hoc basis. When it comes to contents, the web-site actually fulfills the role of an introductory presentation brochure about the Ministry (which is non-existent on paper).

²⁶ Based on interviews with MFASR staff.

²⁷ Based on interviews with MFASR staff. According to this principle an employee is authorized to view only those documents that are directly relevant to the tasks he works on.

²⁸ Under the 1970 Freedom of Information Act, Norwegian citizens have a right to view any unclassified government document. In practise this meant that due to the still valid "need-to-know" principle government officials' access to documents of their agencies was more limited than that of the media and general public.



and it includes some travel advisories, some speeches of the Minister(s), and a useful full-text database of Slovakia's international treaties. Structurally, it contains elements of an active information management system with, for example, a section on "Topical information on the activities of the MFA SR" or "Latest press releases", but in fact this is at present only a "Potemkin village"²⁹. The contents of the "Topical information" has been updated just once (since the creation of the web-site) according to the themes in directive nr. 23/1998. Thus the MFA SR web-site can to a large degree be characterized as one way communication limited to a particular period of time. It has to be noted, though, that virtually all MFA SR information management (although still severely limited in contents and efficiency) is done in Cyberspace and not on paper. This has to do with the cost-effectiveness of IT-based information management in Cyberspace (eliminating the costs of printing and reprinting brochures, as well as distribution costs), through which the Ministry can reach out to the public in a relatively inexpensive way.

Conclusion

The evolving Information Age provides a number of opportunities, as well as challenges for the organizational basis of diplomacy – the Foreign Service. The very fact that the Slovak Foreign Service, which I focused on in this article, is a newly established organization currently going through the process of institutionalization, offers a unique opportunity for forming an innovative organizational design, which would be well-suited to face the challenges and uncertainties of the globalized era. Some considerations should be given to the following suggestions:

- The Slovak Foreign Service needs a new strategic and normative approach to *organizational structure* (a network-based logic), *secrecy* (liberalized and broadened access to the body of unclassified documents) and *public information management* (not only providing sufficient information to the public, but also encouraging Slovak citizens to provide feedback and to take part in various initiatives connected with forming foreign policy – two-way communication). This would make the existing values, practices and routines more flexible and more able to capitalize on the opportunities provided by new information technologies, and ensure that the Slovak Foreign Service has the role of coordinator of Slovak foreign policy in the future;

- There is a need for coherent and innovative recruitment, training and socialization of new Foreign Service Officers in order to maintain the newly created institutional setting and to develop a shared organizational culture. As a part of this process personnel exchange programs with the business, academic and/or the NGO commu-

²⁹ As Governor of 'New Russia' (today southern Ukraine), Grigory POTECHKIN, a talented administrator and military commander, used to build fake villages to deceive the empress Catherine the Great about his 'accomplishments' while they passed through the province in a carriage. The expression "Potemkin village" since then commonly refers to a facade or a deceptive image.



nities should be considered to ensure better interagency cooperation and to improve overall foreign policy coordination;

- Promotion of *soft-power* should be made a foreign policy priority;
- The leadership of the MFA SR should take the initiative and foster innovation and extensive use of IT;
- Finally, the increasing integration of all parts of the Foreign Service through electronic means and centralization of administrative functions at headquarters (including management of embassies' web-sites) will require the strengthening of the IT-technical staff at headquarters in order to support the electronic networks. Competitive salaries for IT-specialists, web-designers, information managers and later for linguistics experts³⁰ will be required in order to enhance the required competence at headquarters.

Despite all of these observations and suggestions, it is necessary to remember, that information technology so far cannot, (and it is questionable if it ever will) replace human contact. The increasing number of face-to-face diplomatic meetings and negotiations between heads of states shows that there are certain non-automatable human functions in diplomacy, which can not be substituted by IT. Groth (1997) has argued in favor of the latter point in his discussion of the concept of virtual organizations (meaning people in a team working in at least two different locations, using one or more electronic media as their communication channels, and having little face-to-face contact [ibid., p. 279]) when he states that: „Flexibility in structure and personnel is good up to a point, but extreme flexibility may all too easily translate into instability, disloyalty, and inefficiency. ...if a really important problem cropped up, the responsible person(s) in a hypothetical virtual organization would still pack their suitcases and go - to bring into action the intangibles that are impossible to convey by electronic means: the sensing of an atmosphere, of a handshake, or the intimacy of a lunch or dinner conversation“ (ibid., p.280). A more instrumental reason for human contact in diplomacy is that in this time of tremendously increasing information flows, the face-to-face contact of diplomats may serve as a means to highlight and underline certain information or agendas, which might otherwise remain unnoticed or not given the appropriate attention.

However challenging the information revolution may be to the conduct of diplomacy, the newly established Foreign Services (there are several of them in East-Central Europe) have an opportunity to incorporate innovative organizational designs in the very process of their institutionalization. If today's opportunities are used properly, Slovakia and its promising new Foreign Service can be among the innovators of diplomatic practice in the emerging Information Age.

³⁰ Jovan Kurbalija, the head of the research program at the Mediterranean Diplomatic Academy (MDA) on IT in diplomacy suggests that in the near future the competence required for diplomatic web-site management will include not only the IT-technical staff, web-designers and information managers but also linguistics experts, as it is increasingly necessary to mediate meanings in the most efficient manner. (From DiploNews No. 6, October 1, 1999, a bulletin distributed to subscribers by the MDA via e-mail)



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Table 1: Annual budgets of the MFASR and other selected Slovak ministries in the period 1994-1998 (Source: Zbierky zákonov 1993-1997 [Collections of Slovak Laws 1993-1997]).

Ministry	Budget per annum (in thousands SKK*)				
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1.426.538	1.862.462	2.109.923	2.428.044	2.276.292
Ministry of Defense	9.900.000	12.900.000	13.588.065	14.339.511	14.628.278
Ministry of Economy	1.442.652	1.542.612	1.771.386	1.960.820	2.146.617
Ministry of Transport and Communication	6.409.182	6.922.989	7.205.167	7.801.252	9.753.745
Ministry of Agriculture	11.141.313	11.750.000	11.986.100	13.687.410	13.053.307

*1 USD oscillated approximately between 27 SKK and 35 SKK in this period.



MICHAL VAŠEČKA

Roma - the Greatest Challenge for Slovakia on its Way into the European Union

For more than ten years the countries of Central Europe have been on their way into the European Union. The process of integration is moving forward and the process of approximation of the legislation with legislature of EU countries will be finished before the EU itself will be ready to unconditionally accept the first candidate countries. Bearing in mind the history of Central Europe, an unprecedented process of reconciliation among different nations in the region is taking place. Some of these countries implemented legislature on national minorities' protection for the first time in their history. Even Slovakia, for a long time a trouble-maker in a region, changed policies toward national minorities after the elections in September 1998 and returned to the path of transition that is typical for other Central European countries.

And yet there are processes and tendencies in some of these countries that will create significant obstacles for becoming EU members. One of these obstacles, without any doubt, will be the attitude toward Roma (Gypsies), or how the so-called Romani question will be answered. Everyone who is aware of the complexity of the problems associated with the Romani minority in Central European countries would agree that it is the greatest challenge for Central Europeans in the process of "returning to Europe". The European Commission stated several times that the integration of minorities has been satisfactory in the countries seeking EU membership, except for the situation of the Romani people. It is likely that the criteria for accession into the EU will include an obligation to improve the status of the Romani people.

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The most salient and challenging example from this point of view can be found in Slovakia. Roughly 22% of people living in Slovakia belong to national minorities. From this perspective, Slovakia is the most ethnically heterogeneous country of the Central European region. The largest minority is Hungarian (567,300 people in the last census in 1991, or 10.76% of the total population), followed by a Romani minority (officially 1.7%, unofficially more than 9%). These major minority groups are joined by Czechs (1.1%), Ruthenians, Ukrainians and smaller minorities such as Germans, Jews, Poles, Bulgarians, and Russians. The Roma are the second largest minority in Slovakia; however, in the 1991 census, when Roma had a chance to claim their ethnicity for the first time, only 80,627 citizens declared Roma nationality. More realistic estimates about the number of Roma in Slovakia suggest a much higher number, between 480,000 and 520,000 (more than 9% of the country's inhabitants). In relative terms, Slovakia has one of the largest numbers of Roma in the world¹.

Between 1992 and 1998, the political situation in Slovakia did not reflect the efforts that had been made to create an idea of a state that is based on more than one nationality. The exclusion of different groups of people from the social and political discourse was on the everyday agenda of the former government. Moreover, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the USA criticized Slovakia and its state bodies because of its approach toward national minorities. For the most part, after the parliamentary elections in 1994 the criticism was correct and fair. However, the situation of all other minorities (political and social) was getting worse - the general political situation was worsening, the political polarization of society increased and very serious deficits of democracy appeared. The situation of Roma has been very much affected by these developments; deficits in the process of solving the so-called Romani problem have resulted from the deficits in applying democratic principles.

The elections of 1998 resulted in changes in the situation of Roma in Slovakia. The new government was able to create a better social atmosphere in the country, and that resulted in visible changes in the approach of the state administration toward the Romani minority as well. A position of deputy prime minister for human rights, minorities, and regional development was created within the government, and new government also created the position of governmental plenipotentiary for resolving Romani issues. Most importantly, the new government has been determined to solve the Romani problem in coordination with representatives of the Romani community and with respect to the recommendations of international organizations and European Union countries. However, what has been not changing since the elections of 1998 is the relations between the majority population and the Roma. Due to the increased efforts of Roma to emigrate to EU countries, in some ways attitudes toward Roma in Slovakia have grown even worse.

¹ Vašečka, Michal: *The Roma*. In: Mesežnikov, Grigorij - Ivantýšyn, Michal - Nicholson, Tom (eds.): *Slovakia 1998 - 1999. The Global Report on the State of Society*. Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs 1999, p. 395 - 415.



The Roma "Question" in Slovakia

The complex problems connected to Romani issues are very often referred to as the "Romani question". To speak about the "question" might be misleading and even perceived as politically incorrect. The same problem experts have with negative connotations of the "Romani problem" that resembles some unpleasant experiences. The notion "Romani problem" should be perceived as a "complex and difficult set of problems that have all negative preconditions for its reproduction, even if solved quickly, generously, and systematically". A successful resolution of the Romani problem represents a big challenge for the future of Slovakia. The Romani problem will gradually become one of the most serious social, cultural, and civilization problems of Slovakia, especially with regard to Roma annual population growth (app. 2,3% a year). The Roma problem has all the negative preconditions for its reproduction and the accumulation of negative impacts of previous solutions. The inevitability of social assistance and the need to expand this assistance will represent a growing burden on the productive parts of the population. It may be expected that this will further increase the social distance between the Roma and the majority population. The present cohabitation of Roma and majority population could be increasingly characterized as a living next to each other but not together. Mainly in the region of Eastern Slovakia the process of non-institutionalized race segregation has started.

The "Romani question", however, should be understood in the same way as the "Slovak question" has recently been discussed in Slovakia: "What is the place of the Romani nation in contemporary Europe?" The problem is that it is very unclear how to formulate the question, and to determine who is asking and who is supposed to answer the question. Among the variety of "Romani questions" the most important ones are:

■ One connecting point between answers to the question "What to do with our Roma?" is very obvious; all of them deal with the search for the form of coexistence of Roma and the majority population. Only after the very clear definition of the desired form of coexistence can the situation of Roma be improved. Previous attempts very often failed precisely because of uncertainty whether Slovak Roma should be *assimilated, integrated* into society or *segregated* from the majority population. This question, moreover, should be answered by both the majority population and Roma. Too many pro-Roma programs are failing because they are aimed at integration, procedures are assimilating, and in long-term results they lead to the segregation. Roma themselves are far from reaching consensus about the form of coexistence as well, balancing between assimilation and integration. One phenomenon of recent years is the radicalization of Romani politics - some Romani leaders are pursuing the creation of separate Romani political, social, and economic structures.

The present cohabitation of Roma and majority population could be increasingly characterized as a living next to each other but not together.



Moreover, the Romani community is strongly differentiated from within. It includes a number of culturally diversified and disassociated complex groups. This complicates the understanding of the Romani situation both within that community and also outside of it. The most important classification is the fixed system of Romani sub-ethnic groups. Roma are also distinguished by the language and dialects that they use. Roma are strongly differentiated by their rural and urban environments and by regional associations².

■ Secondly, due to the conflict atmosphere in the country and demographic trends, the Romani question sounds also as follows: "Are the majority population and Roma prepared and able to share one territory in the future?" The high birth rate of the Romani population represents the most serious threat to the coexistence of the majority and the Roma populations in Slovakia. The situation is getting dangerous, since this is a way of reproducing poverty in Slovakia and creating the preconditions for ethnic segregation. Linkage between ethnicity and the adherence to a class with the lowest social status can potentially lead to serious social conflicts (Vašečka, 1999).

A third important "Romani question" that could be raised is whether the Romani minority character is still dominantly an ethnic one. Also due to the process of disappearance of the Romani national identity, the Roma have become a special social minority overlapping with the underclass rather than a national or ethnic minority. The main characteristics of an underclass are long-term unemployment, fragmented working carrier, and permanent enforcement only on the secondary job market, dependency on the benefits of the welfare state or on informal economy activities³.

The "underclass" environment is understood as an anomic in relation with the majority environment and could be characterized by resignation, low respect toward authorities, low social control, and dependency on social benefits. Typical phenomena of the underclass environment are crime and drugs, pregnancy of teens, unstable family relations, poverty handed down by generations, and marginalization. That leads to apathy and alienation. All previous definitions of underclass perfectly fit into the situation of Roma in Slovakia. Roma fulfil the criteria of an underclass also by long-term dependency on state institutions and regulating their life according to social benefits (e.g. an artificial rise in the birth rate). Although the whole discussion on underclass is often criticized as an ideological one, it is very vital to start to discuss the Romani situation in Central European countries also from this point of view.

■ Finally, the most provocative "Romani question" in Slovakia, connected with the previous one is: "Is the Romani problem going to be solved at all in the future?" The question is connected with the following factors:

² Vašečka, Michal: Romanies in Slovakia on the Eve of the Millennium - A Social or an Ethnic Problem? In: *South-East Europe Review for Labor and Social Affairs*. Dusseldorf, Hans-Böckler Foundation 1/1999a, p.47 - 53.

³ Massey, S.D. - Denton, A.N.: *American Apartheid. Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1993.



- Lack of will of the majority population to solve the Romani problem.
- The separation of the Romani minority from its historical roots and its transformation into a marginalized, and in some respects unadaptable, community.
- There are examples from all around the world that attempts to integrate some minorities has been failing because of dramatically different national habits, clash of civilization patterns, and previous bad policies (Native Americans in the USA and in Mexico, Maoris in New Zealand, etc.).

The Romani Issue and Prospects for Slovak Membership in the European Union

Despite all problems of the Romani minority in Slovakia, Slovak politicians do not have Roma as a top priority, and advocacy of Roma might even be self-disqualifying in political discourse. The Romani problem has, however, increasingly been discussed in Slovakia in connection with the European integration process.

For most Slovak policy makers the Romani problem is becoming an inevitable issue that should be solved on Slovakia's way into the EU. The role of the EU in helping Slovaks to answer the Romani question is therefore becoming crucial. The EU should put pressure on Slovakia to apply policies that will improve the status of Roma in Slovakia. At the same time, the European Union and its member states should accept the problems of the Roma as a common European problem. For the sake of Roma, the "Romani question" must not be allowed to become an obstacle to enlargement. The reactions of some EU member states on the emigration of Roma from several Central European countries was to reimpose a visa regime on these countries. Slovakia has been affected by these developments quite dramatically having recently a visa regime with four EU member states and others threatening to follow. Misunderstandings and the inability to handle "waves of Romani migration" from Slovakia to the EU member states directly resulted in increasing popular hostility toward Roma in Slovakia.

The Romani exodus began in 1997 when Roma started trying to emigrate to the Great Britain. A spokesman for the Interior Ministry of the Slovak Republic stated in 1998 that the reasons for the Romani migration to the Great Britain were economic, not ethnic. According to the spokesman, the émigrés were wealthy money-users who have taken advantage of ordinary Roma and have connections with law offices in London. Roma in turn, claim to be fleeing the systematic persecution of Roma in Slovakia. However, the problem was from the beginning more complicated than that. With a certain level of simplification, the situation could be described as follows: Several Romani families with quite serious reasons for applying for asylum were followed by Roma looking for improvement in their standard of living. In April 1998 the British authorities issued asylum for six Roma from Slovakia. In response to the large Roma exodus from Slovakia on October 10 1998, the British government initiated the visa obligation for citizens of the Slovak Republic.

During June 1999 more than one thousand Slovak Roma requested asylum in Fin-



land. From July to December 1999, Finland presided over the European Union, and Slovak diplomacy with Finland focused on the December 1999 summit to upgrade Slovakia into the "first group" of countries seeking entrance into the European Union. Therefore, speculations appeared that the political opposition (HZDS) organized Romani immigration to Finland. Besides the political opposition, travel agencies were also accused of being responsible for the Romani exodus to Finland. Vincent Daniel, the governmental plenipotentiary on the Romani issues, stated that the Romani exodus to Finland was connected to the financially lucrative asylum benefits offered by the Finnish government. The Finnish government denied the right of asylum to all of the Romani applicants and fearing another wave of Slovak Roma Finland on July 6, 1999 renewed its visa obligation for Slovak citizens. Meanwhile, the Slovak Roma continued to request asylum in other Scandinavian countries, and therefore on July 26, 1999 Norway took preventive action, requiring a visa obligation for Slovak citizens. Norway was at that time "flooded" by the mass migration of 98 Slovak Roma asylum seekers.

The so-called Romani exodus opened new questions that were not previously discussed between EU representatives and Slovak authorities. Several top political representatives stated that a repeat of the mass exodus of Slovak Roma represents a serious threat to Slovak integration efforts into the European Union. Migrating Roma helped to raise awareness in the Slovak government of the need to take action to improve the conditions of life of the Roma. Meantime, the EU representatives understood to certain level, that it has to be recognized that the Roma will move westwards, and the EU needs to prepare for this both by educating western public opinion, and by improving the implementation of the EU's commitment to minority rights in all member-states⁴. The Romani exodus showed also the level of ignorance about the Romani issues on the side of representatives of EU state-members, the need to change the asylum policies of particular member states, and the necessity to understand the Roma problem as a European issue. Most importantly, the crisis connected with the migration of Roma opened the question whether international documents and treaties reflect specific problems of the Romani minority in Central and Eastern Europe. The European Union found itself unprepared to face the Romani problem, and some EU officials blamed Slovak authorities for that.

The European Union found itself unprepared to face the Romani problem, and some EU officials blamed Slovak authorities for that.

⁴ Amato, Giuliano - Batt, Judy: *Mobility in an Enlarged European Union*. San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute 1998.



International Documents and Roma

From the historical point of view, the legal protection of national minorities is a relatively new problem on the international scene. The Romani community can be found here only in past two decades. After close examination of all international legal activities in this field, one can find out that there have been numerous attempts to tackle this matter.

International law recognizes the term "national" or "ethnic" minority usually from bilateral or multilateral agreements between states that are trying to solve questions of "their" common national minorities. This is another fact that shows that the international law is in the field of international protection of the Romani minority *sensu stricto* on the European scale, only in its beginning in comparison with matters of other minorities.

If we want to find out if a state deals with the Romani problem in accordance with international documents, we have nowadays at our disposal a large amount of international legally binding documents. Most of these focus on the protection of human rights and were passed a relatively long time ago by:

- The United Nations (there are approximately 25 documents, whereas only 2 of them deal explicitly with Roma and one has so far been ratified);
- The Council of Europe (more than 17 documents and an additional 8 dealing directly with Roma);
- The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The lack of policies of EU countries toward Roma brings the question to what extent the recent legislature of EU and of international organizations reflects the nature, problems, and specificity of the Romani minority. While some documents of the United Nations and the Council of Europe are directly focused on Romani issues, The European Union mentions Roma in its documents only sporadically. Since European integration is the first-rank priority of Slovakia, the lack of clearly defined policies of the EU on European Roma seems to be at least as hot issue as internal Slovak failures in solving the Romani problem.

The European Union

The entry of new members from Central Europe will inevitably confront the richer existing member-states with substantial numbers of new "internal" migrants whose needs and rights may not be adequately met by existing EU legislation, and whose integration may require additional policy measures. There is a particularly compelling reason for the EU to concern itself directly when the rights of such migrants are, or should be, a matter of common concern to all member-states⁵. This applies in particular in the case of

⁵ Amato, Giuliano - Bait, Judy: *Minority Rights and EU Enlargement to the East*. San Domenico di Fiesole, European University Institute 1998.



Roma, who constitute the largest pan-European transnational minority, historically present in all existing member-states and now emerging throughout Central Europe as the most marginalized and disadvantaged minority. The Roma have received less attention from the European Union than autochthonous national minorities of Central Europe because they have lacked the resources of education, political organization, and powerful backing from outside. Romani needs have been ignored precisely because they have not threatened international order, and prejudice against them has been equally strong in both west and east.

The European Union fears the large-scale migration of Roma into member-states and EU authorities want to see Central European states undertake concrete steps to improve the situation of Roma so there will be no impetus for such migrations. The problem, however, is not only the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of life of Roma, but general decline of the standard of living in Central Europe and the income gap between the European Union and Central European countries. In other words the problem will last until the average income in Slovakia will be equal to social benefits for asylum seekers in Finland. Moreover, even after improving the socio-economic conditions of life, Roma might migrate to EU countries because of different, non-economic and traditional reasons.

There are three main dimensions to the accession process and in all of them the Roma issue must be addressed. First is the pre-accession strategy involving certain agreements and Roma issues should be parts of this strategy. Second, there are regular reports, providing information for judging the situation in view of the Copenhagen criteria. Third are the negotiations leading to accession, and among the most difficult ones without any doubts are those concerning migration. Since this chapter has not been opened yet, the EU and Central European countries should discuss these issues, which might become the most serious obstacle for EU enlargement⁶.

The EU dealt with the Romani problem under its former name (the European Community) in a resolution issued by the European Parliament in 1984 and later in 1989 in a resolution issued by the Council of Ministers. At that time the EC dealt with the question of making education accessible also to Romani children. Recent developments clearly show how the protection of Romani minority rights has fallen behind the protection of the rights of other minorities and also behind the protection of other dimensions of human rights. It is therefore not surprising that governmental representatives, human rights activists, and Roma themselves are trying hard, almost hysterically, to catch up with this delay. This is true not only in the case of Slovakia, but also in other Central European countries, where governmental policies oscillate somewhere between passivity and hysterical reactions, despite immense efforts of the United Nations and the Coun-

⁶ *State Policies Toward Romani Communities in Candidate Countries to the EU: Government and Romani Participation in Policy-making*. Brussels, Project on Ethnic Relations 1999.



cil of Europe'. Bearing in mind the lack of policies and ideas on the side of the EU, it is surprising that one of the most vocal critiques toward the Slovak Republic from the European Union has been exactly the governmental attitude toward Roma.

5.2. The United Nations

Documents of the United Nations have recognized the notion of Roma only for a very short time. The first document mentioning the Roma is only from 1992. Documents that are potentially dealing with Roma are issued by the UN Commission for Human Rights. Documents of the UN are with some exceptions of an advisory character, and they are becoming obligatory only after their implementation into the legal system of every country involved.

With the exception of the Resolution 1992/ 65 "The Protection of Roma" no UN documents deal specifically with Roma and Roma are not even mentioned in other UN documents. However, most UN documents do reflect Romani issues indirectly, and the majority of them were accepted by the National Council of the Slovak Republic and have become part of the Slovak legal system. The most important documents indirectly reflecting Romani issues and ratified by the Slovak Republic are as follows:

Name of the Document (Date of adoption by the UN General Assembly)	Signature - Czechoslovakia	Ratification - Czechoslovakia (Slovak Republic)
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (December 12, 1965)	October 7, 1966	December 29, 1966 (May 28, 1993)
Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (November 26, 1968)	May 5, 1969	August 13, 1970 (May 28, 1993)
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (December 19, 1966)	October 7, 1968	December 23, 1975 (May 28, 1993)

⁷ Pospíšil, Milan - Sekyř, Viktor: *Mezinárodní Dokumenty a Romové. (International Documents and Roma) In: Romové v České republice (Roma in the Czech republic). Praha, Socioklub 1999.*



Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (December 10, 1984)	September 8, 1986	July 7, 1987 (May 28, 1993)
Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 20, 1989)	September 30, 1990	January 7, 1991 (May 28, 1993)
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (December 12, 1966)	no	March 12, 1991 (May 28, 1993)
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (July 28, 1951)	no	November 26, 1991 (February 2, 1993)
Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (January 31, 1967)	no	November 26, 1991 (February 2, 1993)

The Council of Europe

It is primarily the Council of Europe that has been recently very active in the field of protection of human rights. However, it is important to note that most of its documents are in fact only recommendations in nature, although - as we know from practice - the accordance with these obligations is usually very closely watched and state services have been recently negatively overwhelmed by the interest of various international organizations. In 1993 the European Council codified its approach "the Roma as a European minority" that is attempting to recognize Europe as a "mother" territory of the Romani ethnic minority.

The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) is without any doubts the most important convention of the Council of Europe. The convention has been used as a building stone for all European international and internal norms. *The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995) is historically the first document that is primarily focused on the protection of ethnic and national minorities. Although it is the most advanced tool of international law, the convention does not address Romani issues. Due to the specificity of the Romani minority this gap could bring many conflict situations in the future. One example can be the right to use one's mother tongue in the process of education, which is far from being welcomed by all Roma and may not be implemented by all of them. Other important treaties of the Council of Europe are mentioned below:



Name of the Treaty	Accepted by the Council of Europe	Slovak Republic
Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms	November 4, 1950	Ratification - March 3, 1992
European Social Charter including 3 Additional Protocols	October 18, 1961 (revised May 3, 1996)	Ratification - June 6, 1998
European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	November 26, 1987	Ratification - May 11, 1994
Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	February 1, 1995	Ratification - September 14, 1995
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages	November 5, 1992	not signed

The other sets of documents of the Council of Europe are documents of the Committee of Ministers. Three older ones have been dealing with western European Roma issues and nowadays do not reflect the needs and problems of the Roma from the Central European countries. Recently, the Committee of Ministers has been active mostly in the „battle“ against racism, xenophobia, and intolerance.

Documents (Committee of Ministers)	Date of Acceptation	Comment
Recommendation No. 563/69	1969	
Resolution No. 13/75	May 22, 1975	
Recommendation No. 1/83	February 22, 1983	on stateless nomads and nomads of undetermined nationality
Recommendation No. 10/92	May 21, 1992	on the implementation of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities



Recommendation No. 20/97	October 30, 1997	on „Hate Speech“
Recommendation No. 14/97	September 30, 1997	on the establishment of independent national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights
Act No. 10/97	September 17, 1997	
Decision on signature of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages	November 5, 1992	
Acceptation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	February 1, 1995	
Declaration on continuing of the European Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Intolerance	May 3, 1996	

Documents accepted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe create the political framework for internal legal systems of the member states of the Council of Europe. *Recommendation No. 1201* defines national minority rights and brings the definition of a national minority that is key for definitions in all member states. *Recommendation No. 1203* aims directly on Roma and therefore is among the most important documents of the Council of Europe from the Romani perspective. The document reflects five areas of interests that answer many questions concerning the eventual discrimination of Roma:

- Education
- Culture
- Delivering of Information
- Everyday Life
- General measures

Documents (Parliamentary Assembly)	Date of Acceptation
Recommendation No. 1134 on the Rights of Minorities	1990
Recommendation No. 1201 on Additional Protocol on the Rights of Minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights	February 1, 1993



Recommendation No. 1203 on Gypsies in Europe	February 2, 1993
Recommendation No. 1275 on fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance	June 28, 1995

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is perhaps the second leading institution after the Council of Europe, in the question of national and ethnic minorities. From the variety of their documents that deal with this problem, it is in the first place the Final Act from Helsinki, signed on August 1, 1975. The rights of national minorities are more emphasized in the Vienna document, signed after the conference in Vienna in January 1989. The Vienna document states that minorities deserve a special protection, because of their distinct identity. However, so far the most concrete document was signed in Copenhagen in 1990, where the chapter IV lists the basic principles of the human rights protection. Another meeting in Copenhagen in 1991 expressed dissatisfaction with an increase of racial, ethnic, and religious violence and special problems of Roma were also recognized. Since then, Roma are also included in documents from the meeting in Moscow in 1991, chapter IV, and article 2.2. The OSCE in the framework of ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) opened in 1994 so-called Contact Office for the Questions of Roma and Sinti.

Roma as a Pan-European Issue

Only at the end of second millenium is Europe as a whole recognizing that the Romani nation is living all around the Europe and therefore the solution of the Roma problem must be based on pan-European responsibility. Problems that the Romani minority is facing in European countries are very similar. The size of the Romani population in Europe is currently estimated at roughly 8 million, of whom about 70% live in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Numbers in the Central and Eastern European applicant countries differ and are the result of historical developments in particular applicant countries^{*}:

■ Romania	1,800-2,800,000
■ Bulgaria	700-800,000
■ Hungary	550-600,000
■ Slovakia	480-520,000

^{*} Batt, Judy: *Memorandum of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Implications for the EU*. University of Birmingham 1999.



■ Czech Republic	250-300,000
■ Poland	50-60,000
■ Slovenia	8-10,000
■ Lithuania	4-4,000
■ Latvia	2-3,000
■ Estonia	1-1,500

The Roma are not culturally homogeneous. Roma have survived by fragmentation and adaptation to the varied opportunities offered by their host societies. Most Roma in Central Europe are no longer nomadic. Roma constitute the largest group of "losers" in the transition from communism, having experienced a dramatic deterioration in their socio-economic conditions of life, personal security and human and minority rights. Roma have long suffered from serious disadvantages in access to employment, education, adequate housing and health provision.

Under communism, Romani traditions of self-employment and small-scale craft industries were outlawed. Laws against "social parasitism" drove Roma into low-skilled jobs in large-scale industries, which since 1989 have been the most vulnerable to closure. Romani unemployment is exceptionally high, possibly reaching 70-90 per cent. Poverty is now acute.

Access to education was promoted under communism, but was also flawed by the lack of provision for Romani-speaking children. While other minorities often enjoyed education in their mother tongue, this was not provided for Roma, and in many Central European countries Romani children were consigned to "special schools" for the mentally retarded.

Under communism, the nomadic way of life was outlawed, but enforced settlement led to problems. Priority allocation of scarce housing to Roma led to increased resentment from the majority population, who were also suffering from the general housing shortage. Roma tended to group together in on the outskirts of cities, in the worst conditions.

Life expectancy is much lower than in the majority population and problems of the state health and welfare services in many CEE countries has exacerbated the problem. The Roma have a high birthrate, but infant mortality is exceptionally high. Romani women in some countries have been reluctant to deliver their babies in hospital on account of fears of involuntary sterilization pursued at certain times in the past. Poverty and bad housing account for the high incidence of respiratory diseases, rheumatism, digestive illnesses and malnutrition.

Roma have been persecuted for centuries in Europe. The communist authorities

Roma constitute the largest group of 'losers' in the transition from communism, having experienced a dramatic deterioration in their socio-economic conditions of life, personal security and human and minority rights.



attempted to deal with this chronically marginalized group by social programs aiming at assimilation, and denied their existence as a distinctive ethnic minority culture. Roma cultural organizations were not permitted, as they were usually for other minorities. Since 1989, however, there has been a burgeoning of Roma political activity, with the formation of numerous groups seeking to assert Romani identity and promote Romani rights. But the results of Romani self-organization and political activity have been limited. An important obstacle has been the slow response of Central European authorities, the low priority accorded to Romani issues and lack of resources available in a time of general budgetary stringency. Government and official reluctance reflects the wider political context, where the Roma cause hostility among the majority of voters.

The new free press in post-communist Europe has done much to increase information about the scale of the problems Roma face. But the media have not avoided the temptations of tabloid-style sensationalism, and some newspapers, and, less often, TV channels have contributed to reinforcing popular prejudice by uncritically relaying stories of crime and murder with a distorted racial slant.

There is the persistent lack of adequate protection of the legal rights of the Roma themselves. The authorities frequently deny an anti-Roma racist dimension to acts of violence against Romani persons and property. There is a marked lack of success in bringing to court, and securing conviction of, perpetrators of even the most flagrant outrages suffered by Roma. In some cases, Romani victims have found themselves blamed for causing an affray, and have even been charged with the offenses of which they were the victims, rather than their attackers.

Ten Recommendations for the European Union

■ The EU and its member-states have to accept the problems of the Roma as a common European problem. Improvement in the situation will cost money, and will require sustained efforts over many years to change attitudes. The problem will not be "solved" within the expected time of completion of accession negotiations with the Central European applicants, and it could therefore complicate the accession process. But the Roma issue must not be allowed to become an obstacle to enlargement. Therefore, EU countries should coordinate their asylum policies.

■ The EU should commit substantial resources to a common strategic program. The basic aims should be to secure the human and minority rights of Roma, their equal social and economic opportunities, and their integration into society on the basis of toleration and respect for diversity.

■ EU pressure on the Slovak government should be maintained, but should be set in the context of partnership and the offer of financial and other forms of support. EU funding should be increased for training in anti-racism and multi-cultural policing. Training programs for the police seems to be extremely important in short-term perspective.

■ The provision of special funding to support Roma communities must not be allowed to become a further source of resentment on the part of the majority communi-



ties. Efforts and initiatives on the part of majority communities to build links with their Roma neighbors need to be given prominent recognition and rewards.

■ EU member-states' public officials have a lot to learn about the efforts already under way in Central Europe to improve the Romani situation. The care should be taken that mutual exchanges do not reinforce shared stereotypes of Roma.

■ More, and more reliable, information is needed on the Roma and their problems in Central and Eastern Europe. Greater information should be made available to the general public in Western Europe about the Roma issue in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as about the conditions of Roma in EU member-states.

■ There is a need to support access to education for Roma children. Experimental initiatives for a special year of pre-school education to socialize children into the school environment and to improve their knowledge of the majority language, which they will need at primary school, have been found to be effective in Slovakia. Additional Roma teaching assistants to work with teachers in mixed classes have also proved useful. EU funding should support the additional costs of such educational initiatives in Slovakia. Sharing experiences of EU experts in the field of social work with children from the disadvantaged environments would be greatly appreciated.

■ There is a pressing need to support the formation of effective Roma political elite. The probability of implementation of the measures of affirmative action in Slovakia are close to zero, therefore some kind of affirmative action for Roma students could be implemented on a larger, European scale. This could be done by means of special EU-funded scholarships for higher education of Roma students especially in law, education, and business studies, which would include opportunities for a semester or year abroad in a west European university.

■ Roma entrepreneurs have often proved effective organizers of support for their communities, and have enjoyed more credibility and authority as leaders than self-appointed Roma intellectual politicians. The EU should support Associations of Roma Businessmen in Slovakia, and should consult them when planning social and economic programs for their communities. EU programs to support the development of small businesses should include special consideration of this wider role of Roma entrepreneurs in their communities.

■ Increasing numbers of Roma communities live in sub-human conditions in shantytowns comparable to those found in some of the Third World countries. Special projects are needed for the reconstruction of settlements by providing appropriate materials free of charge for communities to reconstruct their settlements, with the provision of water supplies and sanitation. Western experts with experience of similar projects could assist the planning and execution of such projects in developing countries. ■



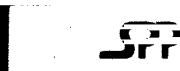
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Reviews

Ownership Reform and Corporate Governance (the Slovak Privatization Process in 1990 - 1996).

By Mikael Olsson. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1999.

This extensive study was written by one of the best European experts in the problems in economic and political transformation of Central Europe. The book was published in the prestigious series ACTA UNIVERSITATIS UPSALIENSIS - Uppsala Studies in Economic history at the end of 1999. The author worked on the study for several years and spent many study stays in Slovakia. At the time he was beginning his work, he did not know that untransparent and politically motivated privatization methods were to belong to the main rebukes the EU were to have towards the Slovak Republic.

Since 1989, there has been a period of rapid change of the economies of the former Eastern bloc, including the privatization of formerly state-owned enterprises. This process developed differently in different countries, depending among other things on their historical traditions and the momentum of their social, political and economic transformation. The ownership reform has represented not only a crucial change in the economic life of the former communist countries, but has also created a dangerous basis for potential social unrest. In societies used to a strong equalization in terms of property, there appeared the phenomenon of a sharp distinction between very poor and very rich citizens. Within a few years, the majority of the formerly centrally administered countries had begun restructuring their economic sys-

tems. The book examines the privatization of large-scale industrial enterprises in Slovakia prior to 1997. The author has covered the politico-economic transformation in Slovakia in the crucial period 1990 - 1996. This means that it includes the years of furious and mass privatization run along "clientelist" political party lines in the years 1995 - 1996. The development of the ownership reform and privatization has been set within the broad framework of hardly controllable economic transformation in the post-communist countries of Central Europe. In the Slovak environment, the book analyses the changing political and institutional basis governing the process and method of privatization; and how the governance of firms was affected by the new markets and ownership- and control-structures that were established. Special attention is paid to the role played by investment funds and investment companies established as a consequence of voucher privatization. The research problem is approached both from an aggregate national level and from the enterprise level. The book includes a number of case studies of enterprises in Slovakia that underwent privatization, and of investment funds that emerged to take part in the process. In addition, two panel-data sets were constructed for the sake of statistical analysis.

The study points to the drastic changes in privatization policy and its enactment,

under different governments. It leads to the conclusion that privatization is a highly political process, whose economic effects cannot be separated from its "distributional" effects. This political nature of ownership reform is shown to have some negative side-effects with regard to the development of well-functioning governance structures. It is, for example, pointed out that the capital market, as it developed during the period of study, was highly non-transparent, characterized by high transaction costs and insider-trading. The study also documents an increasingly concentrated ownership structure of Slovak industry and relates it to the changes in privatization policy. In the final analysis attention is drawn to a recurring theme in the study, namely the issues related to the relative stability and durability of the institutional set up. In many cases an insecurity about "the rules of the game" led to strong opportunistic behavior by the economic and political agents.

As the author states, the overall aim of the study can be concluded in two distinct although inter-related questions. These were, first, to analyze how privatization in Slovakia was achieved; and second, to look at what structures emerged for corporate governance. This led the inquiry into two themes of analysis, the first of which was an analysis of the actual process of ownership reform in Slovakia. The theme focused on issues such as: what methods were chosen for privatization; what goals were connected to the process; if, and in that case by whom and for what reasons, were the methods changed during the course of privatization? The second theme of inquiry focused more on the results and implications of the processes of ownership

reform and privatization. The questions asked were quantitative as well as qualitative in nature. On the quantitative side it was, for example, deemed critical to establish both the extent of the process and who was to become the main owners. Equally interesting, on a more qualitative level however, was to establish what structures, institutions and mechanisms that emerged for corporate governance. An integral part of the book was to look at the consecutive changes in ownership structure, trying to identify possible trends in development. These questions, in turn, led to three areas of research. The first concerned the role of the institutional investors, where it was asked what role the newly established investment funds came to play in governance. The second area focused more on the interaction between ownership reform/ privatization and institution-building. It was, for example, asked to what extent the nascent capital market could fulfill the type of tasks normally associated with its existence. It was also asked what role the investment funds had come to play for the development of the market. The third area of study, finally, focused on the actual extension of ownership.

Privatization in Slovakia proceeded according to three different avenues, i.e. small-scale privatization, restitution and large-scale privatization. In comparison, however, the latter must be considered the main vehicle for ownership reform. The process of large-scale privatization was officially divided into two "waves". The first wave initially was to include 751 state-owned enterprises (SOEs), a figure later lowered to 678 SOEs. This wave was officially completed by October 1993. The second wave, which started in 1992, ini-





tially included more than 1,000 enterprises with an estimated book value of 260 billion of Slovak koruna (Sk), which made \$9.2 bn. Together these two waves thus set to embrace firms making up some 80 per cent of the value of all state enterprises - excluded were originally only "strategic" enterprises like railways, post and telecom. The amount of property for the second wave was, however, gradually diminished, and in the end included 610 SOEs with a book value of Sk 137 billion (\$4.5 bn). Thus, altogether 1,288 SOEs with a book value of Sk 306 billion entered privatization during the two waves. Formally, the second wave was deemed completed by the end of 1996 by the Ministry of Privatization. This, however, was only a model scheme. The analysis of the privatization process made it possible for the author to divide the process into four rather distinct phases, rather than the official two waves. These phases largely "coincided" with the four different ruling coalitions in Slovakia during the period of study:

1. 1990 - 1992: The author titled this period as *federally co-ordinated mass privatization and the emergence of investment funds*. The dominant method during this period was the non-standard voucher scheme, which ultimately was directed by the Federal Ministry of Finance and the then Minister of Finance, Václav Klaus. In Slovakia, the liberal Minister of Privatization, Ivan Mikloš, helped to push the scheme to a successful conclusion. In all, some 500 Slovak firms with a total book value of Sk 90 billion were privatized in this way. In addition, the Slovak government under Prime Minister Ján Čarnogurský approved 181 direct sales and eight public tenders, with a total book value of Sk 11.7 billion.

The study argues that although the privatization was initiated by the federal government, the whole process proceeded in a highly decentralized way. This phase resulted in a general surprise: it was investment funds and investment companies that appeared as the winners. In total they attracted some 70 per cent of the bidding capital in the form of voucher points - something which destined them to a far more important role in corporate governance than initially foreseen.

2. 1992 - 1994: This phase has been entitled as *new policies - testing the ground*. The elections in June 1992 proved to be a turning point in the political and economic transformation of Slovakia. The Slovak Prime Minister Mečiar, who was appointed for the second time as Prime Minister, lost his fight for the preservation of a common Czechoslovak state. As a consequence of the different view of economic reform the Czechs pressed upon Slovakia to secede. This, in effect, meant that the new Slovak government was given the chance to pursue its own policies with regard to privatization. Nevertheless, despite the negative attitude of Mečiar and his ruling HZDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) toward voucher privatization, the first wave was brought to a close - not least since it had already been launched prior to the elections. Due to a serious split in the government concerning the continuation of the voucher privatization, the Prime Minister Mečiar dismissed the Minister of Privatization Dolgoš and, practically, had appointed himself both as acting Minister of Privatization as well as head of the Fund of National Property (Fond národného majetku - FNM). From late 1993 privatization started to gain pace, with the domi-

nant method being sell-offs to incumbent management and other domestic industrial groups, often at prices well below market prices. In total, property with a book value of Sk 21.9 billion (\$722 mn) was cleared for privatization in 77 privatization-related decisions. Of the total volume of property cleared, only Sk 1.4 billion (\$46 mn) had been allotted to voucher privatization and it became clear that the voucher method, definitely, was abandoned by HZDS.

3. 1994: The third phase in the Slovak privatization policy is linked to the interim government led by the former Foreign Minister Jozef Moravčík during the six months in 1994, following the parliamentary overthrow of the Prime Minister Mečiar. Mikael Olsson has titled this phase as the *Moravčík interim*. This phase was characterized by the efforts of the right-left coalition to make privatization a top priority to revive economic reform in general. The compromise, which was reached implied that the interim government set out to increase transparency in the use of standard methods (direct sales) as well as to speed up the process by means of reviving the voucher scheme - the latter in order to appease the international community in the form of the IMF and the World Bank. The population, however, reinstalled Mečiar as Prime Minister for the third time in the parliamentary elections in the fall of 1994

despite the fact that 3.4 million citizens were possessing voucher "booklets" and despite the fact that the HZDS's position of voucher privatization was well known.

4. 1994 - 1996: this phase has been called as *the new policies enacted*. The period concerned was a sad end of a privatization scheme that had been intended to lead to prosperity. This time the government was intent on letting nobody stop their ambitions to sell industries to their close political allies. The winter of 1994/1995 indeed proved to be a defining time with regard to ownership reform in Slovakia. The Ministry of Privatization, for example, was stripped of its powers in the privatization process. These powers were transferred to the FNM where the government had installed their own people. This served to severely curtail transparency, especially since knowledge of FNM's actions was minimized for opposition MPs. Many previous sales had started to be annulled on the grounds of corruption and illegality. The government awaited the stabilization of its position and abolished voucher privatization in June 1995 for good. Another part of state property could be allocated to political partisans.

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Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – And After.

By Richard Crampton. London: Routledge, 1997.

The title of this book may lead you to believe that it sets out to predict the future of an often unpredictable region. "After" the twentieth century? With volatile situations in places like Serbia, we do not even know how and where "Eastern Europe" will end the twentieth century. Or do we?

In the preface to the second edition of this book, R.J. Crampton explains that, by the definitions laid down in the preface of the first edition in 1994, neither the "twentieth century" nor "Eastern Europe" exists any more. Crampton argues that the twentieth century was the age of collectivist ideologies rising up to seize control of the state, using a sense of historical destiny to pit race against race or class against class to shape a new society. He writes, of course, of fascism and communism, the two "isms" that have dominated the history of the region in the modern era, as opposed to the liberalism and individualism which have molded Western Europe since 1789. If these two ideologies, communism and fascism, defined the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, then with the demise of communism in 1989-1991, the twentieth century ended.

Meanwhile "Eastern Europe", for the purposes of this book, is a political construct, not a geographic one. As opposed to the many names old and new, politically correct and incorrect, which have been offered – Central Europe, East-Central Europe, Central and South-East Europe, *Mitteleuropa*, *Zwischeneuropa*, *Středná Evropa* – Eastern Europe is in Crampton's definition simply those countries of Europe that were dominated by the Soviet Union or by other communist regimes since 1945.

In other words, Eastern Europe is those countries that suffered the longest under the twentieth century as Crampton defines it.

Despite this definition bounded by the communist era, however, this work does take the distance to peer over the "wall" of 1945 to note that Eastern Europe's recent history is not merely a function of the imposition of communist regimes after 1945. With some distance from 1989, Crampton argues, we can see that the wall represents not a break, but an interruption, in the history of Eastern Europe. The developments since the fall of communism, particularly the rise of violent nationalism, illustrate that far too well. The "wall" of the communist era could divert the path of Eastern Europe's history, but could not stop its previous course altogether.

After a thumbnail sketch of Eastern Europe before the twentieth century, Crampton gives us the history of the century in a format equivalent to the ages of man: the infancy of fascism and communism in the early interwar period, adolescence (as the two "isms" started to feel their strength) until 1939, horrific maturity from the war's outbreak to the end of high Stalinism in 1953, an introspective middle age extending until the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968, and an increasingly feeble old age until 1980. After the "cardiac arrest" of Solidarity, he argues, the system was "all senility", just waiting to die. (This is of course with the benefit of hindsight: Crampton did predict in 1987, after all, in his *Short History of Bulgaria* that the political situation in the country did not appear likely to change any time in the near future.)



In *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*, Crampton offers more than just a narrative history, though in this task the book does perform admirably. His insights into the interwar period are both detailed and insightful, as when he looks at the infancy of political party systems in each country, or the border problems of Teschen, Ruthenia, the Sudetenland, and others. Later in the book, his analysis of the crises of 1956, 1968, and 1980, while providing no new or adventure-some interpretations, traces clearly, and sometimes passionately, the steadily declining legitimacy of communism in the region.

Another notable aspect of the book is the treatment of the question of nationalities in Eastern Europe. As he points out, the twentieth century began and ended with the breakup of multinational empires in the region, and national questions have played a huge role in the century's developments. To the general Western reader, however, many of the places and groups he describes are completely unknown: "Who or what," he asks rhetorically in the preface, "are the Gagauze or the Vlachs?" Crampton answers these questions, and many similar ones, but he often assumes too much geographical knowledge on the part of the general reader: Bukovina, Vojvodina, Rumelia, Bessarabia, and Wallachia are not commonly known to the British or American student, and the five black-and-white maps in the book are not nearly enough to illustrate the many border shifts, irredentia, and enclaves which make Eastern Europe Eastern European. (It is as if he wrote this book to force you to buy his 1997 *Atlas of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*.)

Crampton does an admirable job of keeping his eye on the nationalities issue. He never forgets the tension binding to-

gether states like the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, or the massive minority issues faced by Romania and Bulgaria. He is always keen to explore the national/ethnic aspect of an otherwise oft-told story: for example, the role of the Slovak question in the Prague Spring, or the Hungarian-Transylvanian origins of Ceausescu's plummet from power in late 1989. Readers new to the region will perhaps learn much more about the various nationalities than they expected, and in Crampton's Herculean efforts to be fair to everyone, he gives more time than a general text for Western readers might warrant, for instance, to the question of Ruthenia.

Crampton also dedicates more time to the lesser known countries of the region than do other texts on the subject. Most Cold War era authors spent the majority of their effort looking at the "Central European" states seemingly at the crux of the battle between western democracy and communism, i.e. East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, while recent works have looked more closely at Yugoslavia and Romania, given the violence that accompanied the fall of communism in those countries. But as an expert on Bulgaria, Crampton gives this country, as well as Albania, more attention than they normally receive in general texts. This is particularly true in the first half of the book, dealing with the pre-1939 period; afterwards, Crampton focuses more on the Central European nations, which were, in fact, the scene of the flashpoints in the battle of ideologies. All through the book, the shift between straight narration of the passage of events in every country at every time, and the more florid passages accompanying the more dramatic periods, is somewhat jarring.

In fact, this point is emblematic of the



whole book. Crampton does not always seem to know what he wants to do with *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century*. For quite long stretches, the book merely narrates political developments, marking it as little more than an introductory text or reference book for British or American undergraduates. Yet at times, the book is meticulously, sometimes colorfully, and sometimes pointlessly detailed. We find, for example, that there were exactly 51 Ruthenians in the Czechoslovak civil service in 1918, that one of Albania's only profitable pre-1914 exports was tortoiseshell, and that when Prince Milos of Serbia acquired a bed in the nineteenth century, it was only the second in the country. At points like these, Crampton's prose twinkles a bit, and he is clearly trying to provide more than just a record of events – he is trying to engage the imagination of readers both new to, and intimate with, Eastern Europe, trying to evoke the distinctiveness of this region between East and West.

In other words, there is something for every reader here, but every reader will find himself or herself occasionally exasperated with aspects of the book. But in a sense, this is symbolic of any discussion of such a volatile and controversial region as Eastern Europe. No treatment is going to please everyone. If it is great, sweeping themes the reader seeks, the treatments of Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, and Poland 1980-1981 are passionate, but also academically sound accounts of the struggle reform of the Communist dictatorships. Meanwhile, if it is tiny details of land reform (one of Crampton's favorite topics) or local color and anecdote you seek, the chapter "Albania 1918-1939" will not offer any grand interpretations, but it will let you know that in 1919, the only working motor ve-

hicles in the country were three dilapidated Ford trucks left by the allied armies.

After detailing the death throes of the communist systems in Eastern Europe, Crampton offers a quick, impressionistic, and necessarily immediately outdated look at the evolution of the former Eastern European countries since 1989, with a confusing and sudden expansion of the coverage to the European republics of the former Soviet Union. This postscript, though it offers useful coverage of the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, otherwise adds little to the book. It seems to have been added as a justification for printing a second edition of a book that should have ended its story, as Crampton ends his "twentieth century", with the fall of communism.

The contrasts in this book – between quick-moving narration and intricate detail, between straightforward recounting and interpretive forays, between deadpan Keesing's *Record* style and nudge-nudge, wink-wink good storytelling – seem to indicate that Crampton was given one assignment by his publisher, but he clearly wanted to write another book, one making full use of his gift for anecdote, his encyclopedic grasp of facts both useful and lapidary, and his clear understanding of the enduring themes of this complex and sometimes self-contradictory region. In the end, he satisfies either both remits, or neither: *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century* can indeed be read (or rather used) as a student text or a reference book, but the flashes of passion that Crampton shows for his subject reveal that it could have been much more.

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Slovensko 1995. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti.

Global Report on Slovakia. Comprehensive Analyses from 1995 and Trends for 1996.

Slovensko 1996. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1997.

Slovakia 1996-1997. A Global report on the State of Society.

Slovensko 1997. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1998.

Slovensko 1998-1999. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti.

Slovakia 1998-1999. A Global Report on the State of Society.

Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, Sándor Márai Foundation, 1995-1999.

1999 was a year of review. Central European countries assessed a decade of political, economic and social transformation in their societies. A number of comparative studies were published and a lot of conferences addressing the issue of transition were organised. The successes were evaluated and the shortcomings and failures of protagonists of the transition to democracy were reassessed. In summarising the facts and processes that took place in Slovakia over the past ten years, the periodical *Global Report on the State of Slovak Society*, published both in Slovak and English versions, serves as documentary material both for professionals and the general public with an interest in what is happening in Slovakia.

The year 1994 marked a fundamental breakthrough in the post-November history of Slovakia. Following the September 1994 election, a coalition made up of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), the Slovak National Party (SNS) and the Union of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS), with Vladimír Mečiar at the helm, came to power. Because of this government's policy, Slovakia went off the transition course, followed by its neighbours – fellow members of the Visegrad Grouping. The coalition government, which had undemocratic elements, laid the basis for the

policy leading to the isolation of the Slovak Republic very shortly after the election. In order to reflect the state of society objectively and to call attention to the undemocratic methods of the government, editors Martin Bútora and Pēter Hunčík brought together a group of experts who were to write chapters of a yearbook, which was designed to serve as a comprehensive document examining the state of Slovak society in 1995. Experts in domestic politics and foreign policy, economists, lawyers, sociologists and journalists were among the authors. The publication 'Slovensko 1995. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti (Slovakia 1995. A Global Report on the State of Society)' consists of the following 18 separate chapters: the development of internal politics and Slovakia's political scene in 1995, foreign policy, the Slovak-Hungarian Treaty, minorities, legislation, economics, privatisation, agriculture, the environment, the nuclear industry, public health, government social policy and the social situation of the population, science and education, culture, the third sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the media, public opinion, Slovakia's regions, documents and a commentaries on security. Although the publication is, in the real sense of the word, a "pioneer" in this field in Slovakia, its contents also



ne suggests that the editors' aim to provide a complex analysis of the society was achieved. However, the publication aspired to something more - its ambition was to forecast future development. Paraphrasing the words of one of the editors, the Director of the Sándor Márai Foundation, Péter Hunčík, it was not within the authors' power to change the situation, but they played an important part in showing that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark". By publishing the Report in English (*Global Report on Slovakia. The Comprehensive Analyses 1995 and Trends for 1996*) the editors proved that there was a solid alternative base in Slovakia which was opposed to the government in power, and whose representatives strove to provide an objective view of events in society and were capable of producing highly professional materials and facts gathering. Some of the authors were confronted by the then government and were accused of solving Slovak problems abroad. Unsurprisingly, the democratic world was informed of the negative trends, and moreover, the problems covered in the Report were not solved and the situation deteriorated even further. The following months, when the authors' predictions came true, this showed that the editors were right.

The authors of the individual chapters of the *Slovensko 1995* publication constituted the core of the authors of the next issue reporting on the situation in Slovakia in 1996 (*Slovensko 1996. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1997* [Slovakia 1996. A Global Report on the State of Society and Trends for 1997]), published by a new publisher - the Institute for Public Affairs, a non-governmental civic association of specialists in various fields,

which was established in 1996. As the Institute's President, Martin Bútora, explains in the foreword to the *Slovensko 1996*: "We would like to contribute so that those who make political decisions, specialists as well as the general public have due access to information on how various public issues are evaluated in democratic countries....We are convinced that better informed and more educated citizens may also become more active citizens, thus proving themselves a basic pillar of an operating democracy". The establishment of a modern think-tank, and the regular publication of reports on the state of society as one of its activities, are manifested in the more professional nature of the 1996 Report as is seen in its contents as well as graphics. The 1996 Report included new chapters such as the situation of human rights, defence and the armed forces, Churches, culture, and demographic development. The number of authors collaborating on individual chapters increased, for instance three specialists collaborated on the chapter on Foreign Policy, compared to only one in the previous year. The publication was the result of the collaboration of thirty authors and 25 lecturers, contains about 1000 typed pages, 150 tables and almost 60 graphs. At the time it was becoming more and more obvious that Slovakia had dropped out of the Euro-Atlantic integration processes, whereas in 1993 it occupied a secure position alongside its neighbours - the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, the 1996 Global Report on the State of Society (*Slovensko 1996*) offered an unflattering picture. Alternatives, only outlined in the previous report, were more thoroughly elaborated here.

In the period of time between *Sloven-*

sko 1996 and Slovensko 1997, a biannual publication - *Slovakia 1996-1997. A Global Report on the State of Society* - was published. The report covers two years, which were significant for Slovakia with respect to foreign policy priorities and the development of its domestic politics. In this period it was confirmed that Slovakia would belong neither to the group of new NATO members nor to the first group of states with which the EU was to begin accession negotiations. The Global Report provides the reader with no command of Slovak who is interested in events in Slovakia with a considerable amount of meticulously organised facts and accounts of events. Moreover, one of its big assets is that it suggests, or points out the specific trends in Slovakia's transition to democracy. In depth knowledge of the issues, presented exclusively by Slovak scholars, allows a reader with no command of Slovak to get a picture of the specific aspects of Slovakia's transition to democracy. More importantly, the publication of the Global Report highlighted the fact that there was an alternative to official government policy in Slovakia. Only one comment on the contents: foreign readers might have found a concise, informative chronology of events that was not incorporated in the English version helpful.

The Slovak version of the publication *'Slovensko 1997. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti a trendoch na rok 1998* [Slovakia 1997. A Global Report on the State of Society and Trends for 1998] is more comprehensive, structured and richer in content than its two predecessors. It has four sections: internal policy, foreign policy, economics and society. This last section deals with what Martin Bútora called "less visible as-

pects of social life", which, however, are indirectly related to the preceding chapters. This section covers issues such as the media, security, the environment, social policy and many others. In 1997 Slovakia was again on the verge of momentous decisions and events, among which the 1997 parliamentary election was the most important event with respect to the development of domestic politics and foreign policy. The publication *Slovensko 1997*, containing 1400 typed pages, was undoubtedly a source of objective and impartial information for public debate about topical problems in society.

As the title itself suggests, the editors of the latest Global Report - *Slovensko 1998-1999* - continued in the earlier tradition, but made it a biannual. This change was positive as publishing two Reports about the period which, to a large extent, was continuous, considering the events and processes that took place, would have been superfluous. Thus the publication *'Slovensko 1998-1999. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti* [Slovakia 1998-1999. A Global Report on the State of Society] offers a comprehensive analysis of the period "immediately" preceding the 1998 parliamentary election as well as the period after it, including the first election of a new president by direct vote. A question might arise as to why the chronology of events includes only the events of 1998, which also applies to some other chapters (Human and Minority Rights, Public Administration). The basic structure is a copy of the model used for the *Slovensko 1997* Report, but there is also a new section - Selected Issues of Social Development in the Slovak Republic - discussing various issues of social significance. As the Roma issue is growing increasingly, pressing the incorpo-





ration of a chapter on the Roma (in the Slovak as well as in the English version) merits special praise. In addition, the number of specialists who collaborated on the chapters of the 1998-99 Report was the largest in its history. The incorporation of more topics raised the problem of the scope of individual chapters. In our opinion, too much space is devoted to some "new" topics such as sports and the Internet, while foreign policy has less space than in the previous year, in spite of the fact that the period after the 1998 parliamentary election brought a new dimension to Slovak foreign policy. Co-operation with the U.S.A and the countries of Western Europe intensified, and a new dimension was added to the mutual relations between Slovakia and its neighbours. Although these facts are reflected in the Report, in many cases, for instance in the characterisation of bilateral Slovak-Polish and Slovak-Austrian relations the economic aspect is absent (in terms of foreign trade and investment Austria especially is a very important partner for Slovakia). Considering the foreign policy priorities, the space devoted to relations between Slovakia and the most important international and transnational organisations is focused especially on the EU and NATO, but a more thorough characterisation of Slovakia's relations with the United Nations, the OSCE, the Central European Initiative, and Slovakia's participation in the activities of these organisations is also lacking. With respect to the priorities and potential of Slovak foreign policy, the countries or regions chosen for analysis are quite well thought-out, but the omission of countries like Great Britain and France is, in this context, a flaw.

The main problem is inconsistency in

the scholarly style in many passages and the publication as a whole, which is most noticeable in the chapter dealing with foreign policy. Rather than criticism, these comments are meant to be advice, or a contribution to a discussion about possible improvements.

'Slovakia 1998-1999. A Global Report on the State of Society' in English was published six months after the Slovak version. The time lag between the two versions had a positive effect on the topicality of the information included. Selected chapters give an account of the events that took place in September and October 1999, for instance the chapter Public Opinion quotes the results of October 1999 surveys. On the other hand, many chapters, including a study of foreign policy, do not contain up-dated information and are "only" abridged translations of chapters in the *Global Report Slovensko 1998-1999*. Consequently, the topicality of some of the events reported on petered out, and some more topical events are not covered at all. Nevertheless, this Global Report is a comprehensive body of sound analyses of a high professional standard.

Since the publication of the first Global report in 1995 the Global Report has become a source of information for professionals as well as the general public interested in what is happening in Slovak society. As Jacques Rupnik wrote to the editors: "The Global Report has become an essential publication for anyone who deals with Slovakia's development and the problems of transition to democracy." "It is an extraordinary publication which gives an exhaustive and well-balanced overview of developments in the Slovak Republic," says Adam Michnik.



Slovakia was criticised abroad for the fact that very little well-founded information on Slovakia was available. The publishers of the Global Reports have taken concrete action in order to improve this. Quotations from Global Reports used in studies and articles by renowned specialists or journalists prove that they succeed in achieving their goal. The Global Reports

reflect not only the current state of Slovak society but also its development. It is important for Slovakia, and not only with respect to its integration ambitions, that the publication of these reflections continues.

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The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht
By Andrew Moravcsik. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

No serious student of European integration can afford to overlook Andrew Moravcsik's recent volume, *The Choice for Europe*. Indeed, one can hardly ignore a work that so persuasively attacks a large number of popular explanations of why European nations decided to pool and transfer sovereignty to supranational institutions. Moravcsik's top targets include the ideas that European integration was driven by geopolitical considerations and by supranational entrepreneurs from the European Commission. Most of the main arguments of *The Choice for Europe* are not new, but never before have they been presented as consistently and supported as convincingly as in this study. Overall, this is a very sophisticated analysis that greatly enhances our understanding of the theor underpinning European integration.

Although it requires some previous knowledge of the basic outline of the process, the book in question is an excellent starting point for all those interested in learning more about the post-war construction of Europe. Spanning the period from 1955 to 1991, it analyzes five important intergovernmental negotiations that have led to the creation and deepening of the European Community:¹ the Treaties of Rome; the interstate bargaining in the 1960s that resulted with the consolidation of the common market and the establishment of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP); the

negotiations on the coordination of monetary policies in 1970s; the Single European Act (SEA); and the Maastricht Treaty. The author's central claim is that "the broad lines of European integration since 1955 reflect three factors: patterns of commercial advantage, the relative bargaining power of important governments, and the incentives to enhance the credibility of interstate commitments." (p. 3) This answer to the integration puzzle does not represent a single unified theory aspiring to explain the entire integration process. Instead, Moravcsik creates a tripartite theoretical framework that is based on the assumption that every major step in the integration can be disaggregated into three distinct subsequent aspects: national preference formation, intergovernmental negotiations, and institutional implementation. The disaggregation leads Moravcsik to construct the kernel of the analysis as a search for answers to three following questions: First, how do national preferences form and what main preferences did national governments try to achieve in various phases of the integration process? Second, what explains the outcomes of negotiations on the integration between the European governments? Finally, how can we account for the choice of institutions designed for the implementation of the results of the negotiations?

As Moravcsik correctly points out, the disaggregation of the studied process has the advantage of allowing the analyst to clearly distinguish between those explanatory theories that are compliments, and those that are substitutes. And here is the

first major strength of the book: Moravcsik builds his research on generally sound methodological principles, most notably by founding it on a clear theory formulation and explicit theory testing. Moravcsik should also be praised for his endeavor to "normalize" the EC studies. To a large extent, EC studies are even today still an isolated domain, permeated by *ad hoc* explanations and distinctive theories that pay little attention to conventional theories in relevant social sciences. In a sharp contrast to this prevailing trend, Moravcsik skillfully dissolves superficial peculiarities of the integration process and locates his study within the mainstream work in international relations, comparative politics, and international political economy. By doing so, he clears the path for a more systematic growth of our knowledge of the integration. Once we follow Moravcsik's example and cease to treat European integration as a *sui generis* event, we will also be able to use it as another testing ground for a number of general theories within the international relations domain.

Another major strength of *The Choice for Europe* is the exceptional quality of the historical research. The extent and comprehensiveness of the supporting evidence is truly impressive. Moravcsik never advances a claim without backing it by relevant and carefully selected historical data. Adding to the reliability of the conclusions is Moravcsik's explicit preference for hard primary sources (he draws on governmental reports, diaries, records of deliberations of key decision-makers, and an extensive number of interviews conducted by Moravcsik himself) and critical use of secondary sources. Moreover, the author informs the reader whenever the evidence used or

its interpretation might cause any controversy.

Such quality evidence makes a good number of Moravcsik's most interesting claims more easily digestible. Several of them have to do with his downplaying of the importance of geopolitics. Although he does not completely deny the role of geopolitical considerations, among which he includes ideological commitments, he contends that they played at best only a secondary role. On certain occasions, they might have accelerated the integration, as in the case of the Maastricht treaty negotiations in which the German government rapidly moved toward EMU also thanks to its pro-European ideology. Nevertheless, according to Moravcsik, geopolitics appeared to have played an important role only in "exceptional cases." (p. 476) Interestingly, de Gaulle's repeated veto of the British entry was not one of them. Moravcsik claims that de Gaulle did not wish to see Great Britain in the EC because of the low price of British agricultural products: If Britain became a member, France's critical economic interest, CAP, would be significantly endangered.

In another provocative move, through the analysis of each of the five "great bargains", Moravcsik attempts to demonstrate that the conventional wisdom greatly overestimates the role of supranational officials in advancing the integration. A lot of EC scholarship points to the essential role of Delors administration in initiating and managing negotiations on the Single European Act (SEA). However, Moravcsik argues that the influence of the Brussels officials in the SEA negotiations represents an exception rather than the general rule. And even in this exceptional case, the sup-

¹ Since his book does not deal with the period after the ratification of the Maastricht treaty, Moravcsik only uses the term EC.





ranational entrepreneurship "failed to alter the distributional outcomes of the negotiations [although] it may have increased their efficiency." (p. 378) Yes, many of the final proposals approved by the leaders of EC governments were drafted by Delors himself. But Moravcsik correctly points out that, by itself, this fact does not demonstrate anything substantial. On the other hand, we can learn a lot about the role of the EC officials if we compare original proposals first suggested by them with those that were finally approved by EC governments. *The Choice for Europe* convincingly shows that in all five cases these two kinds of proposals exhibited significant discrepancies and even outright oppositions. Rejecting the supranational bargaining theory, Moravcsik claims that the final outcomes of all negotiations reflected asymmetrical interdependence, with those governments standing to lose most from the outcomes winning the largest concessions.

As the problems with the analyses in *The Choice of Europe* have already been discussed by numerous scholars elsewhere, I will limit my criticism to three issues: the restriction of the analysis to three countries, the choice of case samples, and an exaggerated emphasis on the rationality of state behavior. Moravcsik considers preferences and strategies of three major countries only: France, Germany, and Great Britain. The reader might therefore ask: Well, what about the other countries that were also members of the EC? They also exercised significant powers, not least the right of the veto, with which they could alter the outcomes of the intra-EC negotiations. I find this criticism unjustified for at least two reasons. First, Moravcsik never completely ignores the influence of the

smaller members. He pays attention to the ability and tendency of other EC nations to advance their preferences through alliance formation and the practice of credible threats. Even more importantly, this line of criticism is unjustified because it shows misunderstanding of author's methodology. Moravcsik's objective is to test competing theories by comparing their predictions with the actual historic outcomes. By separately considering, on five distinct occasions, the preference formation and negotiation strategies of each of the three countries, Moravcsik creates a sufficient number of small cases studies to test the predictions of competing theories. By paying attention to additional countries, he would increase the case selection and thus also improve the statistical validity of his findings. However, this is barely practically possible, given that the book already contains more than 500 pages. Nevertheless, one could ask whether the cases selection contains enough variation across cases to justify an expectation of divergent findings.

Numerous Moravcsik's critics have argued that his case selection is biased in such a way that makes it more likely to confirm actor-oriented than process based theories. As James Caporaso points out, Moravcsik seems to have a meta-theory of cases that understands a case to be a relatively bounded event or set of events. The origin of this dispute can probably be found in Moravcsik's ambiguous definition of the ultimate objective of his study. After reading the opening sentences of the volume, the reader may be justified in assuming that the objective is to offer and test a theory (or a theoretical framework) explaining the entire process of European

integration. If this is author's objective, then the methodology of the case sample choice is indeed not scientifically sound. It ignores the accumulation of incremental changes, including constitutional changes, that escape the control of EC governments and that have significantly contributed to the deepening of the integration. Such changes often result form the decisions taken by the European Court of Justice or from actions of the European Commission. Yet, as Moravcsik clarifies in *Journal of European Public Policy* (No1, 1999, p. 174), his objective is much more restricted. He only aims to determine "which factors most strongly influence major intergovernmental bargains." In other words, he *a priori* assumes that it is the governments who are responsible for the integration. Once we accept that the author starts with explicit inter-governmentalist bias and only aims to test explanations within the realm of inter-governmentalist theory, we lose most of the ground for attacking his methodology. However, with the analysis thus being situated one level down — to intra-theory testing — it and its results become much less interesting.

Finally, I find Moravcsik's rationalist bias a little strong. Although he explicitly mentions his assumption that "governments" are, *broadly speaking*, rational and instrumental" (p. 5, *italics added*), throughout the entire story he tends to attribute too much rationality to their actions. I agree with Moravcsik in that we should prefer actor-oriented theories in which the actors are seen as pursuing rational strategies to achieve clearly defined goals. Such theories tend to have more explanative content and are better testable than theories

stressing unintended dynamics of broad structural processes. Nevertheless, Moravcsik tries too hard to explain away every anomaly in which the rationalist assumption seem to be contradicted, as for instance with De Gaulle's attitude toward the Fouchet Plan. He sometimes bends the historic evidence too much in order to support rationalist explanations for those governmental actions that seems to clearly sub-optimal or highly idiosyncratic.

All these problems notwithstanding, *The Choice for Europe* is indubitably one of the best analysis of the European integration available. Moravcsik proceeds consistently and systematically to show which factors and ideas played a crucial and which only a marginal role in this process. Even given his inter-governmentalist bias, the picture painted by him is not as static as some of his critics argue. He does not take completely historically isolated "snap-shots" of the integration, but instead paints a historical picture that is at least somewhat continuous. After all, he included in each of the five case studies numerous links to preceding and subsequent events and conditions. And even if in his self-styled revisionist study he does not always completely overturn all the idols that he attacks, he certainly manages to crack a lot of them. The proponents of realist and neo-functional explanations of the integration face a formidable challenge responding to the blows dealt to them by Moravcsik. With this book, the standard for future EC/EU research has been set very high.

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