

## Pluralistic Prospects after Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina



*Voters at a polling station in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

The 1998 General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina were successfully carried out on 12 and 13 September after a period of difficult and laborious preparations. Although these were the fourth OSCE-supervised elections over the last two years, voter participation was 78%, refuting earlier warnings of 'voter fatigue'.

The International Election Observation Mission consisted of representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). Senator Tana de Zulueta of Italy, Vice-

President of the OSCE PA led the OSCE short-term observation mission and issued the preliminary post-election statement, in conjunction with the ODIHR On-Site Co-ordinator, Mr. Mark Power-Stevens.

According to the observations of the international observers, the elections took place in an atmosphere generally free of violence and intimidation: "a testimony to the commitment of the national and international bodies responsible." The Observation Mission noted that many aspects of the 1998 elections represented an improvement on previous years, particularly in the conduct of the media and the quality and general

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IN THIS ISSUE	
• Crisis in Albania	2
• Developments in Kosovo	4
• Regional Environmental Seminar in Central Asia	5
• In Brief	6
• Skrunđa Shut Down	7
• Elections in Slovakia	8
• News from the Field	9
• Report from HCNM	11
• Report of the Representative on Freedom of the Media	12
• Update from ODIHR	13
• Report from PA	15

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conduct of the campaign. However, a number of problems noted during these elections, such as the final voters registers and the process of tendered ballots, need to be addressed. It said that, in the longer term, "the 1998 elections should represent an important step in the further political development of Bosnia and Herzegovina."

The 1998 elections differed from earlier elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina with regard to the more responsible behaviour of most political parties and candidates as well as the media. Both the campaign and the elections took place in a generally calm atmosphere. The responsibility for security during the

campaign and on the election weekend was given to local police forces, who fulfilled their tasks in a wholly satisfactory and professional manner throughout the country and in both entities. No serious problems were reported with the process of voting across the Inter-Entity Boundary Line, when refugees or displaced persons were crossing into another political entity in order to vote in person in their place of origin.

The counting process started immediately after the closing of the polling stations on 13 September. Seven elections had taken place simultaneously: for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency of Republika Srpska, for the House of Representatives of the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation, for the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska, for the cantonal assemblies of the Federation and for the municipal assemblies of 11 newly formed municipalities. The large number of so called "tendered" ballots, which had to be opened, checked and counted by hand, contributed to the protracted counting process.

In order to avoid misleading, premature and contradictory reports, the Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Robert Barry, in his capacity as Chairman of the Provisional Election Committee, decided not to announce preliminary, partial or otherwise incomplete election results.

The final unofficial results were announced on 25 September. Commenting on the results, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek noted that the voters of Bosnia and Herzegovina had "chosen to opt for a more pluralistic political spectrum than was the case before" and that ruling nationalistic parties had lost ground. He stressed, however, that the OSCE and the international community would need to keep up their efforts at developing democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and implementing all aspects of the Dayton Agreement. The Chairman-in-Office reminded the newly elected officials that full co-operation to that effect would be expected from them.

Mr. Geremek congratulated the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina for turning

out in such large numbers and for taking a more active role in managing the electoral process. He said that local election committees, the police forces and the media "showed more responsibility and professionalism than ever before."

The focus now shifts to the installation of elected officials, the post-election period and preparations for municipal elections in 1999. Before these elections are held, the Parliament of Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to adopt a new Permanent Election Law. If this happens, the role of the OSCE could focus more on the medium- to long-term tasks of democratization and strengthening local institutions to enable them to run free and fair elections with only a limited amount of support from the international community. As Ambassador Barry stated in an address to the Permanent Council on 1 October, "the upcoming 1999 municipal elections provide a prime opportunity to use our experience and patience and build upon proven successes in order to establish self-sustaining democratic institutions and principles."

## OSCE Responds to New Crisis in Albania

Throughout September the OSCE was actively involved in finding a solution to the latest crisis in Albania.

Political tension was already simmering at the beginning of the month when protests were called throughout the country in support of six former Democratic Party (DP) functionaries who had been served with arrest warrants on 23 August. Opposition parties, which had

been boycotting parliament, stepped up their pressure on the Government by refusing to participate in an extra-parliamentary round-table for drafting the constitution.

The crisis escalated on 12 September when a Deputy of the Democratic Party (DP), Azem Hajdari, was shot dead in Tirana a few metres away from DP headquarters. The Democratic Party

blamed the Prime Minister, Fatos Nano, for the killing, and violent protests ensued. Rioting, including attacks on government and public buildings, spread through the capital on 13 and 14 September. The Council of Ministers of the Albanian Government described the events as an attempted coup d'état. Order was restored on the night of September 14 when security forces regained control of central government buildings

as well as the State radio and television stations.

The OSCE, particularly through its Presence in Albania, followed the deteriorating situation with great concern. Surrounded by gunfire, the Presence negotiated throughout 13 and 14 September with all parties involved, urging them to join in a political round-table to resolve the crisis and actively discourage violence. The Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Polish Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek, was in contact with Albanian President Rexhap Mejdani, leaders in Albania and colleagues from interested countries. He instructed the Head of the OSCE Presence in Tirana, Ambassador Daan Everts, to continue monitoring the situation closely and to take any action deemed appropriate together with other international institutions and interested countries.

In a statement issued on 14 September, Mr. Geremek strongly condemned recourse to violence and called for an immediate end to it. He appealed to all sides to find a peaceful and political solution to the crisis, in adherence with the legal framework of the country and in co-operation with the President of the Republic.

He recalled the efforts of the international community, and notably of the OSCE, to assist Albania in its search for political solutions, consolidation of stability and economic prosperity. He said that “recent events put in jeopardy this

trend and make it difficult for the continuation of this international commitment.”

Heads of Missions of the European Union, the United States, the OSCE and the Council of Europe issued a joint statement on the same day in which they strongly condemned the use of violence for political ends and said that “the leaders of all political parties must take responsibility for the behaviour of their followers.”



*Chairman-in-Office Geremek (center left) meets with President Mejdani (center right) at the presidential office in Tirana*

Ambassador Everts appealed on behalf of the international community for a peaceful resolution of the stand-off. He was instrumental in convincing the Democratic Party to return two tanks that had been taken by the rioters and stationed in front of the DP Party headquarters.

In response to the violence, the Prosecutor General requested Parliament to lift the immunity of Democratic Party leader Sali Berisha and five other Democratic Party Members of Parliament, leaving open the possibility for their criminal prosecution. This request was approved by a Parliamentary Commission on Mandates, Immunity and Rules of Procedure.

On 19 September a high-level international delegation visited Tirana to call for restraint, to support the search for a political solution, and to warn all sides of the international consequences of their behaviour. The delegation was composed of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Bronislaw Geremek; the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Alternate Foreign Minister of Greece, Giorgos Papan-dreou; the Secretary General of the OSCE, Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona; the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Daniel Tarschys; and other officials of the OSCE and Council of Europe Chairmanships and Secretariats.

The delegation met separately with President Mejdani, Prime Minister Nano and Mr. Berisha. The message delivered to them included the following points: recourse to violent tactics in pursuit

of political objectives is unacceptable; the assassination of Azem Hajdari is unequivocally condemned and the perpetrators should be brought to justice; the Albanian Government needs to intensify its political programme in a number of areas; President Mejdani should continue his efforts to restore political normalcy and stability in the country; and a package of measures should be introduced to strengthen democracy, stability and development. It was stressed that “those who polarize the political climate and hinder the normalization process will be isolated by the international community.” It was also pointed out that “the normalization

of the political climate in Albania is essential for the international community to continue its support for the development of the country.” While understanding the independence of the Albanian judiciary, the delegation pointed to the risks of repressive measures against the opposition. As Mr Geremek noted in a press conference following the meetings, “the place of the opposition is neither in the streets nor in jail; it is in parliament.”

On the occasion of the 53rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the OSCE Troika (Denmark, Poland and Norway) met in New York on 21 September to discuss the situation in Albania and the possible role the international community could play in defusing the political crisis in that country. The OSCE Troika Ministers welcomed the idea of establishing an open-ended group of “Friends of Albania” with wide representation of OSCE and EU countries and organized within the coordinating framework of the OSCE.

This message was reinforced by a joint declaration by the OSCE, the European Union, the Council of Europe and the

Western European Union on 23 September. In it, the international community condemned the Democratic Party for contributing to the violence of the past few months “by its tactics and rhetoric.” It repeated the warning that “the international community will isolate those groups and individuals who continue to polarize the country and undermine democratic institutions” and cautioned the Government to “show more respect for the democratic role and rights of the opposition and not encourage precipitous action that could contribute to further polarization.” It said that “genuine political dialogue has to be restored.” The joint OSCE-Council of Europe mission of 19 September was referred to as the “the first step in concerted international efforts to support and monitor the political process, the consolidation of democratic institutions and rule of law and the rebuilding of the economy.”

The “Friends of Albania” group is seen as the focal point for moving this process forward. The Group held its first meeting, under the chairmanship of the OSCE, in Brussels on 30 September. It brings together, informally, those countries and international organizations active in providing Albania with finan-

cial support, technical assistance and other forms of aid. The goal is to coordinate international assistance and convey a message of coherent support. In a press statement issued after the meeting it was made clear that “the Friends of Albania’s ability to continue to provide high levels of assistance to Albania will be contingent upon a visible, consistent level of commitment by the Government of Albania to move ahead on needed reforms.” The forthcoming Inter-Ministerial Donors Conference will be an opportunity to review the support of the international community to Albania.

The OSCE is continuing to monitor the situation in the country, particularly in the wake of the resignation of Prime Minister Fatos Nano on 28 September and the appointment of his successor, Pandeli Mjako, on 30 September. Many of the mandated activities of the OSCE Presence in Albania directly concern some of the most contentious issues at this juncture, namely assisting with the drafting of a new constitution, observing parliamentary activity, promoting democratization and co-ordinating international response in Albania.

## OSCE Follows Developments in Kosovo

The OSCE continues to closely follow developments in Kosovo. In his regular report to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan of 23 September, OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek informed the UN that although there had been a decrease in military operations, representatives of the international com-

munity in Kosovo noted continued incidents of violence in the province.

Concerning political developments, Mr. Geremek referred to the outline agreement reached between the Kosovo Albanians and the Belgrade authorities. Elements of this agreement were explained to representatives of OSCE par-

ticipating States by the United States Ambassador to Skopje and Peace Envoy to the region, Christopher Hill, when he addressed the Permanent Council on 3 September. However, in his report to the United Nations, Mr. Geremek cautioned that “there is confusion as to just who the Kosovo Albanians making such an agreement represent.”

In her address to the Permanent Council on the same day, United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stated that she foresaw a special role for the OSCE in a possible negotiated settlement on the Kosovo conflict, especially with regard to elections.

The plight of the civilian population is worsening. According to Mr. Geremek, with more than 200,000 people forced from their homes, large-scale destruction of houses, food shortages and the risk of epidemic “the threat of a humanitarian catastrophe is becoming ever more real.” The refugee situation in Albania is being closely monitored by the OSCE Presence in Albania in co-operation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

On 23 September the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on Kosovo (No.1199/98). In a statement issued on 25 September Mr. Geremek welcomed the adoption of what he described as “a strong resolution on Kosovo” and said that he considered the resolution “as an important step which shows to the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to the Kosovar Albanian leadership that the international community is united in its determination to end the violence and assist in finding a political solution to the conflict in Kosovo.”

In the statement, the Chairman-in-Office reiterated the readiness of the OSCE to continue to play its part in this effort and recalled the repeated initiatives undertaken to that end since the

beginning of March. In this context he stressed the constructive role that his Personal Representative to the FRY, Felipe González, would assume by assisting in the democratization process. He also recalled the importance of the return of the OSCE long-term mission, as foreseen during the technical assessment mission conducted by the OSCE in Belgrade and in Kosovo in July, which predicted the upcoming humanitarian catastrophe. He stated that the OSCE would be ready to follow up on the exploratory talks held in July and August with FRY representatives.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office once again strongly urged President Milošević to create conditions for an immediate and meaningful dialogue to seek a political solution to the conflict.

## **Seminar Examines Regional Environmental Problems and Solutions in Central Asia**

The OSCE, in co-operation with the Uzbek government, held a Seminar on “Regional Environmental Problems and Co-operative Approaches to Solving Them” in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from 22 to 24 September.

The seminar brought together high-level government officials of the Central Asian States, a wide variety of NGOs, representatives of the private sector, international organizations, and other interested OSCE participating States.

Keynote speakers stressed the critical state of the environment of the region and the risks to human health and the economy. They noted that the environmental problems that Central Asian

States face today not only represent a threat to the health and safety of people in the entire region, but are also detrimental to the development of Central Asian economies and democratic institutions. Speakers called for greater efforts to increase awareness and to involve the public and NGOs in responding to these problems. They also stressed that common regional problems could best be solved with a co-operative approach.

Special attention was given to nuclear waste management and other environmental problems associated with mining; internal migration as a result of economic/environmental degradation; depletion of forests and arable land in the

region and the impact that this has on climate change and biodiversity; and management of water and energy resources.

Participants laid particular stress on potential economic threats and security risks, such as mass migration, economic decline, increased competition for depleted natural resources, and the effect of the worsened living and working conditions of the peoples of the region, as a result of a continued deterioration of the environmental situation in Central Asia.

While a co-operative approach to solving these grave problems was apparent, so too were problems encountered by States in the region in the articulation

and implementation of such solutions. Nonetheless, it was clear that multinational problems require multinational solutions and that the effectiveness of co-operative multinational strategies in obtaining financial and political support from States outside the region would be reinforced by a cooperative, consultative approach among those States and organizations. Participants welcomed the

emergence of multinational bodies pursuing co-operative approaches within the region and confirmed that such approaches were most likely to succeed.

The Seminar also provided a valuable opportunity for OSCE States outside Central Asia to learn more about this important region and for citizens and governments within the region to learn

more about the OSCE. Representatives of the Central Asia States at the Seminar expressed a desire that the OSCE play a more active role in the region.

The seminar also served as part of the preparations for the next Economic Forum of the OSCE.

## **IN BRIEF**

On 3 September, **United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright** addressed the Permanent Council of the OSCE. She outlined her country's views on Bosnia, Kosovo and the evolving European security architecture. She paid particular attention to the OSCE, which she described as "our institution of choice for defending democracy in Europe." She said that it was "uniquely suited to occupy the middle ground between diplomacy and force" and stressed the importance of its operational activities. She highlighted the need for progress on the Charter on European Security and completion of the adaptation of the CFE Treaty before the Oslo Ministerial.

At the same Permanent Council meeting, **Christopher Hill, United States Ambassador to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and U.S. Special Envoy to the Balkans**, assessed the current situation in and around Kosovo. He said that more humanitarian assistance was vital and that political support was also "of the utmost necessity." He informed the Permanent Council that a new Albanian negotiating team had reached agreement on a basis for negotiation. He also reported on progress in negotiations on democratic institution building, representative government, elections and on the

agreement on self-government for Kosovo. He observed that the road ahead would be difficult due to mistrust and violence and said that success could only be achieved through the negotiations process. He stressed the importance of an international presence in the region to ensure the security of refugees and to assist in the implementation of a political agreement.

A **special meeting of the Permanent Council** was convened on 8 September to allow Ambassador Klingler, Senior Deputy Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, an opportunity to inform members of the Council about, and reply to, the statements made on 6 September by President Tudjman of Croatia and the leadership of the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ). In their statements President Tudjman and the HDZ had attacked the decisions of the Election Appeals Sub-Commission (EASC), which affected the HDZ, calling them unjustified and demanding their reversal. At the conclusion of the meeting the Chairman of the Permanent Council made a statement in which he said the the Chairmanship, "expressing the views of the OSCE States, fully supports the OSCE Mission in BiH and the EASC in its decisions, and calls upon the HDZ to comply with the rules and regulations of the Provisional Election Commission."

# Russian Radar Station in Latvia Shut Down On Schedule

In line with the Agreement between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the Legal Status of the Skrunda Radar Station during its Temporary Operation and Dismantling signed in April 1994, the Russian Federation on 31 August 1998 fulfilled its obligations to switch off the Skrunda radar station in Latvia. Experts from the OSCE, which has been assisting in the implementation of the Agreement, visited the radar station on 3 September to confirm that the radar had been turned off. This brings to an end the period of temporary operation of the radar station and marks the beginning of the dismantling phase.

According to the 1994 Agreement, the Russian Federation was permitted to

operate the radar station until 31 August 1998. Another year and a half is permitted for dismantling the installation until the Agreement expires on 29 February 2000.

In June 1994, Latvia and Russia requested CSCE (today OSCE) assistance in the implementation of the Agreement. A Joint Latvian-Russian Implementation Committee under the chairmanship of the OSCE was established in May 1995. The Agreement was monitored by international inspection teams twice a year, beginning with the initial baseline inspection in August 1995.

The OSCE Representative to the Joint Committee on the Skrunda Radar Station, Colonel Jürgen Hübschen, reports

that “the entire work has been done in a very professional way, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and good spirit.” The Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of this process, which can be regarded as an important confidence-building measure.

The focus is now on dismantling. In an address to a reception at the Russian Embassy in Riga on 4 September, Colonel Hübschen said “I am very optimistic that the coming 18 months – until the Agreement expires – will turn into the continuation of the ‘Skrunda Success Story’.”



*One of the 260 metre long antenna buildings of the Skrunda radar station in Latvia in May 1998 (above) and after the beginning of disassembly in September 1998 (right).*



## OSCE Monitors Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia



*Ms. Helle Degn, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (left in white), Spencer Oliver, Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (far left) and OSCE Election Monitors talk to officials at a polling station in Bratislava.*

In a joint preliminary statement issued on 27 September, the OSCE Parliamentary Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament gave a positive assessment of the Slovak parliamentary elections, which took place on 25 and 26 September. The statement, delivered by Ms. Helle Degn, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, said that “election

days were generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. No serious incidents were reported during the elections, and the voter turnout was very high.” According to the statement; “the election administration worked in an efficient manner, and the polling station commissions managed during the election days to apparently conduct a technically correct election.”

Although the elections were “carried out in an apparently correct and acceptable

manner” some issues did, however, raise “serious concern.” These included bias in the media, restrictions on freedom of the media in campaigning, the organization of the Central Election Commission, changes in the election law concerning coalitions, and restrictions on domestic observers.

This preliminary statement was based on the collective findings of observers, seconded by 31 countries, and by parliamentarians and public officials representing the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. In total, 206 short-term observers and 25 long-term observers and core staff were deployed throughout the Slovak Republic. Mr. Kåre Vollan was the ODIHR’s On-Site Co-ordinator. On election day, observers visited approximately 1,700 polling stations. A detailed analysis of the media was provided by Osservatorio di Pavia, a specialist media-monitoring agency, whose services were seconded by the Italian Government.

The preliminary statement is available from the ODIHR, the Parliamentary Assembly or on the OSCE website. The final election report will be available before the end of October.

### OSCE on the Internet

The OSCE website can be accessed at [www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org). It is a good source of information on all aspects of the OSCE’s work and is particularly useful for the latest press releases, Permanent Council

journals and election reports.

Instead of (or as well as) waiting for the Newsletter to reach you by post, you can check it on-line or have it sent by

e-mail. If you would like to receive the Newsletter automatically by e-mail every month (in English, French, German, Italian, Russian or Spanish), please contact us at [martin@osce.prag.cz](mailto:martin@osce.prag.cz)





## News from the Field

*The OSCE currently has ten Missions in the field as well as the Assistance Group to Chechnya, the Presence in Albania and the Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus. The following are highlights from the work of some of the field operations during the past month.*

### **Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus**

The OSCE Advisory and Monitoring Group (AMG) in Belarus recently met with Government officials to analyse the various projects where expert advice has been asked from the AMG. Relations between the AMG and the Belarusian authorities have been described by both sides as "satisfactory."

Projects on which the AMG has given advice since its deployment in February 1998 include draft laws on local elections, training domestic observers, expert comments on the penal code and penal procedure, recommendations on the draft ombudsman law, human rights training, analysis of mass media and recommendations for more pluralistic structures, and an analysis of the economic situation.

### **More News from Bosnia**

The main focus of the Mission's work in September was on the elections (see page 1), but it also continued activities in a number of other areas. It is monitoring the process of filing claims for socially owned property in the Federation. The deadline for completing this process was recently extended for a further six months by the High Representative in order to ensure that persons with legal occupancy rights would not be denied their properties because of obstruction and the inability of municipi-

ties to facilitate the claims filing process. The OSCE Mission is also looking into complaints from individuals whose private property has been illegally expropriated. On a related issue, the Mission is developing a corps of fifteen community facilitators drawn from civic leaders throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina to organize public meetings on topics of local interest, especially those related to return.

The Free Inter-Ethnic Radio Network (FERN) Follow-up Donors Conference was held in Vienna on 25 September. There was unanimous support for the continuation of Radio FERN and enough firm pledges to keep it running until March 1999.

In September there were a number of inspections pursuant to Article II and Article IV, Annex 1-B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace. Article II concerns confidence- and security-building measures, while Article IV relates to measures for sub-regional arms control. The internationally supervised inspection regime is designed to verify compliance with the Agreement.

### **OSCE and UNHCR Facilitate Return of Refugees to Croatia**

On 17 September, the OSCE and UNHCR Missions in Croatia established a Return Facilitation Group (RFG), an operational structure designed to enhance co-operation and co-ordination in rela-

tion to return issues in a regional context. This structure will allow the international community to interface effectively with the Government in the implementation of the Programme of Return by providing a counterpart to the Commission appointed by the Government in May 1998.

The RFG consists of a central office in Zagreb, which is being co-chaired by the two Missions, with the OSCE having responsibility for political issues and the UNHCR being responsible for the humanitarian and operational aspects of the return process. Three Area Facilitation Groups have been set up in Knin, Sisak and Osijek/Vukovar. These offices will work in co-operation with the authorities on both sides of the border, in Croatia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). They will also develop close links with representatives of local governments, in particular the Office for Displaced Persons and Refugees, the Housing Commission and the Ministry for Reconstruction and Development. In Bosnia, one of the main partners of the RFG will be the Regional Reconstruction and Return Task Forces established by the Office of the High Representative.

Since the adoption of the Government Return Programme in June 1998, there has been a measurable increase in the pace of organized returns to Croatia from the FRY of refugees of Serb ethnicity.

On 10 September, OSCE Mission teams monitored the largest organized return so far, when 174 individuals returned from the FRY to 80 different locations in central Croatia. Recent returns have been predominantly ‘easy cases’, with refugees returning to vacant housing, although many of them have found their houses badly damaged. Returnees continue to face problems with lack of information regarding bureaucratic procedures, inadequate housing and even the prospect of food shortages.

### **Diplomacy on the Dniestr**

On Sunday 27 September the OSCE Mission to Moldova hosted a boat cruise on the Dniestr river. The event, organized by the Mission under the apolitical motto “Good-Bye Summer, Wel-

come to Autumn,” was designed to create an informal atmosphere in which officials from both sides of the river could meet. It was the first time that the Mission could welcome representatives of the new inter-agency structure of the Republic of Moldova which was created to promote the settlement process of the Trans-Dniestrian conflict. The cruise was also designed to give an impetus to the resumption of talks.

The Mission gathered approximately 80 experts and policy makers from both sides of the Dniestr and representatives of the three official mediators (Russia, Ukraine and OSCE) on a boat which cruised for 3 hours along the Dniester river under the OSCE flag (probably the first boat to ever fly the OSCE flag!). The new Chişinău negotiating team

headed by Ambassador Ion Lesanu said that they enjoyed the opportunity of getting acquainted with their Tiraspol counterparts headed by Mr. Valery Litiskai in such an open and informal atmosphere. Media on both sides of the river reported on the event, promoting a new idea for conflict settlement: “cruise diplomacy.”

### **Chairman-in-Office Condemns Assassination of Prominent Tajik Opposition Figure**

On 24 September the Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, issued a statement expressing his deep concern at the assassination of Otohon Latifi, prominent member of the United Tajik Opposition. He strongly condemned this terrorist act “which seriously jeopardizes the peace process in Tajikistan.”

He said that Mr. Latifi, as Head of the Legal Sub-Commission of the National Reconciliation Commission, “played an important role in the preparation of a constitution for Tajikistan.” Mr. Geremek expressed his condolences to the family of Mr. Latifi and said that he hoped that the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

At the same time, he called on the Government and the Opposition to exercise maximum restraint and called upon all parties to continue their efforts to implement the General Peace Agreement.



*The pleasure craft “Nistru” (“Dniester” in Romanian) flying the OSCE flag on its cruise down the Dniester river.*

## **REPORT** from the High Commissioner on National Minorities

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### **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

From 2 to 5 September the High Commissioner paid a visit to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. He was received by President of the Republic Kiro Gligorov. While in Skopje, the High Commissioner had meetings with Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski, Speaker of the Parliament Tito Petkovski, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Blagoj Handziski. He also met with leaders of the major opposition political parties: the Liberal Democratic Party, the VMRO-DPMNE, and the Democratic Alternative. In addition he had a further round of discussions with leaders of the two main parties representing the Albanian community in the Republic: the Party for Democratic Prosperity and Democratic Party of Albanians.

The High Commissioner's discussions focused on regional issues, in the light of recent developments in Kosovo and Albania, and on various aspects of the inter-ethnic situation in the country, with particular emphasis on the position of the Albanian minority. With parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in mid-October, he acquainted himself with some of the electoral programmes of the different political parties, and specifically with those parts that relate to the encouragement of harmonious development of inter-ethnic relations.

He also held consultations with Macedonian and Albanian educational experts who discussed possible solutions with regard to the issue of Albanian language higher education in the country.

### **Hungary**

On 21 and 22 September the High Commissioner visited Hungary. He had meetings with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Foreign Minister János Martonyi, State Secretary Zsolt Nemeth, and with the Head of the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities, Toso Doncsev. He also had an extensive exchange of views with the Chairman of the Slovak Self-Government Council, Michal Mata, and other representatives of the Slovak minority.

The visit provided the High Commissioner with the opportunity to meet with members of the new Government for the first time and to discuss, in particular, its views regarding various minority issues.

### **Consultations on Meskhetian Issue**

On 8 and 9 September the High Commissioner hosted and co-chaired informal consultations in The Hague on the Meskhetian Turks. The consultations, initiated by the HCNM and organized in co-operation with UNHCR and the Forced Migration Projects of the Open Society Institute, were the first meeting

of its kind devoted to the problems of this people formerly deported by Stalin. Participants included representatives of the Governments of the Russian Federation, Georgia and Azerbaijan, as well as representatives of Meskhetian Turks from those countries, including those from the public organization "Vatan."

The main goals of the meeting were to exchange first-hand information on the situation of the Meskhetian Turks; to promote dialogue and understanding among the parties involved; to discuss the problems currently facing the Meskhetian Turks and relevant authorities with a view to identifying ways and means of overcoming them; to draw the attention of the international community to the Meskhetian Turk issue and to explore possibilities for developing a joint and comprehensive approach towards it; and to establish a follow-up framework of activities.

The meeting concluded with a joint statement agreed upon by the various participants which highlighted the need for an international, co-ordinated effort for the humane management of the Meskhetian Turk issue. Participants lauded efforts already undertaken to develop the relevant legal framework in concerned countries, including Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, Georgia and Ukraine.

# **REPORT** of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

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## **Duve Appointed Chairman of the Council of the Independent Media Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Freimut Duve, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, addressed the opening session of the Council of the Independent Media Commission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo on 16 September. Mr. Duve recently accepted the position of Chairman of the Council, which has as its current priority the creation of a media environment conducive to the promotion of an open and pluralistic democratic media society. The Commission was created on the initiative of the High Representative, Ambassador Carlos Westendorp.

“My acceptance of this position grows out of a deep sense of respect I have for the potential of the Bosnian media,” Mr. Duve said in a prepared text to the Bosnian media. “I would hope that in the near future this country will be able to take its rightful place among the open and pluralistic democracies of the world. I would hope, too, that when the day comes, and it will be sooner rather than later, the freedom of expression and responsible media which this commission seeks to promote will have played a valuable role in this transition.”

## **Visit to Prague**

The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media paid a short visit to Prague on 21 September, where he met with the staff of the OSCE Prague Office, Czech journalists and young diplomats. Mr. Duve also met with the First Deputy Foreign Minister Professor Pick, who emphasized that freedom of the media is guaranteed in the Czech Republic.

## **Threats Against Journalists in Kosovo—Duve Takes Action**

The Representative on Freedom of the Media sent a letter to the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia on 30 September expressing his great concern about the threat of the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Seselj that journalists and human rights activists would be taken hostage in case of NATO action. Duve wrote that “such hostage taking would not only violate OSCE principles and commitments but also relevant international conventions related to the protection of civilians.”

The Representative on Freedom of the Media urged the Belgrade Government to provide immediate and unhindered access for national and international media to the conflict-ridden region of Kosovo. Mr. Duve appealed to the Bel-

grade authorities to facilitate the return of those journalists who had been expelled from the country or denied entry visas.

He also protested that numerous invitees to a media conference in Belgrade in October had been denied Yugoslav visas. In his letter, Mr. Duve repeated his offer to have talks with the Government on all those media issues. However, on 4 September the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had rejected a visit from Mr. Duve to Belgrade. At that time Mr. Duve declared that “Once again, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia does not accept an OSCE Representative in the country... On the other hand, FRY wants to regain full membership in the OSCE. The OSCE commitments imply contacts in cases of dispute in the spirit of security and co-operation.”

## **Duve’s Advisor Visits Bulgaria**

Stanley Schrager, Advisor to the Representative on Freedom of the Media, visited Bulgaria on 25 and 26 September where he attended a media seminar in Sofia. The general theme was “Improving Communications between the Media and Public Institutions.” Mr. Schrager briefed the participants on the work of the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

## UPDATE from the ODIHR

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### ODIHR Director Visits Azerbaijan Ahead of Elections

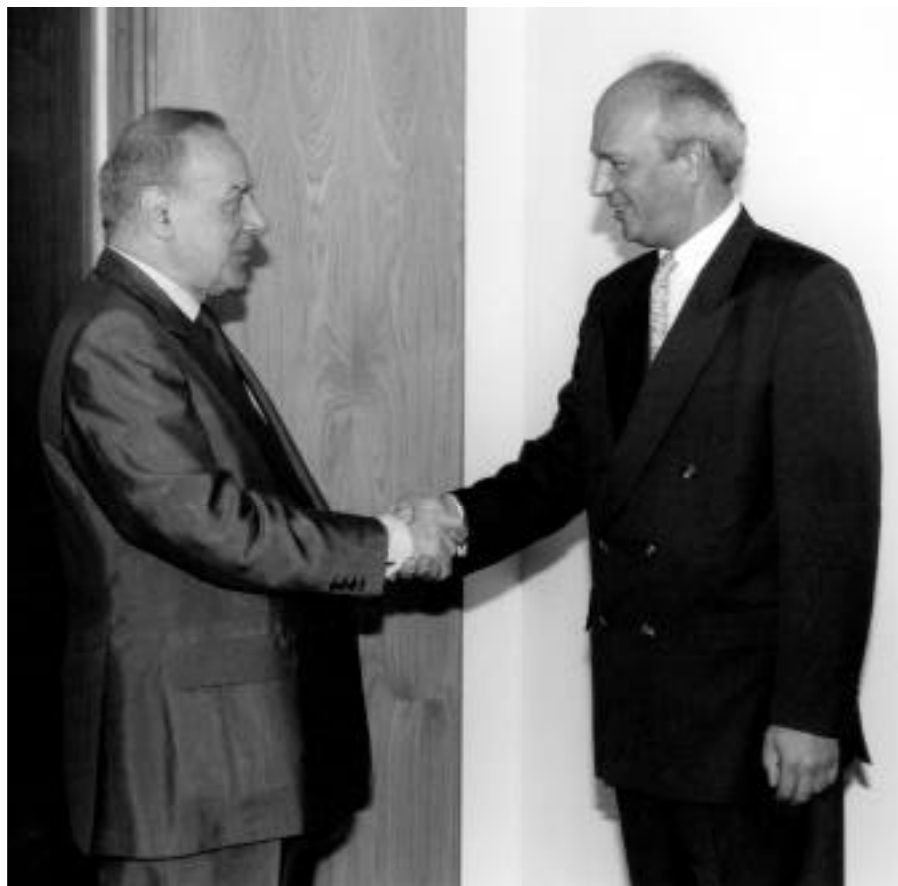
Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann, Director of the ODIHR, visited Azerbaijan from 10 to 13 September. The three

The OSCE Election Observation Mission in Azerbaijan was formally launched by Ambassador Stoudmann on 11 September. Headed by ODIHR Election Adviser Nikolai Vulchanov, the Mission consists of a core team of election

with a number of government officials, opposition leaders and representatives of the media and civil society.

At the end of his visit to Baku, Ambassador Stoudmann met with President Aliiev and raised a number of issues related to human rights and the October elections. In particular, he stressed that the right to peaceful assembly should be fully respected and that representatives of the Opposition who had been arbitrarily arrested should be released. Regarding the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Azerbaijan and the ODIHR, President Aliiev repeated his commitment to long-term reform and stressed that reform was not limited to the election campaign. He also clearly expressed the wish to co-operate with the OSCE beyond election assistance, and was supportive of the ODIHR projects to be implemented in the course of 1999 as a part of the MOU.

In two additional efforts to prepare for the elections, the ODIHR has been involved in voter education and technical election assistance projects. Aiming at increasing citizens' participation in the 11 October elections, the ODIHR and the BBC World Service launched a voter education programme in the Azeri language on 8 September. The programme is designed as a radio drama in four parts and the cast includes well-known actors from Azerbaijani TV and radio. The joint project has been realized with the aid of a voluntary contribution from the Government of the United Kingdom.



Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann, Director of the ODIHR (right) meets President Heydar Aliiev of Azerbaijan (left) in Baku.

main aims of the visit were to launch the OSCE Election Observation Mission, to finalize details concerning the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Azerbaijan and the ODIHR, and to raise human rights issues with the Government of Azerbaijan.

experts and long-term observers, who are deployed across the country in preparation for the arrival of more than one hundred short-term observers closer to election day, 11 October. In connection with the launching of the Election Mission, Ambassador Stoudmann met

## **Latvian Elections**

Voters in Latvia go to the polls on 3 October to vote in the Saeima (Parliament) elections. A national referendum is being held on the same day on amendments to the citizenship law adopted by the Latvian parliament. The ODIHR has sent an assessment team to observe the electoral process in Latvia. The legislative framework and the more technical, administrative aspects of the election process will be assessed by a team of 12 elections experts. The assessment mission is headed by Peter Hatch.

## **Election Training for Central Asia**

In view of the forthcoming elections in Central Asia in 1999, the ODIHR organized a training programme in Germany from 19 to 28 September for election administrators from the region. Part of the ODIHR technical assistance programme in the field of elections, the project was implemented in conjunction with other international institutions with experience in elections. Election officials from Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan participated in the seminar, discussing topics such as election campaigning and mass media, and election administration.

## **President of Portugal visits the ODIHR in Warsaw**

On 15 September President Jorge Sampaio of Portugal — while on a visit to Poland — visited the ODIHR to discuss human rights challenges in the OSCE area. Touching on issues such as the elections in Bosnia, he discussed with the ODIHR Director, Ambassador Gérard Stoudmann, the role of the ODIHR and the methodology of election observation. President Sampaio maintained

that Europe could still play a much greater role in promoting human rights. Both agreed that a major concern is the need for better co-operation and co-ordination among international organizations in order to guarantee progress in this area. Ambassador Stoudmann explained the efforts already made by the ODIHR in this context such as joint assessment missions. President Sampaio expressed his strong support for the work of the ODIHR and mentioned that he would highly appreciate receiving reports from the ODIHR on the human rights situation in the OSCE area.

## **Round-table in Georgia**

On 17 September a Round Table on Housing and Property Rights of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) took place at the OSCE Mission to Georgia. It was organized by OSCE/ODIHR, UNHCR, the Council of Europe and the OSCE Mission to Georgia, and participants included representatives of the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the Government.

The participants discussed expert recommendations related to housing and property restitution issues in the context of the return of persons displaced as a result of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict. It was agreed to form a working group tasked with drafting relevant legislation. The group will include experts from the UNHCR office in Tbilisi, the OSCE Mission to Georgia and experts nominated by UNHCR or the OSCE and will start working at the beginning of October.

## **Judges Workshop**

The OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation

and the Legal Academy, held a workshop with judges from the Moscow area from 29 September to 1 October in the Russian Legal Academy in Moscow. The workshop was entitled “International and European Legal Standards Regarding: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; European Convention for Human Rights Articles 5, 6 and 13.” It is part of the long-term programme “Professional Training Programme for Russian Judges based on International Standards of the Judiciary.”

## **Roma Intern**

The ODIHR has had the pleasure of hosting a Roma intern. Ms. Irena Vaskiv has been working on the design of the planned Roma and Sinti webpage and has helped in the planning of a side meeting at the 1998 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting entitled “National Policies on Roma and Sinti.” The ODIHR intends to continue the practice inviting Roma interns.

## **ODIHR Director Visits Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation**

On 29 September ODIHR Director Ambassador Stoudmann gave a welcoming statement at the Conference on the Election System of the Russian Federation hosted by the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Russian Federation to commemorate its fifth anniversary.

In a bilateral meeting Alexander Ivanchenko, Chairman of the CEC, and Ambassador Stoudmann discussed plans for future co-operation. Ambassador Stoudmann also held talks at the Foreign Ministry where he was received by Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeev and other officials.

## **REPORT** from the Parliamentary Assembly

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### **PA President Addresses Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in Moscow**

The President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Ms. Helle Degn, who is also Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Danish Parliament, represented the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly at the 100th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which was held in the Kremlin in Moscow from 2 to 12 September. In her address, Ms. Degn underlined the importance of international parliamentary assemblies and institutions. She said, in reference to Parliamentary Assemblies, that "it is essential to understand the importance of this international network of elected politicians, in a time when we are constructing a new model of security, which must have the ability to solve our internal crises in the 21st century." She also stressed that the very existence of international and regional parliamentary organizations underlined the importance that the participating States attached to the role of democratic institutions. "Co-operating with each other, joining our efforts when necessary, we may together enormously influence the security and co-operation in this world. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is open to such co-operation," concluded Ms. Degn.

In addition to active participation in the work of different IPU bodies, Ms. Degn met with Gennady Seleznev, Speaker of the Russian State Duma and Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and with Yegor Stroyev, Speaker of the Council of Federation

(Upper House) and President of the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly. She also met with Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the State Duma.

### **OSCE Parliamentarians Monitor Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Italian Senator Tana De Zulueta, Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, was appointed Special Representative of OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Polish Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek, to lead the short-term election observation mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12 and 13 September and issue the preliminary election statement for the OSCE (see also page 1). On Friday 11, September Senator de Zulueta held talks with Jadranko Prlić, Minister of Foreign Affairs for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ambassador Robert L. Barry, Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 14 September Senator de Zulueta issued a preliminary statement in conjunction with Ms. Severinsen, Head of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Delegation, Ms. Doris Pack, member of the European Parliament, and Mr. Mark Power-Stevens, the On-Site Co-ordinator of the OSCE/ODIHR Observation Mission. The OSCE Parliamentary Observer team consisted of thirty members representing Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Turkey and the United States of America, together with observers from the North Atlantic Assembly.

According to the preliminary statement issued at a joint press conference in Sarajevo on 14 September, "the observation mission feels that many aspects of the election represent an improvement on previous years, particularly in the conduct of the media and the quality and general conduct of the campaign." The observers also pointed out a number of problems during the elections. In particular, they were concerned with the quality of final voters registers and confidence in the process of tendered ballots. They found that it was critically important that tendered ballots be carefully scrutinized and counted. It was noted that "the challenge for next years election is to establish a permanent election law, a permanent election commission and an independent national judicial body in order to ensure the further democratization of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina."

### **. . . and in Slovakia**

OSCE PA President Ms. Helle Degn was appointed Special Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to lead more than 200 international short-term observers deployed by the OSCE throughout Slovakia to observe the parliamentary elections held on 25 and 26 September. The Parliamentary Assembly delegation included Members of Parliament of thirteen OSCE countries, including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Turkey, as well as delegations from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament and three

advisors from the United States Congressional Helsinki Commission. The delegation monitored the elections in conjunction with the OSCE/ODHIR, representatives of local embassies, and a number of NGOs.

Prior to the elections, the parliamentarians were given extensive briefings, which included meetings with representatives of the Central Election Commission, the media and major political parties. President Degn also held a separate meeting with the Speaker of the Slovak Parliament, Ivan Gasparović.

During the two election days the PA delegation was divided into 19 teams which visited polling stations in Bratislava, Nitra, Trnava, Banská Bystrica, Žilina and Košice. Delegation members visited more than 200 polling stations, and witnessed the opening and closing procedures. Prior to the preliminary post-election statement Ms. Degn gave a press briefing on 26 September in

Bratislava in conjunction with her Co-Chairmen for the Observation of the Slovak Parliamentary Elections, Franciszek Adameczyk (MP, Poland) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Jan Wiersma (MEP, The Netherlands) of the European Parliament. At this briefing Ms. Degn provided the media with some initial information and observations. On Sunday 27 September she issued the joint preliminary statement for the OSCE Election Observation Mission in Slovakia in conjunction with Co-Chairman Mr. Adamczyk (Council of Europe PA) and Kåre Vollan, the On-Site Co-ordinator and Head of the ODHIR Mission. For more on the statement see page 8.

#### **Presidents of OSCE and Council of Europe Parliamentary Assemblies Meet**

Ms. Helle Degn, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the

Danish Parliament, met in Strasbourg on 22 September with the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mrs. Leni Fischer (Germany). The two Presidents discussed the relations between their Assemblies and agreed to continue the co-operation in a number of fields, including election monitoring and the Tri-Parliamentary Mission to Albania. They also agreed to meet on a more regular basis in the future.

Their meeting coincided with the Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which discussed relations between the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The Council of Europe PA passed a resolution on the issue which included a number of suggestions for increased co-operation. Ms. Degn participated in the debate. In her statement she welcomed increased co-operation and found the approved resolution positive in that respect.



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