

**INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON TOLERANCE**  
**Bucharest, Romania, May 23-26, 1995**



1995

**A Report Prepared by the Staff of the  
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

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## **ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION (OSCE)**

The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki process, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. Since then, its membership has expanded to 55, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. (The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, has been suspended since 1992, leaving the number of countries fully participating at 54.) As of January 1, 1995, the formal name of the Helsinki process was changed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The OSCE is engaged in standard setting in fields including military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns. In addition, it undertakes a variety of preventive diplomacy initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States.

The OSCE has its main office in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations and periodic consultations among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government are held.

## **ABOUT THE COMMISSION (CSCE)**

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance with the agreements of the OSCE.

The Commission consists of nine members from the U.S. House of Representatives, nine members from the U.S. Senate, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair are shared by the House and Senate and rotate every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

To fulfill its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates information on Helsinki-related topics both to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports reflecting the views of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing information about the activities of the Helsinki process and events in OSCE participating States.

At the same time, the Commission contributes its views to the general formulation of U.S. policy on the OSCE and takes part in its execution, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings as well as on certain OSCE bodies. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from OSCE participating States.

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#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

An International Seminar on Tolerance was held in Bucharest, Romania, from May 23-26, 1995. The seminar was organized by the Council of Europe, the Government of Romania, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). It was attended by official representatives of OSCE States, some of whom also belong to the Council of Europe, along with experts from these states and a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The OSCE—or the CSCE (for “Conference on...” as it was called until 1995—has had, since its inception in the mid-1970s, a strong focus on human rights. In fact, human rights and other “Human Dimension” issues were viewed as an essential element of a comprehensive approach to security in Europe. While this continued focus gave impetus to the organization of the Bucharest seminar, new approaches to human rights issues since the end of the Cold War have changed the nature of OSCE gatherings. Substantively, attention to basic human rights has given way to larger issues of democracy-building, not only by governments but whole societies. Structurally, lengthy meetings of official delegations negotiating new commitments have been replaced by shorter meetings in which experts and NGOs join the discussion and share experiences and concerns. In particular, national delegations are encouraged to include “practitioners”—individuals with day-to-day experience and responsibility for dealing with the issues at hand in their home countries. The goal is to develop contacts and share ideas, not to draw up new documents.

Given the rise of extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, racism and other forms of intolerance, the very first Human Dimension seminar had, as its focus, the subject of tolerance. It was held in Warsaw, Poland, in November 1992, shortly after the Helsinki CSCE Follow-Up Meeting agreed upon the seminar approach and format, and identified several human dimension issues of particular concern. More than two years later, the Bucharest seminar reflects the continuing concern over intolerance in the OSCE region. Structurally, the seminar proceedings generally followed the pattern established for OSCE seminars.

Unlike the previous seminars, the Bucharest seminar was not entirely an OSCE product, being organized jointly with the Romanian Government and the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The holding of the seminar was largely a Romanian initiative, which explains why Bucharest was the site. With the exception of “regional” seminars that focus on the situation in a few, select neighboring countries, Human Dimension seminars are normally held in Warsaw, the location of the ODIHR. At the Budapest CSCE Review Conference in late 1994, however, Romania informed the participating States of its intent to organize the seminar, and it asked for their endorsement and OSCE assistance. This initiative, Romania explained, was being taken, because the United Nations has designated 1995 as the International Year of Tolerance.

## **II. PARTICIPATION**

There was diverse participation at the seminar. Beyond officials from the organizing institutions, representatives from about 35 of the 53 OSCE participating States were in attendance. In addition, Macedonia, an observer State in the OSCE, participated in the seminar, as did non-participating States from the Mediterranean area, as well as Japan and Korea. Included on many official delegations were experts on various aspects of tolerance. In addition, private individuals representing approximately 120 NGOs registered for the seminar, and many participated in the discussion. Romanian NGOs, especially those representing the interests and concerns of the country's Roma community, dominated the NGO presence at the seminar.

Samuel G. Wise, Director for International Policy at the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), served as the head of the United States delegation, which included other Helsinki Commission staff and officers from the Department of State and the United States Information Agency based either in Washington or with the U.S. OSCE delegation in Vienna. The U.S. delegation to the seminar also included three public members, specifically: Gerald Margolis, Director of the Los Angeles office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Center's Museum on Tolerance; Pedro C. Moreno, International Director for the Rutherford Institute; and Ronald K. Wakabayashi, Director of the Human Relations Committee for Los Angeles County.

## **III. THE PROCEEDINGS**

The seminar was a four-day event, with an opening and closing plenary and two days in between for four discussion groups to meet and discuss specific aspects of tolerance. The four working groups discussed: 1) legal measures and law enforcement; 2) education and culture; 3) the role of the media; and 4) the role of local authorities and NGOs.

The opening plenary was chaired by the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Peter Leuprecht, who used the opportunity to highlight Council of Europe efforts to promote tolerance in society, especially among youth. The plenary also featured a welcoming speech by Romanian President Ion Iliescu, which generally highlighted the positive changes that have taken place in Romania since the fall of the Ceacescu regime in December 1989. Other leadoff speakers included Audrey Glover, Director of the OSCE/ODIHR, who described the wide array of OSCE activities relating to the subject matter, as well as Professor Michel Foucher, Director of the European Geopolitical Observatory of the University of Lumiere Lyon II, who gave the keynote speech which addressed tolerance as a concept in the new Europe.

Following the opening speakers, delegations were permitted to make introductory remarks, among them Canada, Croatia, France (speaking on behalf of the European Union), Norway and the United States. The U.S. statement focused on the practical nature of the seminar—as a forum for experts to exchange ideas and discuss experiences, especially at the grass-roots level—but then noted the key role of governments “in deciding whether a multi-ethnic society can be preserved and even strengthened, or torn asunder.” While the former Yugoslavia was cited as a prime negative example, items such as citizenship laws were mentioned as well. In addition, the U.S. delegation noted a recent issue in the host country, Romania, where members of the Roma community have been officially designated as “Tsigani” (Gypsy), a term denounced by Roma representatives as derogatory. Representatives from other government delegations did not raise concerns in such a specific manner. Time was left for only one NGO representative to

speak, a representative from the International Union of Roma who joined the United States in raising concern about Romania's official designation of Roma as "Tsigani" and mentioned what Roma-related organizations in the country were doing to improve the situation for their community.

The four discussion groups operated in a traditional ODIHR-seminar style. A moderator led the discussion, with a rapporteur presenting a paper in advance as a basis for discussion and summarizing the discussion when time had run out. In practice, this approach did not work, as many speakers had little intention of commenting on the paper or even focusing on the specific aspect of tolerance the group was assigned to discuss. While the presence of such speakers came as no real surprise, moderators generally were not prepared to keep the discussion focused and relevant. In addition, while some real experts in the field of promoting tolerance were spread out among delegations and NGOs, there was a sense that there was little real sharing of ideas in the formal groups and that those who might have benefited most from the seminar were not present to do so.

Despite these shortcomings, the public members and some NGOs from the United States felt that the discussion groups were useful, primarily because a number of good presentations were made, and they sparked smaller, informal discussions. Some participants, for example, were interested in unique ways children are taught about intolerance in the United States, or how police cooperation is obtained in reporting on the extent to which particular crimes are based on hate. As a result, U.S. presentations on these issues would be followed by private discussions on the side.

It was also evident in all four groups that the NGO presence was dominated by those organizations representing Roma interests in Romania and throughout Europe, especially Finland and Spain. While many NGOs from countries other than Romania had a different focus, those from the host country were almost exclusively focused on Roma issues. This result appears, at least in part, to have occurred because of the lack of information on the seminar volunteered to the Romanian public at large, while representatives of Roma NGOs from Romania were already active OSCE followers who knew of, and prepared diligently for, the seminar. This activity contrasted starkly with the virtual absence of any raising at the seminar of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania.

Several themes surfaced repeatedly in the discussion groups. Among them was the definition of tolerance itself, which ranged from simply accepting what one does not like to actually embracing diversity as a positive and powerful force in society. The question of ignoring intolerance, or what one discussion group rapporteur referred to as the "tolerance of intolerance," was also raised. Finally, there was the question, evident in many debates on Human Dimension issues, of the proper role of the state in both combating and promoting tolerance, with American views and their focus on individual rights and private initiative frequently differing from those of Europeans.

The first discussion group focused on legal measures and law enforcement issues. Frank Orton, one of six ombudsmen in Sweden, moderated the group, and Jens Meyer-Ladewig from the Ministry of Justice in Germany served as rapporteur. Both have extensive experience with the Council of Europe, which was reflected in their comments. A representative of the Dutch-based Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations made a contrasting presentation on the OSCE's important role in developing norms on tolerance and minority questions that have subsequently been incorporated into national laws, bilateral treaties and international law. The group generally viewed the situation as having changed from the last tolerance seminar in that there was less need to develop new legislation than to enforce and implement what now exists. The

only exceptions are some countries still in the transition to democracy where laws protecting citizens from intolerant segments of society are still needed. The U.S.-based National Conference on Soviet Jewry doubted that the political will existed in some countries to prosecute the illegal activity of extreme nationalists. U.S. public member Ron Wakabayashi added that it was important to have law enforcement personnel monitor the extent to which crimes are motivated by hate. On the international level, many speakers supported the idea of a regional “observatory” to monitor and report on instances of intolerance.

The second discussion group focused on education and culture. Gudmund Hernes, Minister of Education, Research and Church Affairs in Norway, served as the group's moderator, and Gita Steiner-Khamsi from the University of Basel served as rapporteur. The discussion in this group was framed by U.S. public member Gerald Margolis, who asked several critical questions for educators, including how a just society is created and what relationship exists, not only between state and citizen, but also between citizen and citizen. Subsequent speakers noted the critical importance of dealing with history properly in the classroom, especially when differing views of painful events are evident in society. U.S. public member Pedro Moreno also mentioned civic education as important, especially on legal principles limiting role of the state in society, the need for authorities to view themselves as public servants, and the inalienable nature of individual human rights. Other speakers focused less on subject matter than on educational processes. Informal educational methods were stressed, such as exchange programs and the use of museums. Adult education was highlighted, not only for teachers but for all those who have occupations in which they deal extensively with the public. During the debate, the issue of exactly what governments have committed themselves to do in providing minority groups with special educational efforts was raised and detailed.

The third discussion group focused on the media. Kevin Boyle, Director of the Human Rights Center of the University of Essex, served as moderator, and Jean-Paul Marthoz of the International Federation of Journalists served as rapporteur. Few journalists were, in fact, present, and much of the discussion focused on how to keep the media from fomenting intolerance rather than on promoting tolerance. Differences of approach were apparent, and some speakers saw tougher regulation as the answer to the incitement of hatred through the media. Indeed, it was suggested by British and Turkish diplomats that the OSCE draw up an international code of ethics for journalists. Others questioned this approach, with three U.S. delegation presentations stressing that the public needs to reflect its desire for greater professionalism in the media as consumers of the media. U.S. public member Gerald Margolis went further, pointing to the positive role the media can play in fostering understanding and acceptance in pluralistic societies.

The fourth and final discussion group focused on the role of local governments and non-governmental organizations in promoting tolerance. Nicolae Cajal, president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania, served as moderator, and Heather Hurlburt, Director of the Face-to-Face Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, served as rapporteur. The session was used by NGOs to talk about their own activities and to counter, in the case of Romania, government assertions that much progress has been made in recent years in regard to local problems. U.S. public member Ron Wakabayashi stressed the importance of local governments in identifying problems at the local level, and the role of community-based NGOs in helping address and perhaps even solve those problems. The useful ideas suggested included citizens creating boards to review police performance, national governments withholding funds to regions or localities where efforts to combat intolerance were insufficient, creating human rights ombudsmen at the local level, and encouraging minority-based NGOs to raise their issues of concern at the international level.

While these formal discussion groups were in session, other activities were taking place as well. For example, an informal working group on Roma issues was created by the first discussion group in order to focus on legal questions and law enforcement in regard to Roma communities in OSCE States. Of a related nature, a gathering was organized by the ODIHR staff to explain the functions of its new contact point for Roma issues. For those taking breaks from the formal sessions, TV monitors in the hallways presented a series of forceful public information commercials on tolerance prepared by a European media group under Council of Europe auspices. And, of course, there were the frequent conversations between participants on their various activities and interests.

The closing plenary generally characterized the seminar as useful, and thanked Romania for being the host. The closing statement of the U.S. delegation was critical of the seminar format, which did not sufficiently allow a “free give-and-take” among experts as was the intention of the OSCE when it first developed the idea of Human Dimension seminars. There was also a return to the issue of the official designation of Roma in Romania as “Tsigani,” with the United States delegation seeing room for both sides in the dispute to work out their differences, a Roma representative suggesting dialogue, and a Romanian Government representative defending the official position.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Holding a seminar on tolerance is a positive development in and of itself, as intolerance in its varied manifestations not only continues to exist throughout the OSCE region, but, according to many, continues to be on the rise. It therefore must be combated more forcefully in order to protect the individual rights of the those victimized by intolerance. Moreover, intolerance can evolve into a very real threat to democratic development in a state and, ultimately, to security between states. The decision to have this seminar, and to participate in it, is an acknowledgment of the seriousness which the participating States attach to the issue.

The format used for Human Dimension seminars works well in principle but not always in practice, and, in Bucharest, it did not work particularly well. Speakers, numbering over 40 for each of the discussion groups, merely followed each other in delivering statements, which were prepared in advance and sometimes not even to the point. This is not the best way to exchange and debate ideas. Some other Human Dimension seminars held a more productive dialogue, and it is possible that the involvement of other parties in organizing the seminar detracted from the more practical exchanges which the OSCE tries to emphasize. In any event, absent clear guidelines and forceful moderators who have a sense of how to facilitate an organized debate, Human Dimension seminars are less likely to realize their full potential.

Related to this is the attendance at seminars. The U.S. delegation had capable and experienced public members who were free to say what they wished and were encouraged to be involved in the discussions. Many other governments, however, did not have experts present on their delegations; in some cases, government representatives were not even present. This was especially a problem in regard to countries in democratic transition and economic reform, where the promotion of tolerance may now be the most crucial. The limited presence of experts from these countries, therefore, also detracted from the success of the Bucharest seminar.

The site of the seminar—Bucharest—was a positive aspect of the seminar. While this seminar was not a “regional” seminar, as an OSCE seminar focusing on selected OSCE countries would be called, it had the characteristics of one by convening in a country where democratic development is still in progress.

Previous CSCE/OSCE meetings held in countries where there was concern about human rights compliance have also been additionally useful for providing a greater focus on those concerns than would otherwise have been the case.

Finally, promoting tolerance in society is, like so many other aspects of building democratic institutions and civic societies, an objective that takes time. This seminar is only a small part of that effort, but it combines with other small parts to form a larger effort that will hopefully produce results. Much of the value of the seminar will depend on the time and effort which the delegations and organizers will devote to follow-up activities. In this regard, one result of the seminar which is certainly significant and positive is the personal contact it facilitated between tolerance experts from the various OSCE countries.

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