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Report of the Congressional Delegation Visit to Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria

(CODEL DeConcini/Hoyer)

April 7 - 13, 1990

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INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe -- also known as the Helsinki or CSCE Commission -- was created in 1976 by Public Law 94-304 with a mandate to monitor and encourage compliance with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was signed in Helsinki, Finland, on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada.

The Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE documents encompass nearly every aspect of relations between States, including: military-security; economic, scientific and environmental cooperation; cultural and educational exchanges; and human rights and other humanitarian concerns. The goal has been to lower the barriers which have artificially divided Europe into East and West for more than four decades. Periodic review meetings have been held to continue this process: Belgrade (1977-78), Madrid (1980-83), and Vienna (1986-89), with the next scheduled for Helsinki in March 1992. Expert meetings on specific issues and lasting only a few weeks are held in between these main meetings.

The Commission consists of nine members of the U.S. House of Representatives, nine members of the U.S. Senate, and one member each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense. The positions of Chairman and Co-Chairman are shared by the House and the Senate and rotate every 2 years, when a new Congress convenes. The Commission is currently chaired by Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) and co-chaired by Representative Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD). A professional staff of approximately 15 persons assist the Commissioners in their work.

The Commission carries out its mandate in a variety of ways. First, it gathers and disseminates information on Helsinki-related topics both to the U.S. Congress and the public. It frequently holds public hearings with expert witnesses focusing on these topics. Similarly, the Commission issues reports on the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE documents. The Commission plays a unique role in assisting in the planning and execution of U.S. policy at CSCE meetings, including through participation as full members of the U.S. delegations to these meetings.

Finally, members of the Commission maintain regular contacts with parliamentarians, government officials and private individuals from other Helsinki-signatory States. Such contacts often take the form of Commission delegations, usually with the participation of other Members of Congress, to other countries, such as the visit to Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria in April 1990.

VISIT TO YUGOSLAVIA
April 7-11, 1990

I. OBJECTIVES

The Commission delegation to Yugoslavia had three main goals: (1) to observe the first, free, multi-party elections in post-War Yugoslavia, which took place in Slovenia on April 8; (2) to discuss a variety of human rights concerns; and (3) to examine firsthand the situation in Kosovo province by meeting with both Serbian and Albanian groups. The delegation visited the cities of Ljubljana, Belgrade and Pristina, and Chairman DeConcini made a separate visit to the village of Medjugorje. Meetings were held with federal, republic and provincial officials, as well as with human rights activists, religious figures, representatives of alternative groups and parties, journalists, and other private individuals.

Overall, the delegation was able to accomplish these objectives. Moreover, its efforts were immediately followed by several positive developments in Yugoslavia, including the lifting of the state of emergency in Kosovo and the announced release of 108 political prisoners, including Adem Demaqi, a political prisoner with whom the delegation had sought to meet. In addition, the members of the Youth Parliament of Kosovo detained just prior to the Commission's visit were released, and former Kosovo official Azem Vlasi was acquitted in a major political trial. All of these developments addressed concerns specifically raised by the delegation during its visit.

II. THE CONTEXT

The Commission delegation visit to Yugoslavia came at a time of great change in Europe and within Yugoslavia itself.

In two ways, Yugoslavia has been both in front of and behind the same wave of political liberalization which swept through the East European countries which belong to the Warsaw Pact late last year. First, among East European states which became Communist after World War II, Yugoslavia was the first where major reform was attempted. Following their break from the Soviet bloc in 1948, Yugoslav Communists under Josip Broz Tito placed the country on its own path of Communist development. The greater sense of legitimacy with which the reform-minded but independent Communists of Yugoslavia ruled, however, made their monopoly on political power less vulnerable to popular pressures for change than those of the neighboring East European Communists who clearly owed their power to strict controls and Soviet support.

Second, some of Yugoslavia's six republics have been moving steadily toward pluralistic societies similar to those in the West, sometimes with reform-minded Communist officials leading the way. Others, however, have maintained centralized political systems less tolerant of dissenting views. As a result, the political situation within Yugoslavia varies so enormously that generalizations regarding the country as a whole cannot be made.

Adding to this complex situation has been a threat, both real and perceived, to the continued existence of Yugoslavia as a single political entity. Unlike most other East European states, which are essentially defined by one national group despite sizable minorities, Yugoslavia represents a collection of many national and ethnic groups who joined together only after World War I. Following Tito's death 10 years ago, political power was divided among the six republics and two provinces in such a way that none of them would be able to dominate the others in the Yugoslav federation. Historical mistrust and growing economic difficulties, however, ultimately led to disagreement and disputes among the republics and provinces, with a parallel resurgence in nationalism, ethnic strife and separatist sentiment.

These divisions have, in turn, sidetracked discussion of Yugoslavia's political and economic future. In Slovenia and Croatia -- the two most liberal republics politically and the most prosperous economically -- the ruling Communist parties (League of Communists) revoked their guaranteed monopoly on power and scheduled elections for the spring of 1990 in which alternative political parties would be allowed to participate. While the country-wide League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) agreed in January to drop its monopoly as well, Slovenia and Croatia had differences with some other republics, especially Serbia, regarding the degree of decentralization and political liberalization, with Serbian officials arguing that the LCY was the only political institution which could hold Yugoslavia together. These differences, however, caused Slovenia and Croatia to move even further towards decentralization if not actual separation. In February, the Slovene League severed ties with the LCY, changed its name to the Party for Democratic Renewal, and adopted a new, essentially social-democratic, party platform. By the time the Helsinki Commission arrived in Yugoslavia in April, other republic Leagues had begun taking similar steps.

The crisis in Kosovo, one of two autonomous provinces within the Serbian republic, has similarly divided the country and had drawn considerable attention internationally at the time of the Commission's visit. Kosovo is the poorest region of the country despite massive government investment. Serbs live there; it was the center of their medieval kingdom and the cradle of their culture. Ethnic Albanians have made up a majority of the population for decades, however, and the percentage has increased to about 90% as a result of the Albanian birth rate, the highest in Europe, and Serbian outmigration, claimed to be caused by Albanian harassment but due also to economic conditions.

Along with Vojvodina, the other province in Serbia, Kosovo was given considerable autonomy as a result of the 1974 Constitution. When increased educational and cultural opportunities for ethnic Albanians combined with few employment or other economic opportunities, however, reviving Albanian pride turned into increasingly nationalistic protest in the 1980's as large numbers of Albanians demanded that Kosovo be separated from Serbia and upgraded to a full republic, with smaller groups calling for separation from Yugoslavia altogether. Demonstrations and violence caused a major crackdown in 1981, with further arrests throughout the remainder of the decade. By the end of the 1980's, a resurgence in Serbian nationalism caused the republic, led by the charismatic Slobodan Milosevic, to assert greater control over the affairs of its two provinces by amending the Serbian Constitution. Ensuing unrest led to further violence and a state of emergency in 1989 and early 1990, which, in turn, has led to many reports of human rights abuses. Among these reports was the trial of former Kosovo party chief Azem Vlasi, an ethnic Albanian, charged with "counter-revolutionary activities" for allegedly instigating a strike by ethnic Albanian miners opposing Serbian controls.

The Serb-Albanian dispute over Kosovo has affected the entire country. Many Yugoslavs have been highly critical of the heavy-handed tactics employed in dealing with the situation. Moreover, the rise in Serbian nationalism has aroused fears of Serbian dominance of Yugoslavia, despite arguments by Serbian officials that they are simply seeking a fairer share of power than was accorded them in the 1974 Constitution. When Slovene authorities banned a demonstration by Serbs in Ljubljana earlier this year, Serbia responded by imposing an economic boycott on Slovene products. In the last year, tensions between Serbs and Croats have increased as well.

Yugoslavia's poor economic performance -- marked in the 1980's by severe hyperinflation, a large foreign debt, unemployment, and declining living standards -- exacerbated these differences. Not surprisingly, the economic situation varies considerably among the republics and provinces. In late 1989, Ante Markovic, President of the Federal Executive Council (Prime Minister), announced new economic measures designed to reverse the country's worsening economic situation. Brought into force beginning 1990, these measures include: making the Yugoslav currency convertible at a rate of 7 dinar to 1 deutsche mark, freezing wages and fuel and transport prices, creating capital markets in Belgrade and Ljubljana, and taking other steps to marketize further the Yugoslav economy. Thus far, the measures seem to be having a positive effect, reportedly bringing inflation down from a 60% monthly rate to nearly zero by the time of the Helsinki Commission's visit to Yugoslavia in April.

III. MEETINGS

Chairman DeConcini arrived in Yugoslavia on Saturday, April 7. Due to other obligations, Co-Chairman Hoyer and Representatives Moody and Delich-Bentley were unable to participate in delegation meetings until Monday, April 9.

Saturday, April 7

First Meeting with the Foreign
Policy Committee of Yugoslav Assembly

Upon arrival in Belgrade, the delegation was greeted by Alexandar Simovic, Chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Yugoslav Assembly's Federal Chamber. The Foreign Policy Committee served as the formal host for the Commission visit. Immediately thereafter, the first meeting of the delegation was held at the Federation Palace with several members of the Assembly. In addition to Mr. Simovic, Jusuf Keljmendi, Joze Susmelj and Klime Popovski attended as members of the Foreign Policy Committee. They were joined by Milomir Djurovic, Chairman of the Foreign Economic Relations Committee of the Assembly's Chamber of Republics and Provinces, and Luka Brocilo, a member of the Committee for the Development of Economically Underdeveloped Republics and Autonomous Provinces of the Assembly's Chamber of Republics and Provinces.

Mr. Simovic opened the meeting by welcoming the Commission delegation to Yugoslavia and to the Assembly. He expressed hope that the delegation's visit would provide a good opportunity to exchange views. Following brief introductions and a review of the itinerary, Simovic briefly summarized Yugoslav views on the Commission's visit. He said that Yugoslavia was undergoing considerable economic, political and social change but that it also had a number of problems needed resolution. The U.S. Congress, he added, had in recent years discussed some of these problems and subsequently considered or passed resolutions stating views with which he could not agree. He concluded that the best way to deal with this situation was to meet and talk directly about these problems.

In response, Chairman DeConcini noted that the Commission was visiting Yugoslavia for the first time and would observe the human rights situation in Yugoslavia with an open mind. Referring to positive developments in the country, he said he wanted to learn how new parties and other actors in the political process were able to function under the recently developed conditions of pluralism, which included free, contested elections as well as legal efforts to institutionalize political reform. At the same time, he said he was deeply concerned about the situation in Kosovo and the reports of human rights violations in that province. Noting reports of political prisoners in Yugoslavia, he expressed hope that measures would be taken to remove this as an outstanding issue.

Simovic responded by describing the constitutional changes in Yugoslavia which will address these issues. He said the existing Constitution does not correspond to current social developments, and he described how the changes would alter the political and economic systems in Yugoslavia. He noted, however, that there are differences among the republics on these changes and said they could not be done overnight. Joze Susmelj supplemented these comments with a brief intervention regarding recent efforts to develop a new Criminal Code which would accord to international human rights commitments. Articles regarding verbal offenses such as 133 on hostile propaganda, he added, should soon be repealed.

Following this introductory meeting, the Commission delegation flew to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. Following a briefing on the situation in Slovenia provided by Michael Einek, Consul General at the U.S. Consulate General in Zagreb, the schedule of official meetings resumed.

Meeting with Miran Potrc, President of the Assembly
of Slovenia, and Members of the Slovene Electoral Commission

The first delegation meeting in Slovenia was with Miran Potrc, President of the Assembly of Slovenia, and the Slovene Electoral Commission, chaired by Emil Tomc. Potrc said that the Commission was welcome in Slovenia any time but especially now, as it engaged in its first free, multi-party elections. He commented that, when the new law allowing these elections was passed in September 1989, it was viewed as contrary to the legal situation in Yugoslavia at the time, but the courts found that this was not the case. Since then, about 20 parties had formed, 13 of which are participating in the elections. To help ensure a fair election process, observers would be allowed to do as they wished.

Chairman DeConcini asked a series of questions on election procedures. Potrc, Tomc and other officials answered that each of the 62 communes in Slovenia have made up a register of residents who are eligible to vote and given each residents a paper for presentation when they do so. If a resident finds that he or she is not on the list at their respective polling station, they can go to the local election commission and get permission to vote by showing their identification card. Over 4,000 polling stations were set up in a total of 14 electoral districts for almost 1.5 million eligible voters. Alternative parties are represented on the election commission and can also observe the voting and counting. As far as campaigning, efforts were made to ensure fair treatment in the mass media, which is under social control. Candidates could purchase space only in their own newspapers but could contribute to space available for readers' commentary in regular newspapers. They could not purchase time on radio and television. Any party or candidate disagreeing with election commission decision could take their case to the regional or Supreme Court.

Briefing for Foreign Election Observers

Immediately after the delegation's meeting with Mr. Potrc and the election commission, a briefing was held for all foreign election observers. In addition to the Helsinki Commission delegation, representatives of the assemblies of the neighboring Austrian provinces of Kaernten (Carinthia) and Stiermark (Styria) and the neighboring Italian province of Veneto were in attendance.

President Potrc described the April 8 elections, which he said were the first free elections in Slovenia since 1938. He said that the 945 candidates would contest the 80 seats in the Socio-Political Chamber of the tricameral Republic Assembly, and 355 candidates for the same number of seats in the Municipalities (Communal) Chamber. In addition, 12 candidates would seek election on the 4-member Presidency of Slovenia, and four other candidates would seek the position of President of the Presidency. Elections for the 80 seats in the Chamber of Associated Labor, contested by 816 candidates, would take place on April 12, with all runoff and local elections scheduled for April 22.

Asked about how these elections served as a model for other Yugoslav republics, Potrc noted that Croatia took similar steps a few months after Slovenia and that Bosnia-Hercegovina and Macedonia were beginning to do the same. He noted some changes in Montenegro but little in Serbia and its two provinces. At the federal level, Potrc said that formal, legal questions had to be answered first but that he hoped free elections with the participation of various political parties would take place as soon as possible.

For the approximately 400 journalists, including 70 foreign press agencies, observing the elections, Potrc also mentioned that a special press center had been established.

Following the press conference, the Helsinki Commission delegation attended a dinner in its honor hosted by the President of the Presidency of Slovenia, Janez Stanovnik. Other guests included Slovene officials and academicians. During the dinner, President Stanovnik led a conversation regarding the future of Slovenia and of Yugoslavia generally.

Sunday, April 8

In addition to various meetings, throughout the day the Helsinki Commission delegation divided into groups to observe the voting process at various polling stations in Ljubljana and surrounding towns and villages. Scheduling precluded staying in Slovenia until after the polling stations closed and the counting of the votes began. The results of this election-observance program are contained in a separate Commission report covering both the Slovene and Croatian elections of April 1990.

Meeting with Representatives of the
ZKS-Party of Democratic Renewal
(formerly the League of Communists of Slovenia)

The first scheduled meeting of the day was with representatives of the Party of Democratic Renewal, which, until it severed ties with the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, was the League of Communists of Slovenia.

Ciril Ribicic, president of the party, explained that the party had adopted a new program, entitled "For the European Quality of Life," and had changed its name as a result. He noted that many candidates from other political parties were formerly members of the League of Communists and that this had been used against them. Asked by Chairman DeConcini why the Communists in Slovenia decided to reform, he said that the developments in Eastern Europe and elsewhere were a factor but attributed the move to a recognition of the need for economic competition as well. He added, however, that the Party of Democratic Renewal, unlike most other political parties, was not ashamed to continue to press for democratic socialism. He also differentiated his party from the others on the question of Slovenia's future vis-a-vis Yugoslavia, saying that the others, in moving toward secession, are playing with the fate of the Slovene nation. He said that he did not expect his party to win the elections but that it would seek to participate in a coalition.

Meeting with Representatives of the
Democratic Opposition of Slovenia-United (DEMOS)

The next meeting was with representatives of the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia-United, more commonly known as DEMOS, a coalition of alternative political parties. Leading the discussion was Dimitrij Rupel, founder of the Slovene Democratic Alliance and DEMOS candidate for one of the four seats on the Presidency of Slovenia. Other participants included Lovro R. Sturm of the Law Faculty of Ljubljana University who is a member of the Slovene Electoral Commission, and Ivan Oman, head of Slovene Farmers Alliance which belongs to the DEMOS Coalition and also a candidate for a seat on the Presidency.

After brief introductions, Rupel immediately turned the discussion to his party's position on Slovenia's future in Yugoslavia. He said the formation of a confederation presented no difficulties for him, but, if that did not work, he would look for an independent Slovene state. While he cautioned that the exact parameters of a confederation could not be defined, he listed separate monetary systems, separate armed forces and contributions to the central administration, not direct taxation, as key elements. He added that the first step will be to draft a new Slovene Constitution.

Asked by Chairman DeConcini about how this would affect the rest of Yugoslavia, Rupel stressed that Yugoslavia is a unique example of a country because it was a "state of nations" while the United States was a "nation of states." He said that his group did not question existing borders but wanted to address the problem of sovereignty which has existed in Yugoslavia since the days of empire. The federation made Slovenes and Croats, among others, unhappy, because it was dominated by Serbs.

Rupel and others then listed complaints about Yugoslav FEC President Markovic's economic policies. They claimed that the artificially set exchange rate had hurt Slovene exports and that uncompetitive enterprises elsewhere in the country continued to be subsidized by Slovene taxpayers. At this stage, Dr. Sturm intervened to complain about the existing situation. He pointed to secret laws which continue to exist, which he said was scandalous. He had recently founded a Citizen's Forum for the Abolition of Top-Secret Legislation which is seeking to nullify such laws and to ensure that all future laws are made public.

Following the meeting with DEMOS, the delegation hosted a luncheon for several members of the Slovene press, including the Ljubljana daily "Delo", "TV Ljubljana", "Mladina" Magazine, and the Ljubljana Press Center. Chairman DeConcini then participated in a press conference with the election observers from Austria and Italy. Then, after observing the voting at additional polling sites, the Commission delegation departed Ljubljana and returned to Belgrade, where Co-Chairman Hoyer and Representatives Moody and Delich-Bentley joined the delegation.

Monday, April 9

Meeting with the Yugoslav Assembly
Working Group for Human Rights

The first meeting upon the Helsinki Commission delegation's return to Belgrade was with the Working Group for Human Rights of the Yugoslav Assembly. Chaired by Mijat Sukovic, the group was founded on February 15, 1990, and this was the first meeting it had with a foreign delegation.

Chairman Sukovic claimed that Yugoslavia is taking major steps to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. He reported that there is no final agreement yet to the constitutional changes but that a high degree of consensus on these changes already existed. On political organizations, he said that the Constitution and laws would be changed to make legal what is already developing in practice. The only limitations would be on those organizations that have as a goal the overthrow of the state or the fomenting of hatred. Other changes include the election of judges without limitations on terms of

office, greater accountability of public prosecutors, the abolition of restrictions on private property, and the repeal of articles in the Criminal Code on verbal offenses. Steps to protect defendants from prolonged detention were described. Sukovic said that provisions of the new Constitution will be as precise as possible in protecting human rights.

When Chairman DeConcini express concern about Kosovo, Sukovic conceded that there were human rights abuses in Kosovo, but not in the usual sense. He said that the authorities were not suppressing individual freedoms there without cause or reason. He pointed to the existence of separatists and chauvinist groups who use violence and terror to force non-Albanians in the province to leave and who want to secede from Yugoslavia. Like any other state, Yugoslavia would have to preserve its territorial integrity, and, while this might limit freedoms, there was no other choice. Sukovic regretted certain abuses on the part of the authorities and reported that disciplinary actions will be taken against those who have overstepped their authority. He asked the delegation to examine the complicated situation in Kosovo closely, however, and claimed that there were some recent improvements in the situation there.

DeConcini responded by saying he came to Yugoslavia with an open mind and continued to be concerned about numerous instances where individuals receive sentences for nationalist expression. He said it seemed that former Kosovo party chief Azem Vlasi, on trial for "counter-revolutionary activity," was being singled out for punishment. He noted that the Commission delegation's request to meet with Vlasi or with Adem Demaqi, an ethnic Albanian imprisoned since 1976, were not favorably received. DeConcini also mentioned the recent detention of several members of the Youth Parliament in Kosovo, including its leader, Blerim Shala.

On Vlasi, Sukovic said that the publicity his trial was receiving helped ensure that it was conducted in a legal manner. He added that it would not be wise to evaluate the trial before it had concluded; it would be best to respect the decision of the court. In any event, a Commission meeting with Vlasi was not a matter over which the Working Group had authority. Co-Chairman Hoyer then asked whether Vlasi had been charged with advocating or using violence. Sukovic responded that Vlasi was accused of seeking the forcible overthrow of the constitutional order and that the court accepted this charge for the trial. He added, however, that he himself did not want to take a position on the indictment, not because he was avoiding the issue but because it was not the place of a parliamentarian to interfere. Hoyer noted that the judicial as well as executive branches of government could be responsible for human rights violations since sometimes the two are not clearly separated. It is therefore appropriate for those monitoring human rights to question charges against a person, even if the courts had not ruled on those charges. Representative Bentley intervened at this point to note that it was good that Vlasi's trial was open, since some past trials in Yugoslavia were not. Sukovic closed the discussion by saying that he might be cautious in discussing the trial but that this was essential in a legal state where parliaments and courts do not interfere with each other.

Meeting with Representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church

The next meeting was with the leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Belgrade. Metropolitan Jovan, Bishop of Zagreb and Ljubljana, greeted the delegation as acting Patriarch due to the illness of Patriarch German. He and other church representatives detailed the plight of the Church in Kosovo. They said that the roots and history of the Serbian Orthodox Church were in Kosovo, evidenced by more than 20 monasteries in the region. Among the many incidents they cited were the burning of the patriarchate at Pec in 1981, the attempted rape of a 73 year-old nun in 1983, and numerous instances of graves being desecrated. Serbs and Montenegrins are moving out of Kosovo and church attendance is declining as a result. They noted that no Mosques or Islamic religious areas have been desecrated. They expressed appreciation over an appeal recently adopted at a session of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, which alleged that "Fundamentalist Islam is instigating the Albanian Moslem population ... to wage a religious war against the Orthodox Christians." DeConcini, Hoyer and Bentley thanked the religious leaders for their views on the situation in Kosovo.

Meeting with the Jewish Community

The Helsinki Commission delegation met next with Jasa Almuli, President of the Jewish Community in Belgrade, and members of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Community in Yugoslavia. Mr. Almuli started by noting how the Jewish community in Yugoslavia was virtually wiped out during World War II and that a small number now seek to maintain that community. He cited a will to survive, assistance from American Jews and tolerance by the Serbian authorities as factors which help maintain the community. He noted that Serbs do not have an anti-Semitic tradition and that a Serbian-Jewish Society now exists after a period when it was denied registration. Almuli added that both Jews and Serbs suffered at the hands of the Croatian Ustashe during the war period, and that Serbs now feel like Jews in Kosovo. He noted recent Serbian sympathy to giving the Jewish community back property confiscated in the 1950's and the banning in Serbia of the extremist anti-Semitic book, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.*

Co-Chairman Hoyer urged caution on the banning of books, arguing that lies should be countered, not banned. He noted that the Helsinki Final Act called for freedom of expression, even if the views were repugnant, and maintained that laws banning ideas could easily backfire on a small group. DeConcini added that a member of the Ku Klux Klan is running for a seat in the U.S. Senate, which was "hard to swallow" but had to be tolerated. Almuli and others responded that they did not favor banning unless necessary, explaining that Hitler's *Mein Kampf* had been published but with commentary explaining the text. They noted anti-Semitic activities were on the rise in Croatia, such as writing

"Juden, Raus!" and other graffiti on walls and the publication of interviews with former Ustashe officials. It was noted that increased freedom at first brings out a lot of "rubbish" as people become more vocal, with Almuli adding that increased nationalism generally, and the search for someone to blame for existing socio-economic problems exacerbated the situation.

Chairman DeConcini asked about Yugoslav-Israeli relations. Almuli answered that Serbia favors the resumption of ties (Representative Bentley pointed out that Serbian Foreign Secretary Alexandar Prlja recently visited Israel) and that the federal government considered it only as a question of when and how. He was optimistic that it would happen by the end of the year. On religious issues, it was explained that few Jews in Yugoslavia practice their religion. The only rabbi in the country is ill, although there are now several students attending seminary school. The only problem in developing religious life was the opposition of local authorities to the construction of a synagogue in Zagreb.

Following the meeting, the Commission delegation took a brief tour of the Jewish museum in Belgrade. They then attended a lunch hosted by Robert Rackmales, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade. They were joined by several Yugoslav journalists, academicians, human rights lawyers and activists, including members of the Helsinki Monitoring Group.

Meeting with Slobodan Milosevic,
President of the Presidency of Serbia

The Helsinki Commission delegation had a long meeting with Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Presidency of the Republic of Serbia. Joining President Milosevic were Zoran Sokolovic, President of the Assembly of Serbia; Stanko Radmilovic, President of the Serbian Executive Council; and Alexandar Prlja, Serbian Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Radmilovic initiated the discussion with a description of the official Serbian view of the situation in Kosovo. He said democracy and the rule of law cannot be sidestepped in Kosovo. However, he added, nowhere in the world is democracy without limits. Associations which seek to restrict civil freedoms or violate the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia cannot be tolerated; Serbia cannot sit at a negotiating table with those who want to have the cradle of its nation secede. He maintained that ethnic Albanians should be, and are, treated with equality, asking rhetorically how thousands upon thousands of Serbs being pressured into leaving Kosovo can be considered Serbian repression. He said that improved economic conditions are a prerequisite for peace in Kosovo and that Serbia will do all it can to promote these conditions, including by encouraging foreign investment. In the meantime, the authorities will have to do what they must to restore order in the region, disrupted by Albanian separatists.

Chairman DeConcini responded by noting the contradictory statements by the many sides in the Kosovo dispute. Recalling commitments in the Helsinki Final Act, he said that terrorism and attempts violently to overthrow a government cannot be tolerated. At the same time, from what he said was an outsider's view, the Serbian response to Kosovo has been hard, causing as many as 49 deaths in the recent crackdown. He argued that if activism is not connected with an attempt at violent overthrow, the response must be measured. The Chairman again stated that he was troubled about the Azem Vlasi trial, since no one says that Vlasi has advocated or used violence. Co-Chairman Hoyer added that there are a number of reports about the plight of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, including a recent Helsinki Watch report alleging discrimination. He said that dissent is now more recognized as a positive force as pluralism has grown in the Socialist, one-party countries of the world. He agreed fully with the Serbian position on violent acts but noted that there are other concerns, adding that the problems in Kosovo needs to be resolved through dialogue and discussion. He said, however, that free speech, including calls for independence, was protected by the Helsinki Final Act. Representative Bentley, referring to Hoyer's remarks, said that Kosovo is what is making the headlines and is making the Serbian people look evil. She stressed the need to work toward a solution in Kosovo.

President Milosevic responded first to the issue of public opinion. He reported that Americans are highly regarded in Serbia, but people don't understand how the United States can be so supportive of an Islamic fundamentalist and drug-trafficking Mafia in Kosovo that works against the people living there. He said that Serbia has offered the Albanians of Kosovo democracy and equality but that it cannot accept Kosovo breaking away from Serbia and joining another state, adding that Kosovo was never Albanian territory, despite the decades-old plan to create a "Greater Albania." Serbian churches and monasteries exist throughout Kosovo, and yet Serbian children cannot go outside without being beaten and Serbian girls cannot go outside without being attacked. Serbs get no service in stores; they cannot get on buses. Churches are damaged, cattle are destroyed. That is not simply the peaceful expression of views, Milosevic concluded, and Serbia had to say, "enough is enough." On reports of discrimination, he alleged that the actions against people are justified if they are not going to work, are not paying their utility bills and are not registering their cars. On the Vlasi trial, he admitted that Yugoslav laws on "counter-revolutionary activity" are outdated but recalled that Vlasi was arrested not for the peaceful expression of views but for endangering the lives of 800 miners by encouraging them to stay in the mines longer than was safe. Concluding, Milosevic stated Serbia's commitment to democracy, including multiple-party elections and abolition of laws on verbal offenses. He claimed that, except for Kosovo, Serbia had less ethnic strife than the other Yugoslav republics and that thousands of Albanians lived happily and without discrimination in Belgrade, working as doctors and other highly regarded professions. All have instruction in their own language, and Albanians have their own university and Academy of Science.

Chairman DeConcini agreed with President Milosevic that relations between Yugoslavia and the United States as well as between Americans and Serbs are good. Yet, he took issue with the claim that Vlasi had threatened the lives of striking miners, and he asked why the Commission was denied permission to visit Vlasi, or Adem Demaqi, or to meet with university students in Pristina. Milosevic answered that the judiciary was independent and that he could not interfere with court proceedings to get the delegation a meeting with Vlasi, but he said he didn't understand why the delegation could not visit the university in Pristina and promised to look into the matter. He said that Yugoslavia was not the East bloc but an open country and that Kosovo was not a foreign zone. He cautioned that the alternative groups in Kosovo will seek to misinform the Commission but confirmed that, as far as he was concerned, the delegation could see anybody it liked. He repeated, however, that he could not decide on a Vlasi visit. Radmilovic urged the Commission to be sure to talk with Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo.

Chairman DeConcini and Representative Bentley asked about the economic situation in Kosovo. President Milosevic and Foreign Secretary Prlja noted that a lot of money has gone into the province but that it was often abused by local officials. Milosevic added that a new textile factory had recently been completed in Kosovo which would help the employment situation somewhat. He also said that Serbia was committed to the development of a market economy. Representative Moody asked about the situation in Vojvodina, the other province of Serbia, and the President responded that the situation was good there. Moody also asked for figures on Serbian outmigration from Kosovo, and Radmilovic responded that 400,000 have left in the last 50 years, 40,000 in the last decade. As a result, Kosovo's population went from 43% Serb just before World War II to only 10% today. When asked about Slovene concerns about Serbian policies, Milosevic explained that Slovenes report only the bad, not the good. For example, the Slovene press covered the recent incident of alleged poisoning of Albanian children in Kosovo, but, when that story turned out not to be true, the Slovene press did not report that.

Meeting with Rajko Danilovic,
Lawyer for Azem Vlasi

The Commission delegation next met with Azem Vlasi's lawyer, Rajko Danilovic, to discuss the on-going trial. Danilovic said the charges against Vlasi were political, not criminal. In contrast to what has been alleged, Vlasi went to the mines because he was concerned about the health of the striking miners. He was replaced as head of the League of Communists of Kosovo because he opposed Serbian constitutional amendments limiting the autonomy of Kosovo. However, Danilovic added, Vlasi was not at first trusted by the Albanian population of Kosovo because he did not support separatist elements; only since the trial has he become a symbol to Albanians in Kosovo. Danilovic expressed hope that

the laws would soon be changed so that the charges against Vlasi would be dropped and he could go free. He said that the trial should have been stopped on several occasions before. Danilovic gave the delegation background on Vlasi and details of how the trial is proceeding. He reported that Vlasi has not been mistreated while imprisoned.

Following the meeting with Mr. Danilovic, the Commission delegation attended a reception hosted by U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann. A large number of federal and Serbian officials were present, along with journalists, religious figures and other private citizens.

Tuesday, April 10

Early in the morning, the Commission delegation left Belgrade and flew to Pristina, the capital of Kosovo province.

Meeting with Kosovo Assembly

The first meeting in Kosovo was with representatives of the Kosovo Provincial Assembly. Djordje Bozovic, President of the Assembly, welcomed the Commission. He reported that human rights are guaranteed for all citizens in Kosovo, and that there are educational, cultural and scientific institutions available for the ethnic Albanians. He documented the position of Albanians in the Yugoslav political system, where they hold seats in assemblies, have served as head of the Yugoslav state and represented Yugoslavia as Ambassadors in 15 countries. He said, however, that some Albanian "chauvinists" want to dominate over the Serbs. After World War II, Serbs were denied permission to return to Kosovo. Albanians came in from Albania, and the population grew. There was a process of "Islamitization," the word "Metohija" ("church lands") was dropped from the name of the province, and, now, there was open terrorism with Tirane as the propaganda center. Albanians are involved in drug-trafficking, use firearms, put children among their ranks and have almost destroyed things beyond repair.

Chairman DeConcini thanked President Bozovic for his presentation. He explained the Commission's mandate to monitor human rights compliance and said that the Commission was not in Kosovo "to point fingers" but to get answers to many questions about the situation there. He said that he was very concerned about the human rights of

both the majority and the minorities in Kosovo. In particular, DeConcini expressed concern about the Vlasi trial, as well as the continued detention of members of the Youth Parliament in Kosovo. Co-Chairman Hoyer asked the other members of the Assembly in attendance whether they held views differing from those presented by President Bozovic. He also asked why the amendments to the Serbian Constitution were necessary. Finally, he referred to the allegations of terrorism allegedly committed by Albanian separatists and asked whether there have been terrorist acts committed against the ethnic Albanian population as well, with DeConcini noting the 49 reported deaths in recent clashes. Representative Moody associated himself with the views of the Chairman and Co-Chairman of the delegation, noting how deeply rooted in history Kosovo's problems are. Representative Bentley made a similar statement, noting that there are a lot of preconceived ideas about the situation in Kosovo that needed to be clarified.

In response, Bozovic and the other Assembly members said that the Vlasi trial and other arrests were under the competence of other authorities and that the Assembly was in no position to interfere in these matters. They confirmed that some members of the Assembly did have alternative views and that there had also been violence against Albanians in Kosovo, but this was Albanian attacking Albanian. Bozovic also claimed that there had only been 29 deaths resulting from this year's clashes, not 49 as claimed by Chairman DeConcini.

Meeting with Alternative Groups in Kosovo

The delegation next met with representatives of several alternative groups in Kosovo. Among the groups represented were: the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo; the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative Association, the Youth Parliament of Kosovo, the Yugoslav Helsinki Committee, the Committee for Defense of Human Rights in Kosovo, the Women's Branch of the Democratic Initiative Association, the Social Democratic Party and the Peasants' Party in Kosovo.

Each one of the groups described its membership, program and activities. Ibrahim Rugova, president of the Democratic Alliance, said that his group was interested in the wide range of issues facing Kosovo. The Alliance did not want to break away from Yugoslavia but wanted to improve the situation in Kosovo through democratic means and with equal treatment for all inhabitants of Kosovo. This meant integrating Kosovo into the democratic trends developing elsewhere in Yugoslavia. Rather than engaging in dialogue, however, the authorities took repressive measures. He pointed out that the Alliance, the largest of the alternative groups with 330,000 members, had about 3,000 members who are not ethnic Albanian and expressed hope that more Serbs will join.

Idriz Ajeti and Zekeria Cana of the Committee in Defense of Human Rights in Kosovo, which did not have any Serb or Montenegrin members, monitored human rights in Kosovo. Cana referred to the situation in Kosovo as a example of state terrorism and apartheid. He referred to the incident, still being investigated, of Albanian children being poisoned, and he cited cases where innocent Albanians were the victims of police brutality. Cana claimed that people caught making a "V" sign with their fingers received 20-day sentences, and, in the case of a 5 year-old who made this sign, one of the parents received a 60-day sentence. Police entered and searched houses without court orders, sometimes beating the residents. When asked by Co-Chairman Hoyer, Cana also described his own situation, which included the taking away of his passport after returning from a trip abroad.

Veton Surroi described the work of the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative, the Pristina Branch of which he represented. Surroi said the Initiative was the only political organization which existed throughout Yugoslavia since the dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. Rather than gathering in the streets to protest, the Initiative encouraged the gathering of signatures to petitions and was able to get 400,000 sign a petition calling for a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Kosovo. Yet, he continued, there was no positive sign given by the authorities to this effort. He claimed that the "puppet regime" in Kosovo was not interested in creating a new balance in Kosovo which would be the result of free elections. Instead, it seeks to harass members of alternative groups. He concluded that the situation in Kosovo in April 1990 was worse than it was in January.

Ylber Hysa, representing the Youth Parliament, said that his group had 100,000 members and sought to encourage tolerance and understanding in Kosovo. He said the group had initiated passive civil disobedience in the hope of encouraging democratic thinking in Kosovo. He reported on the recent detention of several members of the Youth Parliament for activities relating to the alleged poisoning of Albanian schoolchildren. Asked by Chairman DeConcini about violent acts against Serbs, Hysa referred to incidents in recent years, including an attempt to lynch a Serb accused of poisoning the children. He said his group deplored such acts and is seeking to prevent them from happening.

Hivzi Islami, of the Kosovo Peasants' Party, described problems in the countryside, such as insufficient private initiatives, a lack of infrastructure and poor energy supply. He also noted problems of social welfare and living standards generally. He expressed concern about Belgrade manipulation of information regarding the outmigration of Serbs and its causes, as well as attempts to bring 100,000 Serbs back into Kosovo, which he called "colonization." He said that the Peasants' Party was against violence and saw the initiation of a dialogue as the solution to the present crisis in Kosovo.

Shkelzen Maliqi described the work of the Social Democratic Party to which he belongs. He said it currently had about 2,000 members but enjoys widespread support. He added that the party, among the first alternative groups to be set up in Kosovo advocates social democracy without regard to ethnicity and does not advocate violence.

Gazmend Pula of the Pristina Branch of the Helsinki Committee argued that in addition to violations of the rights of individual Albanians who have detained, beaten and killed, it was important also to look at collective, national and religious rights. He said that Albanians have been treated as second-class citizens and that this needs to be changed. He hoped that a solution could be found within the context of the Yugoslav federation.

Luljeta Pula-Beqiri, president of the Women's Branch of the Democratic Alliance in Kosovo briefly commented on the situation of women in Kosovo. She said that women are mobilized against the violence which has victimized their families. She said that the repressive measures will fail to achieve their ends.

Ali Aliu, a member of the Executive Council of the Democratic Initiative, then took the floor to ask Ambassador Warren Zimmermann, who had accompanied the delegation to Kosovo, to present his view on the situation in Kosovo. Ambassador Zimmermann responded that he has spoken out strongly about human rights in Kosovo and has urged that a non-violent solution be found. He said that a dialogue should begin which has its goal democracy, free elections and free choice.

At this point, Co-Chairman Hoyer closed the meeting, thanking the participants for their time.

After the meeting, the Commission delegation held a short press conference, during which questions were asked about the contents of the discussions held both in Belgrade and Pristina. At this time, Chairman DeConcini separated from the rest of the delegation in order to visit Medjugorje.

Meeting with Bozur Society

Following the press conference, the delegation travelled outside of Pristina to meet with the Bozur Society, which has as its goal the protection of the rights of Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo.

Bogdan Kecman of the Bozur Society opened the meeting, saying that he had asked a number of individuals who had been victimized by Albanians to come to the meeting so that the U.S. Congress could hear the truth about the situation in Kosovo. Co-Chairman Hoyer then gave a brief description of the Helsinki Commission's activities to encourage greater respect for human rights guaranteed in the Helsinki Final Act.

After the introductions, several individuals took the floor to describe the problems they faced as Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo. A nun talked about the problems of the Serbian Orthodox Church. She said that Albanians had burned their crops, killed their cattle and pigs and stolen their sheep. They destroyed fences as well. She claimed that she was personally attacked and hit on the head several times by Albanians. She said that Serbs are afraid to till the land or even to leave their homes, although President Slobodan Milosevic had taken measures to improve the situation. A theologian from Pec mentioned the rape of a 70 year-old nun and of a 9 year-old girl and said that the church has suffered at the hands of both Communists and Islamic fundamentalists.

A teacher reported that her husband had been killed by an Albanian in front of his home. When the killer was put on trial, it was conducted in Albanian and she was not provided with an interpreter. She said that a crowd of 200 Albanians gathered outside the courthouse and that she and her family needed police protection. Then a man spoke about Albanian attempts to kill him and needs protection in travelling to and from work. He said he has called for the resignation of Croatian and Slovene leaders who have fostered this hatred. Another man and woman spoke of the digging up of the graves of Serbs, including that of a baby whose body was ripped apart.

A doctor then took the floor who claimed that, as a result of Albanian harassment, there are fewer and fewer non-Albanian doctors. He also reported that during the clashes earlier this year, injured Albanians received medical treatment. Regarding the reports of poisoning Albanian children, he said that evidence indicates that the whole thing was planned in advance. Finally, he said that Albanian doctors violated medical ethnics by treating patients before diagnosing their illness. Asked by Ambassador Zimmermann whether he felt the children faked the poisoning, the doctor responded that some did but that others were clearly frightened.

Finally, an ethnic Albanian spoke of terror imposed on the whole population by Albanian separatists. He said that Albanians in Serbia have more rights than any minority anywhere. He said that it was not safe to drive in Kosovo with Belgrade license plates.

Bogdan Kecman closed the meeting by asking for the assistance of the U.S. Congress. He said that his group wants democracy in Kosovo, although he added that it did not wish to be a political party.

Following the meeting with Bozur Society, the Kosovo Assembly hosted a luncheon in honor of the Commission delegation, during which the political situation in Kosovo was further discussed. Then Representatives Moody and Bentley separated from the delegation and visited the Serbian Orthodox monastery of Gracanica, outside Pristina, while Co-Chairman Hoyer continued with the official itinerary.

Meeting with Rahman Morina, President of the
Provincial Committee of the League of Communists of Kosovo

President Morina, after greeting the Commission delegation, first reported on developments within the League of Communists. He said that the League wanted democracy in Yugoslavia and was willing to work within the framework of a multi-party political system. He added that, while the League was giving up its monopoly on power, it would continue to compete for power, removing everything inhumane in past policy. As far as Kosovo is concerned, the League is against separation or, for now at least, the creation of a confederation. Instead, the party favors a unified Serbia in which there would be national equality. While separatism was not to be tolerated, some youths who fell for these ideas and were arrested for their activities were amnestied. He saw the existence of alternative movements in Kosovo as a step toward democracy but noted that legislation still needs to be passed which will give these groups a legal basis. He said that the party favors dialogue with all progressive forces but is against dealing with those alternative groups made up of one nationality only and seeking to secede from Serbia.

Hoyer said he was glad to hear that the party was willing to participate in a multi-party system but expressed some concern about constraints on the political debate. He asked which groups advocated secession or were made up of a single nationality. Morina responded that the Democratic Alliance, the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative and the Youth Parliament fell into these categories. Hoyer responded that he had met with representatives of these and other alternative groups and that they said they did not seem to advocate secession. In addition, out of 330,000 members, the Democratic Alliance claimed 3,000 non-Albanian members. He asked whether membership lists had to be presented to get official recognition. Morina said he was skeptical of the figures presented by the Democratic Alliance.

Hoyer confessed that he felt the conditions described for a multi-party system appear to be less than democratic as far as the recognition of alternative groups was concerned. He said that amnesties for certain youths was good but not enough to bring reconciliation and asked with what alternative groups would he initiate a dialogue. Morina responded by saying that Kosovo has had little experience with multi-party systems but that the party was willing to engage in a dialogue with those who were not focusing on one national group. Hoyer repeated his question regarding which alternative groups fit Morina's criteria for engaging in a dialogue, to which Morina answered that he could think of none and that Hoyer should ask the alternative groups where their programs coincide.

Meeting with Jetis Bajrami, President
of the Islamic Association of Kosovo

The delegation's next meeting was with the Islamic community in Kosovo. Jetis Bajrami, president of the Islamic Association, said that Kosovo needs help, not materially but spiritually. He said that Albanians were a friendly, hospitable people who are against bloodshed. Instead of peace and equal rights, however, there was violence. Members of the Islamic community, he added, were killed, and the federal police did not even spare the mosques. He mentioned the harassment of Albanian women by Yugoslav soldiers.

When Hoyer mentioned that some have called the conflict in Kosovo as "jihad" by fundamentalist Muslims, Bajrami rejected the thought that it was a Holy war and said that the statement of the World Council of Churches in Geneva represented an arbitrary decision. He said that the people of Kosovo don't know what a holy war is. Hoyer then asked about Albanian harassment of Serbs, even if it wasn't inspired by Islam. Bejrami answered that the situation in Kosovo is chaotic and that these things, including church desecrations, have occurred. However, he said it was difficult to find which individuals were responsible for these acts. Hoyer concluded that both sides need to acknowledge human rights violations, which would represent a first step toward resolving differences. Bajrami suggested that parties sit at a table and address joint problems.

Representative Bentley, who rejoined the delegation along with Representative Moody, said she agreed 100% with that statement. Noting that there are accusations coming from both sides, she said that she and Representative Moody had just returned from Gracanica, where they met Bishop Pavle. Pavle reported that he had been attacked three or four times himself. Representative Bentley suggested that Bajrami and Bishop Pavle get together and discuss how to solve the problems of Kosovo, adding that who took the first step in contacting the other made no difference as long as it was done. Bajrami expressed regret for what had happened to Pavle, whom he regarded as a very nice man. He said that he would talk with him soon.

Representative Moody added that the situation in Kosovo is so tense that the act of one person can be blamed on an entire people. He maintained that efforts needed to be undertaken immediately to lower the tension so that these accusations would not be thrown back and forth. He said the best way to do this was to sit down at a table together and have a dialogue.

That evening, the Helsinki Commission delegation hosted a dinner for several members of various alternative groups and several intellectuals in Pristina, including university professors and journalists. Nadira Vlasi, the wife of Azem Vlasi, was also in attendance. Chairman DeConcini, meanwhile, had arrived in Medjugorje, where he spent the rest of the day and that night, returning to Pristina the next morning to rejoin the delegation.

Visit to Medjugorje

Chairman DeConcini spent approximately one-half day and one night in Medjugorje, a small village in the republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina near the city of Mostar. Since 1981, several children in Medjugorje witnessed repeated apparitions of the Virgin Mary. As a result, Medjugorje has been visited by Roman Catholics from around the world.

Chairman DeConcini met with one of the visionaries who witnessed the apparitions and several inhabitants of the village. He explained the Commission interest in human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience and religious rights. In this connection, he asked about the status of believers in Yugoslavia. Overall, the responses indicated an increasing degree of tolerance of religious activity in recent years.

Wednesday, April 11

Meeting with Representatives of Pristina University

After some difficulty, the Commission delegation was able to schedule a meeting with representatives of the university, although the meeting was held in the hotel where the delegation was staying and not at the university itself. The representatives of the university, however, consisted entirely of professors. They described the difficulties Serbs faced in Kosovo and problems at the university as they saw them. They objected, however, when the Commission delegation brought in two university students, both Albanian, who wanted to talk about their problems. In light of this objection, Co-Chairman Hoyer ended the meeting, informing the professors that he was extremely disappointed at their refusal to let the students speak. They acquiesced, and the meeting reconvened.

The students said this incident was but an example of the situation they faced in Kosovo, explaining that the university was segregated between Serb and Albanian. They called for free elections and open dialogue in Kosovo, as well as the release of all political prisoners.

A Serbian professor responded to the student's complaint about segregation. He acknowledged that, in practice, there are two universities but that this separation was due to the fact that Serbian students wanted instruction in their own language and could not even hear news in Serbo-Croatian. He said the situation was unfair in Kosovo from 1974 until about one year ago, when the amendments to the Serbian Constitution brought a greater balance between the treatment of Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo. He concluded, however, by also calling for a dialogue and discussion of problems.

Following the university meeting, the Helsinki Commission delegation departed Pristina and returned to Belgrade.

Second Meeting with the Foreign
Policy Committee of Yugoslav Assembly

As part of the conclusion of the Helsinki Commission's visit to Yugoslavia, a second meeting was scheduled with the official hosts, the Foreign Policy Committee of the Yugoslav Assembly. This meeting also afforded an opportunity for Co-Chairman Hoyer and Representatives Moody and Bentley, who were not present at the first meeting, to meet with the Committee in a formal setting.

Chairman DeConcini reviewed his observations while in Yugoslavia. He recalled that from the beginning he sought to be open-minded and objective in his approach and said he had learned a great deal. He said that his experience in Slovenia was a very positive one and that the voting observed by the Commission appeared to be conducted in a fair manner. He said that Kosovo, on the other hand, was disturbing to him and others. He felt that there were groups with whom to have a dialogue but that no dialogue was taking place. Co-Chairman Hoyer added that he felt the officials in Kosovo were not forthcoming on the issues raised. Representative Moody stressed the need to engage in a dialogue that would relieve the tension which could cause another explosion of violence in Kosovo.

Alexandar Simovic, President of the Committee, thanked the Commission delegation for taking the time to come to Yugoslavia and see what the situation in Yugoslavia is like.

After concluding the meeting with the Foreign Policy Committee, the delegation attended a luncheon at the residence of Robert Rackmales, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade. A number of Yugoslav citizens active in the human rights field or concerned with economic and environmental issues in Yugoslavia also attended.

Meeting with Budimir Loncar,
Yugoslav Secretary for Foreign Affairs

The Commission delegation next met with Budimir Loncar, Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Chairman DeConcini and Co-Chairman Hoyer both thanked Loncar for the assistance provided by the Foreign Ministry in preparing the visit, which they felt was a good one. DeConcini expressed concern about the tragedy in Kosovo, and Hoyer regretted that there was not a greater willingness by authorities to engage in a dialogue there. Hoyer also expressed an interest in Loncar's views in the CSCE process. Representative Moody said that there were many people of goodwill in Kosovo and that it was unfortunate that things were so tense that a few people could set off a major confrontation. He added that the "center of gravity" was not in support of secession, however, and said that he was more optimistic now than before.

In response, Secretary Loncar acknowledged that Kosovo was a serious and complicated problem. He maintained, however, that Yugoslavia as a whole is at a crossroads in its history and is going through a process of deep transformation. While things are moving at a faster pace than expected, Yugoslavia wants to be an integral part of Europe and knows what it must do politically and economically to achieve this end.

Turning to the CSCE process, Secretary Loncar said that it has a contribution to the changes taking place in Europe. Given the new conditions, however, the process had to develop into a system, with security negotiations brought in and regular meetings of foreign ministers. Instead of being based on balance of interests, it should be based on common interests. He noted that Eastern Europe is receiving considerable attention now but expressed concern that it will be forgotten when things settle down. Loncar also expressed concern about developments in the Soviet Union.

Meeting with Ante Markovic,
President of the Federal Executive Council

In the last official meeting in Yugoslavia, Ante Markovic, President of the Yugoslav Government's Federal Executive Council (a position equivalent to Prime Minister) gave the Helsinki Commission delegation a brief description of recent progress in the Yugoslav economy, largely a result of reforms implemented at the beginning of the year. He said that inflation has been brought down to nearly zero. In addition, the Yugoslav currency, the dinar, has been made convertible, wiping out the country's large black market, thereby adding the equivalent of $1 billion from tourism during the year. He said that Yugoslavia is building up its foreign exchange reserves -- now at about $8 billion -- and hoped that further development of the tourist industry and greater flexibility for small and medium-sized enterprises will help improve things as well, especially in terms of lowering unemployment. He added that the banking system needed to be rehabilitated, especially in Kosovo.

Representative Bentley said she was happy to hear of the economic progress since her last visit to Yugoslavia. Co-Chairman Hoyer also said he was pleased to hear that the reforms seemed to be having a very beneficial effect on the lives of Yugoslav citizens. He added that this was the first time in Yugoslavia and this he saw it as a very complicated country, with many nations within a nation. Markovic replied that, when he first took office a little more than one year ago, he did not think so much could be done in such a short amount of time.

Chairman DeConcini then turned the discussion to Kosovo. He said he was very disappointed with what he saw there, as well as with the attitude of Serbian officials. President Markovic said he felt the constitutional changes underway in Yugoslavia would help things in Kosovo. Representative Moody said that it was in Serbia's interest to initiate a dialogue in Kosovo. Markovic responded that democratization was essential but that solving the country's economic problems is necessary as well. In this regard, Markovic made a strong pitch for U.S. assistance and asked the delegation to do what it could when returning to the United States to encourage U.S. business to look to Yugoslavia as a partner for trade and investment.

Following the meeting with President Markovic, the Helsinki Commission delegation held a press conference in which the members summarized their findings in Yugoslavia. After their press conference, the delegation departed Yugoslavia for Romania.

IV. CONCLUSION

On April 12, one day after the Helsinki Commission delegation left Yugoslavia, Chairman Dennis DeConcini, Co-Chairman Steny H. Hoyer and Representatives Jim Moody and Helen Delich Bentley made the following statement regarding their visit:

> "This Commission delegation came to Yugoslavia, a Helsinki signatory, with three main goals. They were: (1) to observe the first free, multi-party elections in post-War Yugoslavia, which took place in Slovenia on April 8; (2) to meet with Yugoslav officials and private citizens to discuss human rights concerns; and (3) to examine firsthand the situation in Kosovo by meeting with both Serbian and Albanian groups. Our approach was fully objective and balanced, listening to many different points of view. We came not to interfere but to learn. We hope that our visit has facilitated discussion between relevant parties.
>
> "We are grateful to the Foreign Policy Committee of the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia, chaired by Alexandar Simovic, for hosting the visit and allowing us to accomplish our goals. Our itinerary included many useful discussions with prominent officials, including Premier Ante Markovic, Foreign Secretary Budimir Loncar, Slovenian President Janez Stanovnik and Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. It also included meetings with many private individuals, religious figures and members of alternative groups and parties. We regret, however, that our requests to meet with Azem Vlasi and Adem Demaqi, both of whom the Commission believes to be political prisoners, were not granted.

"The human rights situation in Yugoslavia is a complex one. On the one hand, Yugoslavia has made significant strides towards greater openness in society and greater freedom for the individual. We were encouraged by the steps being taken in the direction of political liberalization in parts of the country, especially those steps which allow the will of the people to be expressed through free, genuine elections. The voting the Commission observed in Slovenia appeared to be conducted in a fair and proper manner, respecting the secrecy of the ballot. We are hopeful that future elections in other republics will maintain the same standards of fairness.

"Similarly, we were pleased to hear of efforts to take Yugoslav laws regarding so-called "verbal crimes" off the books. We hope that this effort will lead to the release of those individuals currently imprisoned in Yugoslavia for peacefully expressing their own points of view or acting upon other rights enumerated in the Helsinki Final Act.

"Much of our time, however, focused on the tragic situation in Kosovo. We condemn the many recent instances of violence which are tearing at the social fabric of Kosovo. We call upon all sides to eschew further acts of violence. We believe many people of goodwill exist in Kosovo, but as yet we cannot say the same of all key authorities.

"We listened with sympathy to the grievances of the Serbian and Montenegrin minorities in Kosovo province. Over the years, members of these minorities have been the victims of many instances of harassment, some of them horrible and violent, and we support those efforts directed at bringing to justice, through the law, those individuals who perpetrated these terrible acts.

"At the same time, we are very concerned about the heavy-handed reaction of the authorities to the situation in Kosovo, which, in our view, has led to many human rights violations, not to solutions. There have been many reports of police violence, including dozens of deaths, against ethnic Albanians demonstrating for their rights. Many ethnic Albanians have also been detained or imprisoned, apparently only for peaceful dissent. For example, several members of the Youth Parliament in Kosovo, including its president, Blerim Shala, were detained just prior to our arrival in Pristina. Former Kosovo party chief Azem Vlasi has been imprisoned for more than one year while his trial, which appears to be politically motivated, continues. We call for the immediate release of all individuals detained for political reasons.

"The Commission delegation believes that the problems which exist in Kosovo can only be solved through greater political pluralism and peaceful dialogue among all interested groups. We sought to encourage steps to these ends. Unfortunately, some officials in Belgrade and Pristina with whom we met appear to remain opposed to engaging in a dialogue with these groups, or to allowing them to participate in the political process. The Serbian President, for example, seemed to be inflexible on this point, and the leader of the League of Communists of Kosovo could not identify one alternative group with which he would cooperate or participate in a dialogue.

"The Commission believes that there is still a long way to go before human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected in Kosovo. We are committed to increasing our efforts to encourage better Yugoslav compliance with its Helsinki commitments and hope that these efforts will help bring to all of Yugoslavia the democratic, pluralistic conditions and mutual understanding which are the key to peace between peoples."

In light of several human rights developments which took place in Yugoslavia in the weeks immediately following their visit, Chairman DeConcini and Co-Chairman Hoyer made the following, additional press statement in Washington, DC, on April 25:

"In the last week, several steps have been taken by authorities in Yugoslavia to improve that country's human rights record. On April 18, the Presidency of Yugoslavia lifted the state of emergency which has existed in Kosovo province since February 1989 and pardoned 108 political prisoners, including Adem Demaqi, a long-standing case of concern to the Commission. We understand that the members of the Youth Parliament in Kosovo who were detained in early April have also been released. In addition, on April 24, a court in Titovo Mitrovica acquitted former Kosovo Party chief Azem Vlasi and 14 others charged with instigating a miners' strike in February 1989.

"We very much welcome these positive developments and hope that efforts currently underway to remove from the books the laws on verbal crimes, used for political cases, will soon be successfully completed. These actions address concerns we raised with officials at the federal, republic and provincial levels during our visit to Yugoslavia earlier this month and certainly represent, in our view, an improvement in Yugoslavia's compliance with its commitments in the Helsinki Final Act and other CSCE documents.

"Similarly, we are encouraged by movement toward political liberalization in parts of Yugoslavia, especially through the holding of free elections in which alternative political parties participate. Such elections were first held in Slovenia a little more than two weeks ago and, just this week, in Croatia, both of which were observed by the Commission and will be the subject of a forthcoming Commission report. We hope soon to see free, genuine elections take place throughout Yugoslavia, including at the federal level, elections which allow the will of the people to serve as the basis for political authority.

"While welcoming recent developments in Yugoslavia, we remain concerned about the volatile situation which still exists in Kosovo. The prisoner releases and lifting of the state of emergency will hopefully ease some of the tension there, but a peaceful, constructive dialogue between interested parties continues to be absent, keeping alive the possibility of renewed violence and new violations of human rights. The Commission believes such a dialogue -- which has as its primary goal the full and equal protection of the rights and freedoms of Albanian, Serb, Montenegrin, and all other inhabitants of Kosovo -- should be an immediate next step toward resolving the differences which have caused so much human suffering in that troubled province."

VISIT TO ROMANIA
April 11-12, 1990

I. OBJECTIVES

The Helsinki Commission last visited Romania in August 1987, and has followed human rights developments in the country closely since that time. The delegation to Romania intended to examine the steps made to date to institutionalize human rights guarantees and democratic institutions, preparations for the May 20 elections, and the current status of religious and minority rights in Romania. It met with a widest possible range of official and unofficial representatives.

II. THE CONTEXT

Next to the Soviet Union, perhaps no East European country carries a heavier legacy of 40 years of Communism than Romania. When the Romanian people -- mostly young people -- overthrew the Ceausescu regime last December, they were jettisoning the dictator who had not only repressed each and every one of them individually, but also had inflicted deep and lasting injuries on Romanian society. After 24 years of Ceausescu's rule, the country was deeply divided and its citizens atomized. This legacy means that Romania's future rulers cannot draw on the national unity or communal sense of purpose other emerging East European democracies have exhibited as they embark on rehabilitation and reconstruction of their societies. Not just political structures, but community ties themselves, must be rebuilt from scratch.

One of the most striking features of the Ceausescu regime was the pervasive presence and power of the Securitate, or secret police. Rumor had it that one in every four Romanians was an informer. The atmosphere of mistrust poisoned relations between families, friends and colleagues, and even accompanied exiles to their new homes. (This phenomenon explains the impressive lack of cohesiveness among Romanian exiles and consequent inability in past years to form advocacy groups for human rights in Romania.)

The Front for National Salvation (FSN) officially abolished the Securitate on January 1, and folded some of its functions and personnel into the Army. (Having turned against the Ceausescu regime during the December revolution, the Army has carried a shield of popular support that has made it almost impervious to criticism as an institution. Individual members of the Army have, however, been accused of crimes against the people, and the presence of former Securitate members in its ranks could severely shake the public's confidence.) Yet many Romanians are convinced that the Government has allowed too much of the secret police apparatus to live on and too few agents to be brought to trial. Agents continue to engage in eavesdropping and other surveillance, delivering threats to the Government's opponents, and fostering interethnic violence.

The almost complete free hand given to prosecutors during the investigative stage is one of the major factors in the nearly universal disquiet about the Securitate. There is great uncertainty as to how many Securisti have been arrested for crimes against the people, who they are, what exactly they will be charged with, where they are being held, and under what circumstances. Until they are ready to proceed to trial, the prosecutors are not compelled to divulge this information and, in general, they have not. There are additional complaints that the trials already held, including that of the Ceausescus, were conducted in such a way as to guarantee that the truth would not be revealed completely.

One of the FSN's first moves after taking power was to advance guarantees of minority rights, but its will to make good on these guarantees has appeared to be lacking or even, according to the Government's harshest critics, a facade for a continuation of Ceausescu's divide-and-conquer tactics.

After decades of silence, Romania's civil society is emerging in a cacophony of new political parties, trade unions, and religious and cultural associations. Anyone who has visited Bucharest before should make a trip to the underpass near the Intercontinental Hotel: once a dark and above all quiet crossroads, it is now a place for lively debate and discussion. The FSN promulgated a law restricting the right to demonstrate in January, but has not enforced it. Demonstrations have continued, some violent, and the Government has been perceived as too weak to maintain public order.

Numerous political party representatives have charged that the FSN has resorted to intimidation against their parties, interfered with the establishment of free trade unions and maintained a repressive political control structure in the countryside, especially in the form of collectivized agriculture. Other FSN interference, including its continuing strong influence on the media, raises concerns about the freeness and fairness of Romania's upcoming May 20 elections.

Arrival, Press Statement, Reception

The delegation arrived in Bucharest on the evening of April 11. Chairman DeConcini and Co-Chairman Hoyer made a brief statement to the Romanian press upon arrival. The delegation then proceeded to the home of U.S. Ambassador Alan Green for a reception, where they met with numerous human rights activists, religious representatives, members of the new Government and artistic figures. The guests shared their impressions of the current political climate in Romania, many emphasizing the very tenuous nature of reforms to date and the significant barriers faced by opposition parties in the May 20 parliamentary elections.

Meeting with Representatives of the American Visa Committee

On April 12, the delegation met at the U.S. Embassy with four representatives of the American Visa Committee, formed after the December revolution to press for immigration to the United States. The committee represents the approximately 4,000 Romanian citizens who had applied for and received emigration passports during the Ceausescu regime, and consequently had lost jobs, housing and even access to food coupons. The United States had not granted them entry permission, as they did not meet normal immigration standards. Many of them have sponsors in the United States who are willing to support them financially until they get on their feet. Some would be willing to enter the United States under the parole authority of the Attorney General instead of as refugees, and as such would require less government support.

When asked why they still wanted to leave after the December revolution, the committee members said that they continued to be considered "traitors" for wishing to leave. They felt that Romania's 40-year-old corrupt system was intractable, and that they had already paid a heavy price in their quest for freedom. They expressed no confidence that any good could come out of Romania's current fluid situation.

Meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Romulus Neagu

The delegation next met with Deputy Foreign Minister Romulus Neagu, Acting Foreign Minister during the absence of Foreign Minister Sergiu Celac. Chairman DeConcini opened the meeting by wishing the Government every success in bringing about free and fair elections through which the Romanian people could finally express their will. He commended the new Government on making a statement of full adherence to the Helsinki process one of its first acts. And he expressed the Commission's hope to learn during its short visit to Bucharest of the Government's plans for bringing about human rights improvements, including those affecting the minority and majority populations of the country, and improvements in its relations with neighboring countries.

Co-Chairman Hoyer pointed up some of the differences between the Romanian and "sister" revolutions: the revolution in Romania was bloodier, and many of those currently in power were in positions of authority at some time during Ceausescu's regime. He expressed his conviction that these two aspects had influenced the depth of changes made so far, and hoped that far-reaching changes would be realized. He then asked about Romania's plans for foreign election monitors.

Deputy Foreign Minister Neagu outlined several other aspects of Romania's revolution. He noted that the system that had been imposed on Romania had the same features throughout the region: a "monolithic dictatorship of Communist parties doomed to failure," which societies had decided to oust from political life. The reaction to the dictatorial regime was, however, different in each country, with the broad differences being those between evolutionary and revolutionary processes. In other countries, changes had been initiated inside the Communist parties themselves. The earlier those processes had started, the later they were in coming to fruition. One example of this thesis would be Yugoslavia, which set out on its own distinct path beginning in 1948. The upheavals of the 1950's through 1980's served as pressure valves. But Romania was like a boiling pot with no valve; all attempts to ease the situation were brutally suppressed.

Neagu posited that in the climate of today's Romania, it would be impossible for the Communist Party to reappear under any guise. He claimed that Romania had managed to achieve in a few days what other countries had worked on for decades: far-reaching changes in the superstructure and legislation affecting the country. In the 100 days since the revolution, Romania has created the framework for one of the most liberal societies in the world, he suggested. He admitted that Romania was not yet the most liberal society, but that it was trying to achieve this. Neagu pointed to legislation assuring absolutely free movement of individuals, an equal voice for minorities and the mechanics of the elections as examples. The election law was the result of the work of all political parties with the advice of experts from all around the world, including the United States. He felt that this law should ensure free and fair elections.

On the issue of minorities, Neagu said that the Government proceeded from the assumption that individuals can solve all problems only when they have opportunities equal to those of the rest of society. This equality of opportunity is now provided for in law. The problems the current Government has inherited from the past, including the animosity between Romanians and Hungarians, can be solved only through their own efforts. The central Government has initiated a dialogue between two minority organizations in Transylvania, the Hungarian Democratic Union and the Vatra Romaneasca ("Romanian Hearth") and that dialogue is going well. The central Government suggested that each party choose the other side's representatives for the talks. Each side has now put forward its demands, and now those demands must be reconciled.

Neagu claimed that interference from outside the country had led to the recent violent upheavals in Transylvania. He claimed that 10,000 Hungarian citizens had entered Romania on March 15, many in "well-trained, organized groups," with flags and signs. These groups placed flags on town halls, and incited ethnic Hungarian extremists to take over schools, expel children from those schools and people from their homes. These acts created a "normal reaction" from the Romanian side and encouraged extremists. Neagu painted the Tirgu Mures events as a confrontation between extremists.

Neagu said that stability had now been established in Transylvania and that the Government has implored Hungarians not to interfere in Romania's internal affairs. He said that the Romanians had tried simply not to respond to such interference, and offered to share copies of an exchange of letters between Hungarian Foreign Minister Gyula Horn and Romanian Foreign Minister Celac. He said that the Foreign Ministry would appreciate consultations with the Commission on a jointly-sponsored Romanian-Hungarian proposal on minority rights for the June meeting in Copenhagen of the CSCE Conference on the Human Dimension.

Turning to elections, Neagu said that the Romanian Government had sent written invitations to the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and the Interparliamentary Union to send election observers. The Government had also invited the 34 other participants in the CSCE. He also handed an invitation to the Commission to the delegation. He estimated that 300 to 400 foreign observers would be necessary, but shied away from offering a more precise idea because the Government does not want to give the impression that it is seeking to limit the number of observers. He said it is in the Government's interest to have a lot of observers, and that the only real difficulties will be posed by logistics. Chairman DeConcini stressed the importance of informing citizens of how many observers would be present in order to boost their confidence in the election process. If required, the Government will provide interpreters and facilities for meetings with candidates. Observers will be allowed to be present during counting of the ballots.

As to the Romanian Government's invitation to the United Nations to send observers, Neagu said that until now the organization has sent observers only to those elections which were linked to international conflict, like Namibia and Nicaragua. But the United Nations had expressed its willingness to assist the Romanian Government, as the U.N. Charter provides, with organization of the elections. The Government is communicating with the United Nations now, and waiting for its experts to arrive.

Co-Chairman Hoyer raised the Romanian Government's denial of an entry visa to King Michael the previous day as inconsistent with the Helsinki Final Act and Vienna Concluding Document. Neagu pointed out that the King was not coming as a Romanian citizen, but rather on a British passport. He must apply for a return to Romania as others, like emigre Ion Ratiu, have done. There is no visa required for returning Romanian citizens. Originally the Romanian Government had sent a message to Michael expressing its willingness to facilitate his trip. Then it had received threats against the King. With the existing political vacuum, the Government considered the King's visit to be potentially destabilizing to society, and saw its first responsibility as ensuring social peace. The Government asked the King to postpone his arrival until after the elections, and thought that he had understood. Neagu suggested that the advisors surrounding the King had pressed him to travel to Romania nonetheless, and that the Romanian Government had not been able to communicate with the King directly, as he was in seclusion.

Meeting with Prime Minister Petre Roman

During his meeting with the delegation, Prime Minister Roman stressed that the present Government is not a "Government with a political cover," but rather one of "national consensus." He, for example, is not a member of the Front for National Salvation, although he was "born with the FSN." He said that he has never asked the members of the Government about their political affiliation, but would guess that some are not FSN members. In any case, considering the unstable situation in the country, Romania needs a coalition Government, he suggested.

In response to Chairman DeConcini's question about the freedom of the Romanian media, the Prime Minister said that television and radio are under the control of the Provisional National Unity Council, and thus do not favor any political movement over any other. He suggested that complaints about Government manipulation of the media were impressionistic or the product of political jockeying among the parties.

To underline his point about the impartiality of the media, Mr. Roman offered the example of television coverage of the previous weekend's political rallies. He said that the television devoted equal amounts of time (three minutes each) to a well-attended FSN national conference and to the activities of some small political movements. If anything, he thought, such even-handed treatment of political activities of such different magnitudes was unfair.

Senator DeConcini asked about guarantees of a free and fair election in Romania. The Prime Minister said that he was heavily involved in preparations for the May 20 elections, which the Government has the responsibility to organize. He had just come from the third meeting he has held with Romania's mayors to discuss the logistics of the election. The great majority of these mayors are newly appointed by the provisional councils in the judets (counties).

Similarly, most of the country's judges were reappointed after the revolution by an independent commission of the country's most eminent jurists. The Central Electoral Commission is chaired by respected jurist Mihai Constantinescu, who is not competing for a parliamentary seat, and is made up of seven Supreme Court Justices and 70 jurists representing the parties.

The electoral law itself had roots in what Mr. Roman described as a "very tough" discussion between the ruling Government and the pre-war parties on January 12. At that time, the parties agreed that the electoral law would be valid when representatives of all existing parties would sign it. That law was passed after much discussion in the Provisional National Unity Council with 1 vote of 289 against, and as such represented a broad consensus among the parties.

Co-Chairman Hoyer asked what steps the Romanian Government has taken to dismantle and disempower the Securitate, and what will happen with its files. Mr. Roman prefaced his answer with the observation that some Securitate members had cooperated with the Army against the "terrorists" during the revolution. He said that the first step was to fold them into the troops of the Defense Ministry, and then to dissolve them as an organization. The toughest work was underway: to establish who had participated in the repression of the revolution and to fire them. About 4,000 have been fired to date, creating a new problem: no one wanted to hire them. Mr. Roman said that domestic intelligence is finished. Some Securitate agents, however, had been involved in counterintelligence against foreign agents, and these could still be useful to the new regime. Roman suggested that if these counterintelligence agents had been at work, they would have been able to foresee and head off the inter-ethnic violence in Transylvania in mid-March.

Forty Securitate agents are still in jail, Mr. Roman reported. The prosecutor, who is independent and answerable to the Provisional National Unity Council, in accordance with a new statute, is working on their cases. Their trials will be open to the public, as the first one was. But neither they nor their lawyers is allowed to speak with the press.

Turning to the relationship between church and state, the Prime Minister said that the Government no longer controlled the practice of religion in the country. At most, he suggested, it would act as a moderator between denominations competing for property. Co-Chairman Hoyer presented a certified letter from the Romanian Department of Religious Affairs to the Baptist congregation in Doroqoi, Northern Moldavia refusing permission for construction and asked Mr. Roman to look into the case. He suggested that especially in light of the damage the Ceausescu regime's poor treatment of churches had done to Romania's international reputation, a "180-degree turn" in this area could be proof of genuine change in the system.

Chairman DeConcini raised Senator Hatch's concern about providing AZT supplies to appropriate bodies in Romania for treatment of AIDS. Mr. Roman said that after the Government learned of the extent of Romania's AIDS problem (spread through transfusions and inoculations in orphanages), it immediately got help from international organizations, based mostly in France. The Ministry of Health had set up a special commission to disseminate AIDS-related medications, and this commission would be the Senator's appropriate interlocutor in Romania.

Meeting with Members of the Provisional National Unity Council

After a quick tour of the gargantuan "House of the Republic," Ceausescu's unfinished last monument to himself, the delegation proceeded to the Parliament Building, where it met with 11 members of the Provisional National Unity Council. The meeting

was chaired by PNUC Vice President Prof. Ion Minzatu. The others present on the Romanian side were (with party and PNUC commission affiliations in parentheses): Nicolae Dumitru (FSN; Commission on Education), Adrian Nastase (FSN; Commission on External Affairs); Sergiu Mesaros (National Democratic, spokesman for the Democratic Center Coalition; Chairman, Health Commission); Attila Verestay (Hungarian Democratic Union; President, PNUC's Minorities Commission); Prof. Mihai Constantinescu (Liberal Party of Liberty; Chairman, Constitutional and Juridical Commission); Corneliu Rascanu (Romanian Democratic Party, Democratic Center grouping; Finance Commission); Nicolae Cerveni (President, Liberal Socialist Party, Democratic Center grouping); Vlad Galin (Vice President, Democratic Liberal Party, Democratic Center grouping; Vice-Chair, Agricultural Commission); Ovidiu Tacaciu (President, National Reconstruction Party; Vice-Chairman, Constitutional Commission); and Iftenie Pop (Vice-President, National Peasants Party--Christian and Democratic).

Vice President Minzatu outlined the genesis and makeup of the PNUC. The 259-member provisional legislative body was the product of a February 1 agreement between the FSN Council and a number of political parties. It is composed of the old ruling FSN Council, plus three members from each party, union, minority group and the Association of Former Political Prisoners. Sixteen commissions handle the PNUC's legislative load.

The PNUC does not control the Government's finances. While the PNUC Committee for National Development decides on funding for some projects, the ministries have a lot of authority over their finances. One can only speculate about how this question will be handled after the May elections. The only certainty is that the new Parliament's first priority will be to draw up a new Constitution, and other decisions will flow from that document.

The PNUC members were more immediately concerned about the issue of party funding. Mr. Cerveni said that the parties have received only very tiny allotments, making it impossible for parties to enter the elections with well-formulated programs that have been well-advertised to the population. In the February 1 agreement, Prime Minister Roman had proposed to designate 2 million lei for starting up each political party and 3 million lei for each party's electoral campaign; yet so far, each party had received only 400,000 lei each. Mr. Cerveni suggested that the Democratic Center Coalition had grown out of the parties' concerns over funding, and that the coalition members would support one another from the financial point of view.

The PNUC members agreed that the elections would probably be free, but there was some disagreement as to whether they would be fair. Peasants Party Vice President Pop explained that the FSN had filled the political vacuum created in Romania in the wake of the December revolution, and had since taken on all the means of ruling available to the previous regime. The FSN was both a party and the Government, and so the gap between it and the other parties is huge. The Peasants Party had hoped to postpone the elections in order to close this gap.

Commissioner DeConcini noted that in the other East European states and in Nicaragua, voters had not been familiar with the parties and yet they voted against the Communists. Mr. Pop replied that Romanians could not forget their "big neighbor" who is not democratic. Mr. Cerveni and FSN representative Dumitru stressed in addition the legacy of fear and lack of civic education in Romania stemming from the past 45 years of repressive rule -- and the need in coming months and years to change not only the political structure of the country, but also the spirit of the people.

The PNUC members joined the delegation for lunch at Deputy Chief of Mission Larry Napper's home. The delegation then left for Sofia.

VISIT TO BULGARIA
April 12-13, 1990

The delegation arrived in Sofia, Bulgaria on the afternoon of Thursday, April 12 and was greeted by U.S. Ambassador Sol Polansky.

The Ambassador briefed the delegation on the current situation in Bulgaria, focussing primarily on the upcoming elections and the prospect for their fairness. Ambassador Polansky also provided the members background information on Prime Minister Lukanov who they were scheduled to meet later. Questions were also addressed to the Ambassador regarding his assessments of the current and past relationship between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union.

Meeting with Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov

Following their briefing by Ambassador Polansky, the delegation met at the Council of Ministers for more than two hours with Bulgarian Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov. The Prime Minister opened the meeting by extending greetings to the delegation and a personal greeting to Co-Chairman Hoyer and indicated that this was the third time that they have had the opportunity to meet with one another. Lukanov then talked about the "entirely new atmosphere" in Bulgaria and the fact that the people themselves are convinced and determined to build a democratic, pluralistic society focussing on the self-determination and self-development of man.

Co-Chairman Hoyer opened his remarks by talking about his two previous visits to Bulgaria, each having a different atmosphere. He recalled being in Bulgaria in September 1987 and being told by former President Zhivkov that Bulgaria was making a "180 degree turn." Six months later, however, he was also told that Bulgaria was making another "180 degree turn." Hoyer outlined the purpose of the delegation's visit -- to see how democratic developments are going for they appear to be in a state of real flux. However, Hoyer indicated that with these new developments we may see a closer cooperation between our two countries.

Prime Minister Lukanov then discussed the changes underway in Bulgaria beginning with assuring the delegation that the Government of Bulgaria found it "the right thing to do" in satisfying the four criteria set out by Secretary of State Baker in securing improved relations between the two countries. (Four criteria: multi-party pluralism, free elections, a market economy, and a willingness to improve relations with the United States.)

Lukanov said that the Bulgarian political scene has changed unbelievably -- "the diversity of political life is amazing." This is attributed to three major forces: The Bulgarian Socialist Party; the Union of Democratic Forces; and the Agrarian Union. He did indicate that he was the first to meet with members of the opposition after the November 10 resignation of the Zhivkov government.

In talking about the elections, the Prime Minister stated that they have agreed on a multi-party system which will include a "mixed system" of majority and proportional representation. He did, however, indicate that a political party law provided for election financing from abroad for a period of one year. This was a very controversial point in parliament and required the intervention of the Prime Minister to have it approved.

As it related to access to television by the political parties, Lukanov indicated that an agreement was being hammered out whereby equal time would be given to the major parties (UDF and BSP) for 20 minutes at a time, three times a week. It would be "fair and equal access to the public." He did not say if the time periods would be during "prime time." The smaller party (the Agrarians) may receive a smaller amount of time, but Lukanov was unclear on these details. Responding to a question by Ambassador Polansky, Lukanov said that the media agreement, when worked out, would be implemented everywhere in the country on the same basis.

Discussion then turned to the print media, where Lukanov mentioned that the distribution of opposition newspapers, particularly "Democratsia" has increased. He did indicate that there is a shortage of newsprint, which comes directly from Moscow and this in turn may hamper additional production and distribution of "opposition" papers. He also stated that only "Duma" and one other newspaper is now controlled by the party; all the rest are free to print what they want.

An Electoral Commission has been set up consisting of 24 members and headed by Professor Stalev. This Commission will also be supported by local organizations. Representatives of all political parties will be inviting the maximum number of media and individuals to monitor elections both before and the day of the balloting. While he objected to the word "observers," he said that those "guests" would have access to all areas "except the polling booths themselves."

Lukanov then took an opportunity to pat himself on the back by talking about the momentous changes that have occurred in his country with "little conflict." He did express a little caution, however, by saying that he was unsure if this peaceful condition could be maintained as election day drew nearer. While Bulgaria has a long history of confrontation, he hopes that a "positive, civilized character" is maintained by all throughout.

Congressman Moody questioned the Prime Minister on his Government's move towards a market economy and how quickly that process will evolve. Lukanov indicated that the "shock therapy" model had been abandoned because of its unpopularity. The BSP has called for a "quick and radical reform" in which he cited three factors: 1) maintain relative stability of economy; 2) take into account the societal aspects -- must minimize "pain" (unemployment, inflation); 3) political situation - we must take into account the limits of our mandate. "Some people have told me that I have already gone too far."

The discussion then turned to the prospect of currency convertibility. Lukanov indicated that with a small economy like Bulgaria's, there must be foreign competition before convertibility could occur. As a result of this, Bulgaria recently interrupted its debt payment schedule and also changed its exchange rates. There will now be a two-stage approach to convertibility: first, 50% of hard currency would be retained by the generating organization and the other 50% would be sold to the banks for them to establish the market rate. There is one tier for investment purposes and the second is a floating rate (supply and demand). Next year there will be a floating currency market which will bring the two closer together, the objective being to move the two closer together.

Lukanov indicated that the new Parliament will move quickly in establishing more realistic interest rates, most likely around 8-9%. He ended his discussion on the economy by noting that any attempt at partial reform would be a "disaster."

Congresswoman Bentley asked the Prime Minister to provide the delegation with an update on the situation of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. Prime Minister Lukanov responded that "we expected that the undoing of what Zhivkov had done would not be easy." Three-hundred thousand people moved across the border, some suffering personal and psychological pain and humiliation. It is a very difficult situation to solve which will leave everyone happy. On December 29, when we decided to end the assimilation campaign and restore Muslim rights, there was a wave of joy in the Turkish community and a wave of protest in the Bulgarian community.

He then turned to the changing of an individual's name. "The real freedom is to change or retain one's name." One hundred thousand requests have been made to change names. So far 8,000-10,000 names have already been changed with no one being refused permission to change their name. Hopefully all those who want to change their names will be able to do so by the end of the year. He elaborated on the process by saying that if one wants his old name back, all he has to do is go and have it changed -- however, if he wants a new name, he must appear before the court with two witnesses who will attest that the individual is who they say they are and to indicate that the individual is changing their name voluntarily (there is some concern that in some of the Turkish villages, younger people may be subjected to pressure to change their names against their will).

Lukanov did indicate that of the 110,000 Turkish returnees to Bulgaria, approximately 1,000 still had problems finding housing and another 1,000 were having difficulties finding employment. The Government was trying to respond and has established a commission to attempt to resolve these problems. Its first meeting was held on April 11 and was chaired by the President himself.

Questions were then asked about any remaining political prisoners in Bulgaria. Lukanov stated that 60 Muslims are still in prison for reasons of terrorism. However, all other political prisoners have been released. There is strong pressure from the Muslim community to release them. Lukanov indicated that they will try and do something and hinted at a possible reduction in sentences.

Co-Chairman Hoyer inquired about any limitations placed on individuals for travel purposes, in the specific context of granting most-favored-nation trading status to Bulgaria. The Prime Minister stated that there are currently no travel restrictions. Earlier there had been some local problems with the Muslim community, but these have subsequently been taken care of.

In their concluding remarks, Lukanov made a pitch for improved relations between the United States and Bulgaria, with an emphasis on the granting of MFN trading status and an increase in exchanges between the two countries.

Co-Chairman Hoyer felt that there was a significant desire on both the part of the United States and Bulgaria to normalize relations with all of Europe -- political, economic, and cultural. However, Hoyer felt that he had reservations with granting MFN to Bulgaria before the scheduled June 10 elections.

Delegation Reception

Ambassador Sol Polansky hosted the Helsinki Commission delegation at his home and guests included Prime Minister Lukanov and representatives of the Union of Democratic Forces, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the BZNS.

Meeting with Union of Democratic Forces

On the morning of Friday, April 13, the delegation proceeded to the headquarters of the Union of Democratic Forces and had the opportunity to meet with and discuss the issues of importance to the "opposition." Attending the meeting were Dr. Petur Beron, UDF Secretary; UDF Foreign Relations Officer, Stefan Tafrov; UDF Economic Advisor, Venseslav Dimitrov; Dr. Krustyu Krustev, Deputy Chairman of Podkrepa; Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev, Chairman of the UDF and various representatives of the UDF movement.

Dr. Beron had just, that morning, returned from campaigning along the Danube and indicated that Prime Minister Lukanov had recently asked him to a debate. Dr. Beron then discussed UDF's views on the upcoming elections and the electoral process as well as the issue of equal access to the media. "The elections might be free and fair." The UDF has invited observers from many areas, including all CSCE signatory countries. He believes that most of the countries will send observers and expects between 4,000-5,000 people in Bulgaria for the elections.

In addition, UDF is counting on their own activists to monitor the elections. There will be 15,000 voting boxes and they are in need of 30,000 who will be employed during the election to observe the process. "They will not campaign for us." This idea has been organized by the UDF and does not really have the support of the other parties.

Co-Chairman Hoyer asked if the UDF was having more difficulty in outside areas. Dr. Beron felt that the local structures are the same as they were in the past with the directors of most local areas being members of the Communist Party. The UDF candidates and supporters in many areas are being harassed and told by their employers that "if we have to reduce our work force, you will be the first to go." Yet, he also felt that the Communists are interested in the fairness of the elections for the world is watching.

Turning to the question of access to the media, Dr. Beron repeated what the delegation had heard in its meeting with Prime Minister Lukanov in that negotiations were being conducted to allow three appearances a week for 20 minutes each. Ambassador Polansky raised concerns that even if you have an agreement as such, isn't the UDF concerned about coverage during the remainder of the day. Dr. Beron indicated that part of the roundtable discussions also involved how local radio stations would work. UDF representatives will ask that everything be distributed evenly but felt that if someone wants to show a clip outside their allocated time, that it should be privately funded.

In a response to a question from Co-Chairman Hoyer regarding the raising of campaign funds, Dr. Beron said that initially the opposition began by passing the hat in October 1989. However, that now will not really work since they need to raise large sums of money. He felt that they will never be able to raise as much as the Communists as they may have close to $50 million. The UDF will also try and get money from Bulgarian organizations abroad. They have already received hardware -- computers, faxes, typewriters, etc., and are in need of Xerox machines and paper to increase their copying capabilities.

Dr. Beron then shifted his comments to some criticism of the BSP. "After the UDF makes a proposal, a week later the BSP announce that they are going to implement that same proposal. The Communists have stolen our program from December. We now see it in their program that has been published."

Co-Chairman Hoyer stated that he found that in talking to Prime Minister Lukanov that he professed a strong commitment to "reform, human rights, and economic stability." How does the UDF substantively distance itself from the Communists?

Dr. Beron remarked that the system is still the same. They can change their name, but they are, on the whole, the same. The platforms could be the same, but compare their words to their deeds.

Conversation then shifted to reports of the making of a film paid for by the Communists which broaches the subject of death camps in Bulgaria. Responding to a question by Congressman Moody, Dr. Beron said there were between 40-50 death camps in Bulgaria with 3-4 being the most serious. There have been reports that people were beaten to death and their body parts were fed to pigs. He indicated that this is a very serious situation with which we must come to grips.

Congresswoman Bentley asked if there were any political prisoners remaining in Bulgaria. Dr. Beron stated that an independent organization said there are about 200. Authorities claim that all those in prison are for criminal reasons. They have created a Helsinki Watch Committee. Congressman Moody requested a meeting with this Committee.

In a response to a question from Congressman Moody regarding the trial of former Prime Minister Zhivkov and the possibility of his coming to trial before the elections and its impact on the BSP, Dr. Beron felt that he will not come to trial prior to the elections.

Dr. Zhelev entered the discussion having arrived from a meeting with President Mladenov and the representatives of the Federal Republic Central Electoral Commission where they had been discussing the electoral districts. He found that the official authorities have left some election districts twice as big as others. The UDF proposed equalizing them with no deviation larger than 15%. There was some talk of doing this by adding the military who are serving in other election districts or by people who live abroad. This point then turned on those Bulgarians who left for Turkey who will also be able to vote in the three cities of Istanbul, Ankara and Edirne.

Zhelev returned to the topic of military personnel and felt that these individuals should be permitted to vote outside of their barracks so as not to be intimidated by their superiors. The UDF will also insist that the opposition press have equal access to the military barracks. They have heard reports that soldiers have been punished for bringing the opposition paper "Democracy" into their barracks. At the present time only "Duma" and a military paper are allowed into the barracks.

The Co-Chairman asked Zhelev to differentiate the platforms of the BSP and the UDF. Zhelev reiterated what Dr. Beron had stated earlier that almost all the positive elements of the BSP platform had been taken from the UDF. "The BSP has very foggy ideas, they can't explain what democratic society is."

Questions were then asked regarding the trade union movement in Bulgaria. Dr. Krustev stated that their are between 130,000-150,000 people in the trade union movement, but the numbers change. He indicated that there are no conditions for a pure trade union movement in Bulgaria.

Ambassador Polansky inquired as to how the UDF will field its list of candidates. Dr. Zhelev said that they will have a common electoral platform which was to be published a week later. Their color will be blue. There have been some suggestions to mark the name of the party on the ballot. All UDF candidates should win in head-to-head competition. "Our main aim is to get rid of the Communist Party system."

Co-Chairman Hoyer asked Dr. Zhelev how important the CSCE process had been in bringing Bulgaria to its current point.

Dr. Zhelev responded that it was extremely important -- all the processes that took place in Eastern Europe would have been unable to take place without the Helsinki process. Naturally it was not the only factor. Gorbachev's perestoika gave impetus to these processes. He also observed, however, that President Reagan's defense and foreign policies were instrumental in creating an environment in which Gorbachev's perestroika was possible.