

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS
ROUNDTABLE ON INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN VOJVODINA
Palic/Subotica, YUGOSLAVIA
February 18, 2001

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Project on Ethnic Relations Vojvodina Roundtable resumed its work on February 18, 2001 in Palic near Subotica. The first two meetings were held in Vienna in September 1999 and in Athens in February 2000.

All participants (the list is attached) have affirmed their commitment to the Athens communiqué of February 15, 2000 (see attached). They stressed that the communiqué should now be considered by the President of FRY, the Government of Serbia, and the Collegium of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia.

All participants hope that steps toward practical implementation of the Athens recommendations will be considered as soon possible. They recognized that there are other many urgent and very serious problems confronting the country but that they need not delay consideration and implementation of the Athens recommendations.

The participants believe that the problems of Vojvodina and its national communities can indeed be solved within the framework of Serbia and Yugoslavia and they expect the recent democratic transformation to catalyze positive changes.

The participants support the intention of the federal government for Yugoslavia to become a member of the Council of Europe and in this context call the federal bodies to ratify all relevant European conventions on protection of human rights, national minorities and local self-government.

The participants agreed that the positions of both minorities and the majority in Vojvodina are close enough to allow constructive solutions to minority issues and that a satisfactory response to reasonable minority demands (outlined in the Athens communiqué) will enhance Yugoslavia's successful and speedy European and international integration.

Interethnic Relations in Vojvodina
Subotica, Yugoslavia; February 18, 2001

List of Participants and Observers

Andras Agoston, President, Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina
Jon Cizmas, President, Union of Romanians in Yugoslavia
Nenad Djurdjevic, Representative of the Project on Ethnic Relations in FRY
Emil Fejzulahi, Vice President, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina
Nicolae Gheorghe, Adviser for Roma and Sinti Issues, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, OSCE
Alex Grigor'ev, Program Officer, Project on Ethnic Relations

Dejan Janca, Member, Presidency, Vojvodina Reform Democratic Party; Ambassador of FRY to Hungary

Dusan Janjic, Member, PER Council for Ethnic Accord; Director, Forum for Ethnic Relations

Laszlo Jozsa, Vice President, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians

Allen Kassof, President, Project on Ethnic Relations

Jozsef Kasza, Deputy Prime Minister, Government of Serbia; President, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians

Ljubica Kiselicki, Member, Presidency, New Democracy Party

Fedor Kolesar, President, League of Ruthenians and Ukrainians of Yugoslavia

Tamas Korhecz, Secretary for National and Ethnic Minorities, Provincial Government of Vojvodina

Zarko Korac, Deputy Prime Minister, Government of Serbia; President, Social Democratic Union

Jasna Malkoc, Mission in FRY, OSCE

Andrzej Mirga, Chairman, PER Romani Advisory Council; Co-Chair, Council of Europe Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies

Sandor Pall, President, Democratic Union of Vojvodina Hungarians

Livia Plaks, Executive Director, Project on Ethnic Relations

Srdjan Sajn, Co-President, Democratic Romani League

Stefano Sannino, Head, Mission in FRY, OSCE

Predrag Simic, Adviser to the President, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Vojislav Stanovcic, Member, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts; Member, PER Council for Ethnic Accord; Chairman, Expert Team for Drafting of the Law on Minority Communities, Government of FRY

Bela Tonkovic, President, Democratic League of Croats in Vojvodina

Tibor Varady, Professor, Central European University

Miroslav Vitez, Professor, University of Novi Sad (representing the Slovak community of Vojvodina)

PROJECT ON ETHNIC RELATIONS

ROUNDTABLE ON INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN VOJVODINA

Athens, GREECE
February 14-15, 2000

COMMUNIQUÉ

On February 14-15, 2000 in Athens, leading democratic political personalities from Serbia, representatives of the most influential Serbian democratic political parties and parties of Vojvodina Hungarians and Romanians continued the discussion on interethnic relations in Vojvodina that started in Vienna on September 23-25, 1999.

The participants and observers in the meeting included **Andras Agoston**, President, Hungarian Democratic Party of Vojvodina; **Nenad Canak**, President, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina; **Ion Cizmas**, President, Union of Romanians in Yugoslavia; **Ilija Djukic**, Member, Main Board, Democratic Party; Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee, Democratic Party; former Minister of Foreign Affairs of FRY; **Alex Grigor'ev**, Program Officer, Project on Ethnic Relations; **Tahir Hasanovic**, *Secretary General, New Democracy Party; Member, Executive Board, Coalition Dan*; **Dragor Hiber**, Vice-President, Civic Alliance of Serbia; **Miodrag Isakov**, President, Vojvodina Reform Democratic Party; **Laszlo Jozsa**, Vice-President, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians; **Dusan Janjic**, Director, Forum for Ethnic Relations; **Allen Kassof**, President, Project on Ethnic Relations; **Jozsef Kasza**, President, Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians; Mayor, Subotica; **Zarko Korac**, Coordinator, Alliance of Democratic Parties; President, Social Democratic Union; **Zoran Lutovac**, Chairman, Committee on Ethnic Relations, Democratic Party; **Milan Mikovic**, *Member, Presidency, Serbian Renewal Movement; Head, Serbian Renewal Movement Group, National Assembly of Serbia*; **Sandor Pall**, President, Democratic Union of Vojvodina Hungarians; **Livia Plaks**, Executive Director, Project on Ethnic Relations; **Predrag Simic**, Foreign Policy Adviser to the President, Serbian Renewal Movement; **Tibor Varady**, Professor, Central European University; **Slobodan Vuckovic**, Chairman, International Affairs Committee, Party of Democratic Center.

In the intensive discussion and exchange of views, the participants agreed that the talks in Vienna and Athens showed that the democratic opposition in Serbia is capable of resolving – *inter alia* – the issues of interethnic relations in Vojvodina in the way that would imply a consistent respect for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of FRY and Serbia, the democratic principles, international standards, and values, and legitimate demands of national communities.

The roundtable participants agreed that the democratic opposition in Serbia has to respect the following:

1. The autonomy of Vojvodina within the Republic of Serbia corresponds to the interests of democratization and decentralization of Serbia as well as the preservation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also represents the most suitable framework for the resolution of all issues pertaining to the national communities. These issues are more efficiently resolved on the local level.

2. It is necessary to develop modern institutional guarantees for the rights of the national communities in Vojvodina (in Serbia, FR Yugoslavia), including the right of national communities to self-organization for the purpose of preserving and developing their identities, especially in the fields of education, media, and culture. The national communities can form national councils that are to decide alone or with state bodies on the issues of education, culture, and the media.
3. The self-organization of national communities through adequate autonomy arrangements in keeping with relevant documents of the OSCE and the Council of Europe is necessary for the more efficient organization of multicultural communities of citizens of Vojvodina, as well as for democratization of Serbia. Taxes and other financial contributions paid by members of national communities should constitute the financial foundation of their self-organization. The organizations of national communities should freely allocate the portion of the budget earmarked for culture, science, education, and the media, proportionate to their taxes and financial contributions to that same budget. Regarding national communities that cannot satisfy their needs in this way, the principle of positive discrimination shall apply.
4. The right of national communities to use their own language should not be lesser than it was in Vojvodina in the 1970s and 1980s. This particularly applies to the reaffirmation and precise definition of the use of language in curricula, schools, the state organs, in documents, in the media, geographical names, etc.
5. Free media and the right to establish private schools and cultural and academic institutions is the principle that should be applied to all citizens, including members of national communities.
6. Decentralization and greater autonomy for municipalities, including the management of respective shares of revenues, is an important element of the modern democratic system of government. Regionalization and formation of administrative districts requires taking into account interests of citizens and interests of ethnic communities.
7. Support for the democratic forces whose goal is the inclusion of Serbia in European integration processes is in the common interest of all citizens and national communities of Vojvodina and Serbia.
8. The continuation of the democratic dialogue and cooperation between the representatives of national communities and all democratic forces in Serbia is the way to resolve problems in ethnic relations. This excludes the possibility of resorting to any form of interethnic violence. Solutions shall be sought within Serbia.

The participants of the roundtable expect the presidential collegium of the united opposition of Serbia to support these positions and to undertake measures for their implementation.

The participants of the Athens roundtable thank the Project on Ethnic Relations for providing a framework for a useful discussion and expect the process to continue.