International Republican Institute
Final Report and Recommendations
1998 Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia

For more information on IRI programs in Slovakia, please contact:

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I.   IRI Election Observation Mission

IRI received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy and the Charles S. Mott Foundation to conduct an international election observation mission for the September parliamentary elections. IRI's 15-member delegation included representatives from eight countries in Eastern Europe, Great Britain, and the United States (see Appendix III). The delegation leader was the Honorable Richard Burt, former U.S. Ambassador to Germany. IRI's delegates were credentialed through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, but operated independently during the elections.

Following two days of briefings in Bratislava with political parties, election officials, journalists, non-governmental organizations, and representatives from the American Embassy and US AID, IRI delegates deployed in nine teams to locations around Slovakia. In addition to continuing to meet with party and election officials at the local level, IRI's delegates observed voting procedures in 150 locations. After the elections, the delegation reconvened in Bratislava for debriefings and issued a preliminary statement to the media (see Appendix IV for statement).

Given this unexpected need for international observers in Slovakia, the National Endowment for Democracy provided IRI with a grant to send eight international observers to monitor Slovakia's September elections. Additional funding from the Mott Foundation will be used to bring eight additional observers from other Central and East European countries to observe the election, thereby doubling the size of IRI's delegation.

The presence of regional election observers will have several additional benefits beyond evaluating the Slovak elections. First, IRI will train regional observers in its methods and techniques of election observation, thereby building capacity in their own countries for domestic election monitoring. Second, regional observers will make new contacts with peers from other countries, allowing for a regional exchange of information and experiences. Third, regional observers will be provided with handbooks and other materials that can be utilized in their own domestic efforts. Fourth, the presence of regional observers will reinforce the concept that the neighboring countries of Central and Eastern Europe have a responsibility to help promote democratic values and free elections throughout the region.

While international observers are expected to monitor the Slovak elections, the best guarantee against election fraud will come from Slovak citizens. Because there is little Slovak experience with election monitoring, IRI first augmented its training in ballot security by supporting Slovak election observation missions to both the Hungarian and Czech parliamentary elections in May and June, respectively. In addition, two Slovaks joined an IRI observation mission to the March 1998 elections in Ukraine. This training provided Slovaks with actual experience in election monitoring three to four months before their own elections. It also established an important precedent: international delegations observing the September 1998 elections in Slovakia will be more readily accepted

because Slovak citizens will have previously observed elections in neighboring states.

To provide another check on the process and support the efforts of domestic observers, IRI plans to send an international delegation to observe Slovakia's September 1998 elections. Funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), this mission will deploy both American and East European observers to eight different regions throughout Slovakia. These observers will be non-partisan experts in regional issues and electoral processes who will bring professionalism, outside expertise and objectivity to measure and support Slovakia's electoral process. IRI will select eight delegates for the observer mission in order to insure that one delegate is able to travel to each of Slovakia's eight regions. When deployed, each of the delegates will be accompanied by an IRI staff member experienced in election observation techniques.

IRI believes it's important to include East European delegates in its observation delegation for several reasons. First, East European election experts have a better understanding of the unique features of post-communist elections in parliamentary systems than those accustomed to the American electoral system. Second, many East Europeans have developed considerable expertise in their own electoral processes. Third, nationalists in the Slovak Government may seek to discredit the conclusions of international observers by characterizing such findings as a direct attack on Slovak national sovereignty. By including East Europeans in its delegation (many from nations that recently hosted Slovak observers for their elections), IRI hopes to defuse false allegations of an American bias organized against Slovakia.

IRI does not make simple findings as to whether an election can be categorized as free and fair. Rather, IRI's goal is to document strengths and weaknesses of the process, make specific recommendations on how to improve that process and, thereby, help build the capacity of democratic institutions in Slovakia. The report will be a public document forwarded to the Slovak government and political party officials, U.S. congressional and government officials, Slovak and U.S. news media, U.S. and Slovak research organizations and other interested audiences.

II.   The 1998 Election Framework

Under Slovakia's constitution, parliamentary elections had to be held no later than September 1998. On June 23, 1998, Parliamentary chairman Ivan Gašparovi_ officially declared that Slovakia's next parliamentary elections would be held on September 25-26, 1998, to replace the Parliament that has fulfilled its four-year mandate.[1] Gašparovi_'s

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[1] The National Council of the Slovak Republic (NRSR) is Slovakia's unicameral legislative body commonly referred to as Parliament. As such, the terms "Deputies" and Members of Parliament (MPs)" are used interchangeably to denote the members of the NRSR.

decision set in motion a chain of events with specific deadlines defined by law (see Appendix I).

The election law provided universal, equal and direct suffrage through the use of a secret ballot. The law also extended the franchise to disabled voters and military personnel. The minimum voting age is 18 and the minimum age for running as a candidate for Parliament is 21. All 150 seats parliamentary seats were contested in a single nationwide constituency district. Parties that submitted lists of candidates won seats in Parliament (or mandates) proportional to their nationwide percentage of votes. Parties must have received at least five percent of the vote to be awarded seats in Parliament.

The Central Election Commission, district election commissions and precinct election commissions were established by members nominated by the political parties. The main functions of the Central Election Commission (CEC) included the registration of political parties, the certification of candidate lists, the supervision of lower level commissions, the coordination of materials from national and local government bodies, the allocation to parties of free television and radio advertising time, and the determination of election results. Eighteen parties submitted candidate lists and nominated members to the CEC on July 22, 1998. On July 24, the multi-party CEC held its first meeting and only one of the 18 parties failed to be certified by the CEC.[2]

Seventy-nine district election commissions oversaw precinct commissions and supervised the tabulation of polling station results. Precinct election commissions administered polling stations. Government appointed recorders functioned as "expert advisers" and provided administrative support to the commissions at all levels. In addition, the State Statistical Office established "expert summarization bodies" consisting of government employees assigned for the purpose of processing election returns for the commissions. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) also established an "expert-administrative body" to assist the Central Election Commission in fulfilling its tasks. The MOI printed the ballot papers and delivered them to the mayors of municipalities, who then supervised their distribution to Precinct Election Commissions on the day of elections. The MOI seal was stamped on the ballots in order to validate them.

Municipal governments were also responsible for providing voter registration lists and determining polling station locations. Precincts usually included about 1,000 voters, but could include as few as 50 voters in remote areas. A new provision in the election law also

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[2] The Real Social Democratic Party of Slovaks failed to meet the registration requirements and will not participate in the September 1998 elections.

required the municipality (by August 31, 1998) to send every registered voter a written notice stating the time of elections and the location of voter's polling station.

The election campaign officially referred to the period that commenced 32 days before the start of the elections and ended 48 hours before polling stations opened. On September 25, polling stations opened at 2 p.m. and closed at 10 p.m. On September 26, polling stations re-opened at 7 a.m. and closed at 2 p.m, at which time the tabulation of results began.

Voters were provided an envelope and separate ballot paper for each of the seventeen parties registered in the elections. To cast a ballot, voters placed the ballot for their preferred party in the envelope and then deposited it in the sealed ballot box, discarding the remaining ballots. Voters could indicate a preference for a maximum of four candidates on the party's list of candidates by circling the respective number of the candidate. Therefore, the security of envelopes in the chain of custody was a significantly higher priority than ballot security. Any ballot found in the ballot box not contained within an envelope would be invalidated.

In addition to receiving free advertising on state television and radio, many political parties received state subsidies. After the election results were verified by Parliament, the Ministry of Finance reimbursed all parties that won more than three percent of the nationwide vote. (Each party   received 60 Slovak crowns for each vote won.) Municipalities also were reimbursed from the state budget for election-related expenses.

On July 22, 1998, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) kicked off a petition campaign to add a referendum question to the September 25-26 elections. The referendum asked voters to ban the privatization of several large, state-owned energy companies. Opposition parties called the move an election gimmick to distract voters' attention from privatization scandals of the Me_iar government. Newspapers reported that the petitions were circulated by state employees. However, Vladimír Me_iar certified the petitions as acting president and the referendum occurred simultaneously with the elections.

Therefore, in addition to the three-tiered network of electoral commissions, a central referendum commission, as well as district and precinct referendum commissions were formed by all parliamentary parties. The Minister of Interior urged mayors to locate the referendum polling sites in the same buildings as regular polling stations, but in different rooms. The referendum commissions had to be distinct from the election commissions because different requirements applied to the formation of the two types of commissions.

Election Law Amendments

Election law amendments passed by Parliament on May 20, 1998, were sharply criticized by Slovak parties, domestic non-government organizations (NGOs) and

international organizations. For example, U.S. Ambassador Ralph Johnson stated in early July that the new law failed to meet international standards for transparency and fairness. Hans van den Broek, the EU Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, echoed Johnson's concerns during a visit to Bratislava. Criticism of the amended election law was concentrated in five main areas: its timing, lack of clarity, media restrictions, increased authority for state officials, and new rules for parties.

Both Slovak opposition parties and western governments were critical of fundamental changes in the legal framework made so close to election day. While not inherently unfair, the fact that the law passed without any opposition support indicates that the Me_iar government made little effort to build consensus. Moreover, many provisions in the law were unknown at the time of passage because they were subject to subsequent regulations issued by the Interior Ministry.

Critics of the law also pointed to a number of gray areas in the legislation. Some argued that new provisions denying the right of appeal to the Constitutional Court were unconstitutional. The law also made it more difficult for citizens to determine if they were correctly entered on the list of eligible voters. Citizens may vote without being on the registration lists, merely upon presentation of an identification card, raising concerns about multiple voting. The law didn't provide political parties a right to have pollwatchers present during balloting and ballot counting procedures, and included limits on filing election challenges.

As in the 1994 election law, only state television and radio were allowed to broadcast campaign commercials (with blocks of time provided free of charge to all parties). Time was equally divided among the 17 parties running and each party received between one and three minute slots totaling 66 minutes. The parties had exclusive control over the content and each party had one slot each day.

Private media, however, faced new legal uncertainties. The amended law said that "election campaigning is prohibited in the radio broadcasting and television broadcasting of private license holders," but failed to define "election campaigning." This prevented private radio and television broadcasters from airing debates, discussion programming or even reporting on the campaign itself. The law also imposed new and draconian fines on the electronic and print media for violations.

On the first day of the official campaign, STV aired a lengthy interview with Premier Me_iar during prime time.[3] Opposition parties were not provided a similar opportunity.

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[3] In Slovakia, the titles of "prime minister," "premier," and "chairman of the government" are used

Slovakia's only private channel, TV Markiza, aired several election related programs. Its weekly discussion program, "SITO," was given a special campaign format: a debate between representatives of the six largest parties. TV Markiza ran a series of profiles of party leaders. Other Markiza programs included a variety of election-related features.

Although the election law amendments left in place the traditional structure of multi-partisan and independent election commissions, there were concerns over whether the commissions could actually administer the elections. The powers of the Ministry of the Interior, State Statistical Office, and other central government authorities were enhanced at the expense of commissions.

In addition, Parliament adopted HZDS legislation in 1996 that divided Slovakia into eight new regions *(kraj)* and 79 new districts (*okres*), in a major victory for the Me_iar government. After unsuccessfully arguing for their own decentralization plan, the opposition parties claimed that the boundaries for the new regions and districts were actually designed to recentralize power in Bratislava ministries. In effect, the Me_iar government was able to name eight new regional and 79 new district officials who would be responsible for delivering national resources to the local level. Opposition parties feared that these local officials would be used to usurp the authority of local election commissions.

The law also overhauled existing rules on the formation of political coalitions. Individual parties within a coalition were required to garner at least five percent of the vote to obtain mandates, whereas the previous threshold was based on a graduated system that considered only the votes of the coalition as a whole. While coalitions were not prohibited by the amended election law, the new restrictions were designed to discourage parties from forming one. Rather than splitting themselves into weaker parties, the three-party ethnic Hungarian Coalition and the five-party Slovak Democratic Coalition transformed themselves into two newly registered parties.

Several smaller parties also signed agreements with government coalition parties to have their members run on the larger parties' candidate lists. Such arrangements avoided the law's threshold provisions. The ruling Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) included candidates from the New Agrarian Party (NAS) and Party of Businessmen and Entrepreneurs (SPZ) on its candidate list, while the Slovak National Party (SNS) list included candidates from the Slovak Green Alternative (SZA) and Christian Social Union (KSÚ).

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interchangeably.

Finally, amendments to the election law created a single, national election district in which parties ran a list of candidates and won seats in Parliament proportionate to their nationwide percentage of votes above the five percent threshold. In 1994, a complex system required voters to select a party or coalition and to cast preference votes for individuals named on party candidate lists. Rather than a single, national district each party had four lists, one for each of Slovakia's four regions. Many parties agreed that the four-region system was antiquated and preferred that eight election districts be created corresponding to the country's eight new administrative regions. While the opposition argued that the single district was unfair, it further weakened the already tenuous link between voters and specific Members of Parliament. It also provided an advantage to Me_iar, who was able to lead his party in a nationwide, presidential-style campaign rather than run on a party list within just one of the eight regions.

Constitutional Issues

With the presidential office vacant since March 1998, the Slovak constitution transferred many presidential powers to the prime minister. The absence of sitting president created an unusual situation in which the government could have submitted its resignation to its own prime minister, who would then name a new government. But on July 14, 1998, Parliament unanimously passed a constitutional amendment that transferred certain presidential authorities to the Speaker of Parliament in the event the presidency remained unfilled. The most important of these transferred powers was the ability to accept resignations from the prime minister and others and to appoint a new cabinet. Therefore, the amendment removed some ambiguity from the elections.

Election Observers

Although Slovak elections between 1990 and 1994 were widely viewed as free and fair, this was no longer a reliable assumption after the events of 1997. Specifically, Slovakia's Constitutional Court ruled that the Slovak Government acted illegally when it interfered with a May 1997 referendum by unilaterally deleting a ballot question on direct presidential elections. When the Government's actions in May 1997 were added to the government's consistently weak record on democracy, there was widespread concern among both Slovak and international observers about the potential for fraud in Slovakia's 1998 elections.

While the government had long pledged that international election monitors would be welcomed in Slovakia, it was slow to enact measures to enable their presence. A July 22 article in the anti-government daily, *SME*, stated that the government had returned materials related to OSCE's accreditation request to the Foreign Affairs Ministry because "the(y) were not yet in order." The government's action meant further delay on the accreditation issue. On August 13, 1998, Me_iar made a puzzling speech in which he invited OSCE member-

states to observe elections, but then proceeded to send official invitations to only 18 of OSCE's 54 member-states. Six days later, the government approved the materials for observers and on August 25, the Central Election Commission finally voted to accredit OSCE observers. The CEC also voted to allow international monitors to observe the actual counting of ballots. The government refused to credential domestic and non-partisan observers from OK '98 campaign, a group of indigenous non-government organizations.

III.   Election Observer Field Reports

As noted in IRI's preliminary statement (See Appendix IV), the delegation did not witness activities which would indicate any organized attempt to manipulate the results of the elections. While delegates did observe minor incidents and problems, in no way did these lead IRI to question to validity of the election results. The delegation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other observers reached similar conclusions.

IRI's delegates were deployed to nine cities around the country, allowing for teams to be present in each of Slovakia's eight administrative regions (*kraj*). Teams were based in Banska Stavnica, Bratislava, Dolny Kubin, Gelnica, Kosice, Nove Zamky, Piestany, Poprad and Trencin. IRI's observers all participated in a series of briefings in Bratislava with party and election officials, the media, international organizations, and domestic non-governmental organizations before deploying to their cities. Each team of delegates met with local party and election officials before the polls opened on Friday.

Because IRI's delegation was accredited through the OSCE, IRI observers met with the regional and local OSCE staff to attempt to coordinate election monitoring. In some cases, IRI teams followed a route and schedule prepared by OSCE. In other cases, IRI teams operated totally independently. But in all cases, IRI shared its findings and observations with other groups monitoring the elections.

IRI's monitors visited a wide variety of polling stations and were encouraged to observe both urban and rural precincts. Under the procedures developed by IRI, delegates had the discretion to stay as long as they felt circumstances warranted in any polling station. Delegates reported back to IRI's office in Bratislava on their preliminary findings on Friday night, before continuing to monitor the elections on Saturday. Delegates again reported to Bratislava following the closing procedures, before returning to Bratislava for a debriefing on Sunday. IRI issued its preliminary statement on Sunday afternoon.

<u>Local Meetings</u>

Each IRI team was provided with contact information for local party officials, the district election commissions, local media, and domestic NGOs involved in the political process, such as Civic Eye and the OK 98 campaign. Each team scheduled its own local meetings. In most cases, IRI

observers found election commissioners to be open and forthcoming, however several groups did meet with skepticism or outright hostility. Local parties cited isolated incidents and concerns before the polls opened, but were generally confident that the elections would proceed normally and without incident. Many opposition party representatives cited the same concerns and criticisms over Slovakia's biased pre-election environment, however.

Opening Polling Stations

Each team was present at a polling station on before opening at two o'clock Friday afternoon. While local mayors had the option of opening the polls earlier, IRI monitors did not encounter this in the areas they visited. The preparation and opening procedures were orderly and without incident. In all cases, polling stations had received the required materials, including ballots, envelopes, stamps, sample ballots, voting booths, and ballot boxes. Election commissioners were on time and operated in a collegial fashion. The polls opened promptly and there was typically a handful of voters waiting to cast their ballots when voting began.

Balloting Process

In general, voting on both Friday and Saturday was efficient and organized. The overwhelming majority of voters were informed about the need to bring identification cards or passports. While not required to do so, many voters brought the notice mailed by local government, which generally speeded the process. IRI did not observe voters being permitted to vote without proper identification. Indeed, all teams found incidents where voters were turned away and told to return with the necessary documents. Voter lists were accurate and, without exception, were marked when voters came to the polls. IRI did observe isolated incidents of community voting, especially in villages, but election commissioners generally did not permit this to occur. Teams deployed to areas with a high Roma population noted that Roma voters were less likely to have their documents with them and understand the voting procedures. IRI noted in its preliminary statement that Slovak election authorities could devote greater resources to voter education, especially for the Roma community.

The election law permitted voters who were away from their hometowns during the elections to obtain a certificate entitling them to vote at any polling station in the country. While this procedure created the potential for fraud, IRI teams did not observe what they perceived to be problems in this area. Obviously, neither international observers nor political parties are able to determine if certificate voters have been properly deleted from the register in their regular precinct, which could lead to multiple voting. However, there was no evidence of a large number of certificate voters, which might indicate fraud. Typically, most precincts had only a small number of certificate voters, if any at all. Certificate voting was more common in urban areas, particularly where universities are located.

All voters received ballot papers in the mail and had the option of bringing them to the polls. There was no discernable pattern as to whether or not voters brought ballot papers to the polling stations. In all cases, polling stations had ample supplies of ballot papers available. IRI delegates did not observe ballot papers being organized to favor or disfavor any party. In the Slovak system, the envelopes, and not the ballot papers are the main security instruments. In all stations, voters were provided with a properly stamped envelope.

Election commissioners stated that they had received training from their respective district election commissions. Commissioners were well informed about the law, with the possible exception of provisions on domestic monitors. IRI monitors saw official manuals and copies of the election law printed by the Interior Ministry in nearly every station visited. In general, election commissioners were cooperative with IRI observers. In a few isolated cases, IRI met commissioners who were not forthcoming, but these were the exception and not the rule. The overwhelming majority of commissioners were generous with their time and courteous, despite being taken away from their official duties. In most cases, delegates were able to talk freely with all members of the commission. While the number of commissioners varied from precinct to precinct, in all cases, IRI found that both opposition and government parties were fairly represented.

IRI observers were favorably impressed by the professionalism of election commissions. Several opposition parties cooperated to insure that all commission slots were filled, in some cases using volunteers from non-governmental organizations. Given that two of the four opposition parties had only limited structures (the Party of Civic Understanding was established just a few months before the elections and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition has little presence outside southern Slovakia), this cooperation was an important contributor to election security. IRI found only one polling station (in a Bratislava suburb), for example, which did not have a representative of the Slovak Democratic Coalition. In a few instances, delegates encountered commissioners representing smaller parties who had to be reminded which party they represented. However, opposition fears that "packed" election commissions would lead to problems proved to be unfounded.

Delegates did not observe police inside the polling stations. Experiences varied widely among the various teams, with some reporting police outside every polling station, while others saw little or no law enforcement presence. A government decision to deploy armed soldiers to polling stations to assist with security did not appear to influence balloting in any way. Again, the presence of troops varied widely by region. Given the calm and orderly course of voting, it is difficult to understand the government's motivation for involving the military in the elections. IRI did not encounter polling stations where the police had been called in to restore order.

The great majority of polling stations were located in schools. These locations had the proper signs posted and displayed the Slovak flag, in accordance with the law. In larger communities, there were often two or more precincts located in the same building. In most cases, the individual polling stations were well marked, typically with a list of streets and addresses posted by the door

corresponding to that precinct. At many locations with multiple polling stations, there were election officials assisting voters to find the proper precinct.

Delegates did find that the government-sponsored referendum on privatization was a source of concern. Because the referendum and election commissions are drawn from different constellations of parties, separate polling places had to be established for the referendum. IRI monitors did observe many voters being confused about where to cast their election ballot. While IRI observers were not credentialed for the referendum and did not formally monitor it, it was clear throughout voting hours that many voters were ignoring the referendum. IRI saw a number of instances were referendum commissioners stood outside referendum precincts encouraging voters to come in and vote. As was later shown by the fact that the referendum failed to secure the required level of participation, most voters followed the advice of opposition parties and did not take part.

Several teams noted that polling stations were not always located on the ground floors of buildings, which did create problems for some older voters and those with limited mobility. When asked, election commissioners acknowledged the problem. Voters did not seem to have difficulty finding the buildings where the polling stations were located.

As specified in the law, polling stations displayed the sample ballots for each party, along with notices from election authorities about candidates who had withdrawn or died since the ballots were printed. There were a handful of polling stations where sample ballots had been defaced, but there was no pattern to suggest it was anything other than random vandalism. IRI observers did not see posters or partisan materials in polling stations. A small number of election commissioners were observed wearing party pins, however.

In the precincts visited by IRI delegates, election commissions were able to see the voting booths, but not observe the voting within. Voting booths, although often rudimentary, provided adequate security and privacy for voters. Ballot boxes were properly sealed and visible by the election commissions. Polling stations had trash receptacles for discarded ballot papers and the rooms were kept clean. While there were press reports that some employers had demanded that their employees bring their unused ballot papers to their place or work to demonstrate how they voted, IRI believes these rumors were groundless. Many voters did take their unused ballots with them, many deposited them in the trash cans provided, many tore the papers before discarding them; but there was no apparent pattern which give observers cause for concern.

Election commissioners answered voters' questions, but did not appear to be influencing voters in any way. The multi-partisan commissions served as a good check against this kind of abuse.

The flow of voters varied from precinct to precinct. In general, most urban stations had the greatest number of voters on Saturday morning. This was probably influenced by articles in the media encouraging voters to go to the polls on Saturday to prevent ballot fraud during Friday night. These

fears proved groundless. Voting tended to be heavier in rural areas on Friday. Overall, there was an extremely robust level of participation by the electorate -- nationally, some 85 percent of voters went to the polls. In many precincts, IRI monitors found even higher levels of voting. Especially during the evening hours on Friday and on Saturday morning, there were lines of people waiting to vote. Voters were patient and waited without incident.

The election law does not allow parties to send monitors to observe voting and IRI did not see party monitors. The commendable efforts of Civic Eye (OKO) to train and deploy domestic monitors met with mixed success. In some areas, especially in larger cities, OKO monitors were permitted to observe the elections. In many others, however, they were not. In this area, election commissioners were not well informed as to the law, which did allow the presence of monitors at the discretion of the chairman. In some instances, commissions voted to allow or ban OKO monitors. On Friday, it became evident that instructions had come from government authorities to bar domestic monitors from the polls. Nevertheless, some domestic observers did monitor the elections. IRI delegates found that OKO observers were well trained, polite, obeyed the instructions of election officials, and clearly identifiable by their T-shirts. Those who were not admitted to the polls waited outside the building. Domestic monitors told IRI that they met with mixed reactions from voters, with many offering encouragement and thanks for their presence, while a smaller number objected to their presence. The statements of leading officials of the HZDS that domestic monitors would attempt to intimidate voters or otherwise disrupt voting were baseless, calumnious, and unfortunate.

IRI was one of several institutions sponsoring exit polls during the parliamentary elections. IRI's delegates observed interviewers from the IRI poll and others at a variety of polling stations around Slovakia. In most cases, the polling firms were permitted to set up tables and chairs inside the buildings, although the law does not require that they be granted permission to do this. In one polling station selected for IRI's exit poll, the election commission chairman refused permission for the exit poll to be conducted. Overall, however, polling firms were able to operate with minimal hindrance from authorities, and more often than not, with the cooperation of election commissions.

Friday Night Closing/Saturday Morning Opening

Two-day elections have long historical precedent in Slovakia. While some expressed concern that the lapse in voting during Friday night created the potential for fraud, IRI saw no evidence to indicate that there were any problems. Each team of observers monitored both the interim closing procedures on Friday night and the reopening of a polling station on Saturday morning. In all stations, the procedures set out in the law were carefully followed.

On Friday night, election commissioners sealed the ballot boxes with tape and then marked the seals with the official stamp of the commission and the signatures of commissioners. Other materials, such as the envelopes, were secured. The polling station was then locked and sealed with tape over the windows and doors. Again, these seals were then signed and stamped. Police were present in the

buildings during the night, but not in the actual polling stations themselves.

On Saturday morning, the procedures were reversed, with the seals being broken in the presence of the commissioners. IRI did not observe any polling stations where there was reason to doubt the security of the premises. Voting resumed at the appointed hour, in accordance with the law.

Final Closing Procedures & Tabulation

All IRI monitors were in place at a polling station to observe the closing procedures and counting of ballots before the station was closed. As the law directs, anyone waiting to vote was given the opportunity to do so. Most stations closed at the designated hour of two o'clock, or several minutes later. In all the stations observed, commissioners followed the procedures stipulated in the election law.

The counting of ballots was a lengthy process in most stations, due to the heavier than expected turnout and the need to count preference votes after the ballots themselves had been counted. While some stations experienced the inevitable mathematical errors, forcing the commissions to begin the process again, none of the stations monitored by IRI's delegation found substantial problems. The commissions worked in a cooperative manner and IRI did not observe any disputes or serious difficulties.

In the stations IRI observed, only persons with a right to be present were in the polling stations after the polls had closed.

Once the tabulation was completed, the protocols were filled out, again, in accordance with the law. The protocols and other materials were then delivered to the district commissions. IRI teams found that the district commissions conducted the tabulation process with the same professionalism seen at the precinct level.

Summary of Election Observer Field Reports

The polling stations monitored by IRI during the elections were generally efficient. In the overwhelming majority of sites visited, IRI monitors were welcomed and commissioners were generous with their time. The IRI delegation did not see election materials in polling stations or intimidation of voters. Police were present in some stations, but did not interfere with the process. Voting and counting of ballots proceeded in an orderly fashion, as spelled out in the law.

While there were minor areas of concern, as noted above, IRI election observers felt that the process provided Slovak voters with an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights without interference. Although international observers were not present in all polling stations around the country, there was general agreement that the elections proceeded smoothly and without major incidents.

IV. Findings and Recommendations

As with other international observers present for the elections, IRI's delegates found few serious problems during the voting and counting of ballots. However, IRI's statement sharply criticized the role of state media, state authorities, and the ruling coalition in creating an unfair election environment. (Note: For sake of simplicity, the Me_iar government's election law amendments are referred to as the 1998 law, while the prior law, as amended, is referred to as the 1990 law.)

The administration of Slovakia's September 1998 parliamentary elections was efficient and orderly, leading to a result that reflected the will of the voters. Despite the widespread concerns of international groups, there was no evidence of fraud or manipulation of the election results. Fears of a constitutional crisis given the absence of a president proved unfounded. Election officials at all levels were generally well trained and worked in a collegial, professional manner. The Slovak electoral system functioned and provided for a peaceful, smooth transition of power.

However, the pre-election environment deserves criticism on several counts. While not casting doubt on the results of the elections, these criticisms point to areas where the Slovak government can improve the efficiency and transparency of its parliamentary elections.   The following recommendations are based on the observations of the International Republican Institute's election observation mission. Most, but not all, of these recommendations arise from the Me_iar government's election law amendments that were enacted in May 1998.

Partisan advantage seemed to guide the Me_iar government's approach to revising the election law. Critics charged that the amendments were designed to bias the playing field in favor of the government coalition. As with most legislation enacted during the Me_iar era, the opposition was denied a meaningful role in the crafting of policy.

When Slovakia's new government addresses the election law, it has a responsibility to insure that the new opposition is an equal player in the process. Should the new government repeat the arrogant approach of its predecessor toward election law reform, then it too should expect to be criticized by domestic and international observers.

Finding 1: Electoral Districts and Systems

The 1990 law's provisions for creating four election districts (Bratislava plus western, central, and eastern Slovakia), were abolished in the 1998 law. Because the four districts corresponded to the communist-era administrative regions of Czechoslovakia, they no longer had any political relevance in an independent, democratic Slovak Republic. During the debate on the 1998 law, a number of alternatives

were proposed, including creating eight districts to correspond with Slovakia's eight administrative regions (*kraj)* or some variant on a single-member district system. However, the final version of the 1998 law replaced the four-district system with a single, national election district based on a proportional system.

Proportional representation systems like Slovakia are inherently no less democratic than majority systems. However, the 1998 law's single election district would seem to be inappropriate for a country that has distinct regional differences. Because each voter in 1998 effectively voted for all 150 members of Parliament, there was no guarantee that deputies would represent all areas of the country. Under the current law, voters can't identify "their" representatives while Members of Parliament didn't associate with a specific region or group of voters.

Recommendation 1: Abolish the Single National Election District

While proportional systems strengthen the links between voters and political parties, the election law should be revised to include some sort of a directly-elected district system to strengthen the link between voters and their representatives. The current system could be revised to: 1) create a mixed system that includes both a proportional as well as a district component within the current unicameral system; or 2) create a bicameral legislature that leaves the current proportional system in place in the National Council of the Slovak Republic, but creates a second legislative body in which all of its representatives are directly elected from specific regions or districts. This change ought to be made by amending the constitution rather than the election law because: 1) the passage of a constitutional amendment would require a political consensus broader than amending legislation; 2) a simple majority could not overturn a constitutional amendment to redesign the electoral system for political advantage; and 3) a constitutionally-decreed electoral system is more likely to provide voters with a more consistent electoral framework over time.

Finding 2: Candidate Certification

The 1998 law required that candidates for Parliament either be members of a party or provide certification that they were not members of any party. This provision limited the civil rights of Slovaks by adding an additional requirement for those seeking public office beyond the constitutional requirements. This provision was injurious to smaller parties as well as parties seeking to form pre-election coalitions.   In several cases, candidates were forced to resign from their parties in order to seek election to Parliament. While the most noted example of this occurred with the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), it was by no means the only example. The Slovak National Party (SNS) and Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) both had candidates from other parties run on their candidate lists.

Recommendation 2: Eliminate Party Membership Requirements for Candidates

The Slovak government should strike references to party membership when it revises the election law. The requirements elaborated in the constitution, which provide equal opportunity for all citizens above the age of 21 to seek public office, are sufficient and should not be modified through legislation.

Finding 3: Campaign Finance

While the election law included provisions limiting campaign spending, nearly all observers concluded that the provisions were violated by several parties. The law covered spending only during the official campaign period, while parties clearly began campaign spending months earlier. Furthermore, many types of campaign spending through means other than monetary, such as in-kind donations of goods and services, are not covered by the law.

Recommendation 3: Establish Financial Reporting Requirements

In order to cap campaign spending and prevent the abuse of state resources for political purposes, financial disclosure requirements for parties and candidates must be established. One tool that Slovakia should consider is to mandate increased transparency in campaign spending. Slovakia could implement measures that would require all registered parties to file regular (quarterly or semi-annual) reports on party finances, which would include both sources and uses of their funds and be available for public review. During the campaign period, reporting could be increased to weekly frequency. Experience around the world has shown that political parties are extremely resourceful in skirting limits on campaign spending by finding loopholes to circumvent the letter of the law. While reporting will not eliminate abuses of the campaign finance system, it will allow the media, opposing parties, and voters to base their judgements on better information.

Finding 4: Media Regulations

The 1990 law was enacted at a time when Slovakia had virtually no independent electronic media. Its provisions providing for state coverage of the elections were logical in an environment where state television and radio enjoyed a near monopoly. Since 1990, however, Slovakia has seen an explosive growth in private electronic media. Rather than setting down clear guidelines and establishing equal rules for state and private media, however, the 1998 law produced confusion and may have limited the constitutional freedoms of private media. In addition, both state and private media were found to be biased during the 1998 campaign. While state media was judged to be more egregiously biased, this does not excuse private media from the civic responsibility granted to them by virtue of a license to broadcast. Slovak Television was openly contemptuous of the opposition and granted the government

and government parties excessive and fawning coverage. Commentary was interspersed with news programming, with no opportunity for rebuttal. Leading government figures were given extensive air time, while other parties' representatives were not. In one notorious case, STV allowed a leading figure in the HZDS to appear after the official moratorium had begun (i.e. less than 48 hours before the election).

Recommendation 4: Establish Better Guidelines for Public and Private Media

The Slovak government should draft legislation that clarifies and liberalizes the ability of private media to cover legitimate news events throughout the campaign. Private media should be able to conduct debates and interview programs with candidates and parties. While it's difficult to set objective criteria for fairness, legislation should establish an equal time doctrine that encourages both public and private media to provide balanced coverage to all parties running in the elections. However, great care must be taken to insure that new regulations enhance rather than restrict the media's independent and objective editorial judgement. In the case of state television, abuses can be prevented by providing true political independence for Slovak Television and Radio Board Members, and limiting the Board's ability to influence news coverage.

Finding 5: Electoral Commission Transparency

Debates, proceedings, and decisions of the Central Election Commission and subordinate election commissions have an enormous impact on the course of the elections. However, the existing law permits commissions to operate behind closed doors, with few requirements for public disclosure.

Recommendation 5: Improve Transparency in CEC Deliberations

The Slovak government should consider amending the election law to increase public information and media access about the deliberations of election commissions at all levels. Specifically, the election law should mandate that all meetings of the CEC and other commissions should be open to the public and media. Commissions should have the ability to go into closed-door session only in extraordinary circumstances and only after a public vote . The law should provide that any member of a commission has the right to demand a recorded vote, the results of which should be made public. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations must be made in advance of CEC meetings in order to facilitate this access without interrupting or distracting the CEC from its work. In addition, accredited domestic and international observers should be able to witness the pre-election preparations and meetings of lower level commissions as well as the ballot tabulation process.

Finding 6: International Observers

A majority of members of the Central Election Commission and senior representatives of the former government failed to recognize that Slovakia had already agreed to allow international election observers by virtue of its current obligations under international agreements.   By signing the Copenhagen Document – Conference on the Human Dimension of the OSCE (June 29, 1990), Slovakia committed to allow independent monitoring of the elections. Paragraph 8 of the OSCE's Copenhagen Document provides a clear mandate for international monitors:

> *"The participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law. They will also endeavor to facilitate similar access for election proceedings held below the national level. Such observers will undertake not to interfere in the electoral proceedings."*

But it was only after prolonged debate, delay, and calumnious statements by government and election officials that the CEC agreed to accredit international observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The CEC rejected the application of a domestic organization, the Association for Free Elections, to accredit Slovak monitors. The CEC also rejected the applications of IRI and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs to accredit independent delegations, while granting last-minute credentials to a disreputable group that had abandoned all pretenses of independence by a series of statements in support of the Me_iar government.[4]

Recommendation 6: Provide Specific Procedures and Regulations for International Observers

The Slovak government should adopt legislation that explicitly permits international observers to monitor elections with a transparent, non-discriminatory procedure for accreditation. In addition, regulations regarding the rights and obligations of international observers should be included in the materials distributed to all electoral commissions. Slovakia should follow the lead of other central European countries to comply with its international obligations.

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[4] The British Helsinki Human Rights Commission.

Finding 7: Domestic Observers

Some representatives of the former government parties asserted that the establishment of multi-partisan election commissions made accreditation requests from any citizen or domestic organization a redundant and administratively burdensome exercise. The ONCE, II, and other groups strongly disagreed with this assertion, partly because of the implications of allowing international observers while excluding domestic observers. In addition, election commission members, although designated by political parties, take an oath to be impartial in fulfilling their official duties.

Recommendation 7: Establish an Explicit Right and Regulations for Domestic Observers

Slovakia should establish an explicit right allowing domestic organizations, the media, and individual citizens access to observe all aspects of elections. The CEC. should provide regulations to both election commissions and observers that define the rights and obligations of domestic observers. Any regulations should include provisions allowing observers to seek and record information, but not encroach on the right of election commission members to adjudicate disputes or interpret the election law. In the selection and physical arrangement of polling stations, district electoral commissions should be obligated by law to allow for both domestic and international observers.

Finding 8: Coalition Threshold Requirements

In a clear attempt to disadvantage the opposition, the 1998 law modified the threshold requirements for coalitions without explicitly banning coalitions, by forcing each party in a coalition to clear the five-percent threshold and have a separate candidate list, the 1998 law sought to discourage any rational party from forming a coalition. A few months before the elections, the two extant opposition coalitions (the five-party Slovak Democratic Coalition and the three-party Hungarian Coalition) were obliged to devote valuable time and resources to transform their legal status into that of single-party organizations.

Recommendation 8: Restore Coalition Requirements

Slovakia should restore the coalition provisions of the 1990 law, which provided for a graduated threshold for multi-party coalitions and joint candidate lists, depending upon the number of parties in the coalition. By encouraging coalition-building, the election law will facilitate the still-needed consolidation of political parties unable to independently surpass a five percent threshold.

Finding 9: Election Commission Powers

The 1998 law shifted power from the election commissions to state authorities in a number of ways. The law provided that the recorders of election commissions were selected by the national government, district offices, and mayors for the central, district, and precinct commissions, respectively; whereas commissions previously appointed their own recorders/secretaries (?). In several cases, the relationship between the Ministry of the Interior and the election commissions was modified in the 1998 law. Previously, the commissions had directed the ministry to undertake various actions. In the new law, the ministry was to be consulted. However, balanced multi-partisan commissions are generally a better guarantee of fairness than state workers who are controlled by the current government.

Recommendation 9: Return Powers to Election Commissions

The Slovak government should therefore seek to return power to the election commissions. Positions such as recorders could be directly selected by the commissions themselves, removing concerns about government interference. The law should be amended to insure that multi-partisan commissions have clear legal authority on all aspects of administering the elections. It's only when all parties constesting elections are able to muster representatives to serve on election commissions throughout the country that the voters can be confident of the balloting process. The critical aspect of electoral commissions is not they're partisan, but that they're multi-partisan; while the partisanship of government officials may be concealed from public scrutiny.

Finding 10: Voter Education

The Slovak government did not undertake a major voter education effort, despite substantial changes in the election law and a large number of newly-eligible voters. While state media did broadcast some public awareness commercials, they were inadequate, dull, and did nothing to motivate voters to go to the polls. Slovak non-governmental organizations, such as the Citizens Campaign '98 (*OK'98*) and Rock the Vote (*Rock Volieb*), stepped into the void by organizing a number of voter education and participation efforts. The Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ) also undertook a major effort to reach its members. While these sorts of independent efforts are both commendable and effective, they do not relieve the government of its responsibility to make sure voters are aware of the law. Indeed, these efforts were condemned by the ruling coalition as partisan and foreign-inspired. In addition, II observers found that many in the Roma community were unaware of basic provisions in the election law, such as identification requirements for receiving a ballot.

Recommendation 10: Increase State-Funded Voter Education Efforts

The Slovak government should insure that state agencies, including state media, undertake a proper voter education and motivation campaign for the next elections. Such a campaign should compliment, not replace, the outstanding efforts of non-governmental organizations.

Finding 11: Referendum

A referendum on barring the privatization of certain state "strategic" businesses was held concurrently with the parliamentary elections. The referendum was invalid because it failed to attract 50 percent of the voters, despite an 85 percent turnout for the parliamentary elections. The current law specifies that separate referendum commissions are established by parliamentary parties designating representatives at the national, district, and precinct levels. Because the constellation of parties in Parliament was different from the parties contesting the parliamentary elections, separate commissions and polling places for the two ballots had to be established. While many voters avoided the referendum for political reasons, IR observers also saw voter confusion caused by duplicate polling places. Some voters did not realize they had the opportunity to vote in the elections and in the referendum. In addition, the costs of the separate referendum was a needless expense.

Recommendation 11: Clarify the Law on Referenda

The Slovak government should consider amending the law to: 1) prohibit simultaneous referenda and elections; or 2) provide an exception to the rules for composing referendum commissions that allows election commissions to administer both referendum and election ballots when they are scheduled simultaneously.

Finding 12:   Official Campaign Period

Both the 1990 and 1998 election laws established an official campaign period of 30 days. The experience of 1998 shows that this legal definition of "campaign" is not in keeping with political reality. The date of the 1998 elections was clear long before it was officially announced. Because this was the first occasion when a Slovak Parliament completed its four-year term, parties and candidates were able to anticipate the elections and begin campaigning long before the official campaign began. This early advertising and other spending by parties clearly skirted the campaign spending provisions of the election law.

Recommendation 12: Lengthen the Official Campaign Period or Ban Pre-Election Campaigns

The Slovak government should either expand the official campaign period to accommodate actual party activities or ban "campaign" advertising before the official campaign period. Any such ban should distinguish between the general public relations campaigns regularly conducted by political parties and specific "election campaign" advertising. A ban also must

be enforced with appropriate penalties for violations. In contemplating these two options, the Slovak government must make enhanced freedom of speech and access to the political process as the central criterion of its decision.

Finding 13: Pre-Election Moratorium

Both the 1990 and 1998 election laws established a two-day moratorium on political activity between the end of the campaign period and the beginning of the balloting process. Under the law, sanctions apply to the media, but not to parties or candidates for violating the ban. In 1998, the moratorium was breached by state television when it aired an interview with then Parliamentary Chairman Ivan Gašparovi_, who also served as Vice Chairman of Me_iar's HZDS. While STV was fined by the Broadcasting Council after the elections, the HZDS avoided any penalty. In other words, the HZDS not only violated the 48-hour ban while its competitors were relegated to enforced silence, the taxpayers were saddled with the subsequent fine.

Recommendation 13: Abolish Pre-Election Moratorium or Penalize Violators

Myriad valid arguments can be made for the commonly used 48-hour "cooling-off" period. Foremost is the fact that moratoriums prevent inflammatory political rhetoric from inciting violence, intimidating voters, or encouraging fraud on election day. Conversely, a moratorium can leave some parties at a considerable disadvantage if it's either obeyed or enforced on a selective basis. In weighing the alternatives, the Slovak government should again focus on the central issue of supporting free speech and political participation. A guiding principle for implementing such bans should be that the threats to a peaceful and orderly voting process are so overwhelming that they clearly outweigh the fundamental liabilities of limiting free speech. If a moratorium is to provide an equitable and effective deterrent, political parties and candidates (in addition to the media) must have a clear expectation that violations will be quickly penalized to the full extent of the law.

Finding 14: Vacating Mandates and Preference Votes

Under the 1990 law, when deputies resigned, were elevated to other government posts, or died, their substitutes (*nahradnici*) were determined by the voters rather than the parties. The 1998 law transferred the fundamental right of the Slovak voters to elect their representatives to a small group of political party leaders, when it stated that the parties shall determine the substitute for a vacant mandate. In part, this change was motivated by parties suffering defections among its MPs, who could resign or change party membership while retaining their mandate.

Recommendation 14: Preference Votes and Candidate List Order Should Determine the

Selection of Substitutes for Members of Parliament

Because Members of Parliament are ultimately elected by voters rather than parties, individuals who resign their party membership should have the option to retain their mandate (especially if a mixed electoral system is established that provides voters with the opportunity to vote for individual candidates). However, in cases in which a Member or Parliament dies or wishes to resign his mandate, the Slovak government should adopt legislation that obligates parties to respect the will of the electorate in selecting a replacement. In other words, substitutes should be determined by preference votes where applicable, and otherwise by order on the party's original candidate list.

Finding 15: Voter Registration Lists

The 1990 law required municipalities to publicly post voter registration lists to help voters determine if they would be allowed to vote on election day without difficulty. This provision was eliminated in the 1998 law, which transferred the onus of registration to citizens. However, the 1998 law contained a major improvement over its predecessor by requiring municipalities to mail voters a notification. In addition, the 1998 law prohibited parties from obtaining advance copies or reviewing voter lists, while municipalities could withhold the lists for last-minute revisions up to two hours before voting begins.

Recommendation 15: Enhance Transparency of Voter Registration Lists

Public confidence in the election process is directly related to the integrity and accuracy of voter registration lists. Therefore, voters, political parties, and commissions should have sufficient time and access to review the registration lists and address any duplications, deletions or other inconsistencies. Registration lists should be publicly posted and copies made available for a nominal fee. The "voter notification" provision should be retained not only because it provides confirmation of registration, it also may prompt greater voter participation. Finally, political parties should have access to basic voter information provided that proper measures are taken to protect citizens' privacy. Giving parties access to the lists will enhance the integrity of the electoral process while increasing party access to voters.

Finding 16: Right of Appeal

The 1998 law changed the rights of Slovak citizens and political parties to appeal decisions concerning the elections. Specifically, the 1998 law states that the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic is the final authority in election cases and denies the right of appeal to the Constitutional Court. Many attributed this amendment to the desire of the Me_iar government to obtain a more favorable forum for the appeal of election law disputes.

Recommendation 16: Restore Constitutional Court Jurisdiction

Because the right of the individual to vote is guaranteed by the Slovak Constitution, citizens should have the right to appeal election law decisions to the Constitutional Court if they believe their rights have been violated. In addition, political parties should have the right to appeal election disputes on behalf of their candidates, members, and voters if they believe the violations rise to a constitutional level.

Appendix I: Preliminary Statement of Delegation Findings

IRI Election Observation Mission
September 27, 1998

The International Republican Institute sponsored a 15 member delegation to observe the Slovak parliamentary elections on September 25-26, 1998. IRI observers received their Central Election Commission (CEC) credentials through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In contrast to the flawed campaign environment, IRI observers found the two-day election administration process to be basically sound, and found no evidence of either widespread or systematic irregularity in the balloting process, although ballot tabulation and reporting is still not complete. It appears that the results of the balloting are a credible and generally accurate reflection of the will of Slovak voters as expressed on the election days. By their extraordinary participation the balloting process - nearly 85 percent of eligible voters went to the polls - Slovak citizens have expressed their faith in the democratic process and their desire for political change.

Far more troubling and problematic, in the view of the IRI delegation, is the political environment in which the election campaign was conducted. IRI delegates concluded that the campaign was compromised, and that the campaigns of individual parties were significantly handicapped. There was not a level playing field for parties in the campaign. This was the result of the actions of the incumbent government and by state institutions under its control in the period preceding the election. These actions included late amendments to the Slovak election law that complicated and slowed the campaigns of major opposition coalitions and intimidated private media, as well as clear and persistent bias by the state media in its coverage of the campaign. In spite of these factors, opposition parties made a strong showing in the elections.

In addition, IRI delegates concluded that the Slovak Central Election Commission by its resistance to international observers and its refusal to accredit domestic election observers, demonstrated a lack of genuine commitment to insuring an open and fully transparent campaign and electoral process. Indeed, a majority of members of the CEC seemed not to understand that by virtue of its membership in the OSCE, Slovakia had already consented to both international and domestic monitoring. In contrast, IRI delegates found that the overwhelming majority of precinct election officials were open and helpful. Given that the electoral process was generally sound, the attitude of most CEC members is puzzling. Despite the best efforts of election commissioners, the lack of technology and clear guidance on procedures mad e closing procedures and tabulations cumbersome in many locations. IRI recommends that precinct and district election commissioners be consulted on how these procedures can be improved.

Although the Slovak government ultimately consented to international monitoring, senior

government officials made statements during the pre-election period that indicated a fundamental lack of understanding of Slovakia's OSCE commitments. The statements of senior government officials and the pro-government media about domestic monitoring efforts were lamentable. According to OSCE documents, Slovak citizens have a right to monitor their own elections. Despite the barriers raised by the CEC and Slovak government, IRI delegates commend the Association for Fair Elections for their efforts during these elections.

IRI also commends the efforts of thousands of Slovaks who became involved in the political process. While government officials and pro-government media consistently labeled the efforts of non-governmental organizations in near conspiratorial terms, the activities of non-governmental organizations were a positive legacy of the 1998 Slovak elections. In a year when major changes were made to the election law and when a large number of new voters became eligible to vote for the first time, it was above all the non-governmental sector, and not the government, which informed citizens about the elections. More attention should also be paid to insuring that all segments of Slovak society, especially the Roma community, receive adequate voter education information. IRI delegates believe that the nonpartisan efforts of non-governmental organizations to increase voter turnout, especially among youth, were in part responsible for the high election participation.

IRI observers stress that their observation of the balloting process offers no basis to doubt that the results of the voting accurately reflect the will of Slovak voters. However, the negative features of the campaign environment could have had an impact on the results. This is especially so given the extremely narrow margin that separates the leading parties according to the latest available data.

IRI observers further stress that the actions of the Slovak government and political parties in the post-election period - the period between now and the formation of the next government - will be critical. The Slovak Constitution provides guidance on the procedure for formation of the new government. It is incumbent on the current government, all parties, and political leaders to respect the law and contribute to the timely formation of a new government, no matter what its composition may be. The new government also has a duty to respect the rights of the opposition parties. In particular, parties and politicians have a responsibility to the thousands of young people who decided to participate in the political process for the first time. They and millions of other Slovak citizens have expressed their faith in the political process. Those who have been elected now must insure that the electorate's wishes are honored.

Delegation Background

The delegation is composed of four election and political experts from the United States and 11 European experts, representing Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. The delegation leader was the Honorable Richard Burt, former U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany. After meeting with a range of political, election, media, and NGO representatives in Bratislava, IRI delegates deployed to cities throughout

Slovakia, including Bratislava, Tren_in, Pieš_any, Nové Zámky, Dolny Kubin, Poprad, Gelnica and Košice. The delegation was funded by grants from the National Endowment for Democracy and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

For additional information, please contact: E.R. Gregory at 421-7-533-8111 (through Sept. 30) or 202-408-9450 (after Sept. 30) or Lindsay Lloyd at 421-7-533-3544.

Appendix II: Schedule for the Preparation of the parliamentary elections

Final date before polling day	Article	Task	To be done by
90 days 27 June 1998	24-1	Call the election	Chairman of the National Council
65 days 22 July 1998	17-1	Submit the candidate lists	Political parties
65 days 22 July 1998	13-1	Appoint 2 CEC members and 2 substitutes	Political parties
60 days 27 July 1998	13-2	First meeting of the CEC	Prime Minister
55 days 1 August 1998	18-1	Process the submitted candidate lists	CEC
45 days 11 August 1998	19-1	Registration of the candidate lists	CEC
45 days 11 August 1998	15-1	Appoint 1 DEC member and 1 substitute	Political parties
40 days 16 August 1998	21	Ballot order draw	CEC
40 days 16 August 1998	15-2	First meeting of the DEC	Head of the District Council
30 days 26 August 1998	10-1	Determine election precincts and polling stations	Mayors of the municipalities
30 days 26 August 1998	16-1	Appointment 1 PEC member and 1 substitute	Political parties
30 days 26 August 1998	23-1	First day of campaigning	Political parties
25 days 31 August 1998	19-5	Forward lists of registered candidates to municipalities	MOI
25 days 31 August 1998	25	Inform the voters about their registration in the electoral rolls and time and place of the election	Municipalities
23 days 2 September 1998	16-4	First meeting of the PEC	Mayors of the municipalities

Final date before polling day	Article	Task	To be done by
20 days 5 September 1998	19-5	Publicize party lists	Municipalities
48 hours	23-1	End of campaigning	Political parties
25 September 1998	22-4	Deliver ballot papers to the PEC's	Mayors of the municipalities
25 September 1998 and 26 September 1998	24-4	Polling day (days)	PEC's

Appendix III: Election Results

Political Party	% of vote (1994)	Seats won ('94)	% of vote (1998)	Seats won (1998)
Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)[1]	34.96	61	27.0	43
Common Choice[2]	10.41	18	na	na
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	na	na	14.66	23
Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)[3]	10.18	17	9.1	15

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[1] In 1994, the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) ran in coalition with the Peasants Party of Slovakia (RSS). The RSS later merged with the Farmers' Movement (HP) to form the New Agrarian Party (NAS). In 1998, NAS candidates ran directly on the HZDS ticket.

[2] In 1994, Common Choice was a coalition of four leftist parties" the Party of the Democratic Left (SDL), the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS), the Green Party of Slovakia (ZRS), and the Farmers' Movement (HP). In 1998, the SDL ran independently. The SDSS and the ZRS candidates ran as part of the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). The HP merged with the RSS (see above).

[3] In 1994, Coexistence, the Hungarian Civic Party (MOS), and the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH) ran in a coalition. In 1998, the three parties were formally dissolved and united in the new Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK).

Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)[4]	10.08	17	na	na
Democratic Union (DU)[5]	8.57	15	na	na
Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)[6]	na	na	26.33	42
Slovak National Party (SNS)	5.40	9	9.07	14
Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	na	na	8.01	13
Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS)	7.34	13	1.30	0
Parties under five percent	13.06	0	5.81	0

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[4] In 1994, one member of the Democratic Party (DS) was elected on the ticket of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH). In 1998, both the DS and the KDH were part of the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK).

[5] In 1998, the Democratic Union (DU) ran as part of the SDK.

[6] The Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) was formed by the the Slovak Green Party (SZS)and the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS) in addition to the DU, DS, and KDH,. It was formed after the 1994 elections.

Turnout Statistics:

1998 number of registered voters: 4,023,191
1998 number of voters who received ballots: 3,389,346
1998 voter particpation (%):   84.24 %

1994 voter participation (%):   75.65 %

Ruling Coalitions[7]

1994 Government Coalition:

Party	Seats
Movement for a Democratic Slovak (HZDS)	61
Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS)	13
Slovak National Party (SNS)	9
TOTAL	83

1998 Government Coalition:

Party	Seats
Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	42
Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	23
Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	15
Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	13
TOTAL	93

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[7] There are 150 seats in the parliament. At least 90 votes constitute a constitutional majority.

Appendix IV:
Members Elected and Seated in the Slovak Parliament
September 25 - 26, 1998
(in alphabetical order)

G = Members relinquishing their seats to take a position in government
R = Members resigning their seats

Name	Party	G/R
Marta Aibekova	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Ladislav Ambros	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Marian Andel	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Imrich Andrejcak	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Maria Angelovicova, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Marian Antecky	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Peter Baco	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Ladislav Ballek	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Stanislav Bartos, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Edit Bauer, CSc.	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	G
Gyula Bardos	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Irena Belohorska	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Jan Bencat, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Julius Binder, Dr. h.c.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Peter Bohunicky	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Jozef Brhel	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Peter Brnak	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Julius Brocka	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	

Jan Budaj	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Bela Bugar	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Tibor Cabaj	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Milan Cagala, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	G
Pal Csaky	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Jan Cuper, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Ludovit Cernak, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Name	**Party**	**G/R**
Jan Danko, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Pavel Delinga, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Michal Drobny, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Diana Dubovska	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Arpad Duka-Zolyomi	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Miklos Duray	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Peter Dvorsky	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	R
Mikulas Dzurinda	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Alojz Englis	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Vladimir Faic	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Pal Farkas	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Barnabas Ferko	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Robert Fico, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Jan Figel	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Lubomir Fogas, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	G
Martin Fronc, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Milan Ftacnik, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	G
Jan Gabriel	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Jozef Gajdos	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	

Name	Party	G/R
Ivan Gasparovic, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Frantisek Halmes	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Pavol Hamzik, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	G
Lubomir Harach	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Istvan Harna	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Roman Hofbauer, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Milan Hort	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Laszlo Hoka	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Juraj Hrasko, DrSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Pavol Hrusovsky	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Ivan Hudec	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Stanislav Husar	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Augustin Marian Huska	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Milan Istvan	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Name	**Party**	**G/R**
Dusan Jarjabek	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Jan Jasovsky, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Anton Juris	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Pavol Kacic	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Maria Kadlecikova, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Jozef Kalman	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Pavel Kandrac, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Pavol Kanis, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	G
Olga Keltosova	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Jozef Klemens	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	

Milan Knazko	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Melania Kollarikova	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Pavel Koncos	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	G
Miroslav Kotian	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Roman Kovac, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Sergej Kozlik	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Laszlo Koteles	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Gustav Krajci	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Peter Kresak, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Jozef Krumpolec	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Eduard Kukan	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Jozef Kuzma	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Jozsef Kvarda	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Jan Langos	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Peter Magvasi, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	G
Ludovit Machacek	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	G
Maria Machova, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	G
Jirko Malcharek	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Anna Malikova	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Vladimir Manka	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Miroslav Maxon	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Vladimir Meciar, Dr. h.c.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	R
Marian Mesiarik	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Name	**Party**	**G/R**
Lajos Meszaros	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Jozef Migas, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Frantisek Miklosko	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Miroslav Mikolasik	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Vitazoslav Moric, CSc.	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Ludmila Muskova	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	

Laszlo Nagy	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	
Viliam Oberhauser, CSc.	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Ladislav Orosz, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Peter Osusky, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Peter Osvath	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Gabriel Palacka	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Vladimir Palko, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Jaroslav Paska	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Ferdinand Petrak	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Ladislav Pittner, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Marta Podhradska	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Igor Presperin, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Jozef Prokes, CSc.	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Pavol Prokopovic	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Milan Rehak	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Ivan Rosival, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Jan Rusnak	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Stefan Rusnak	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Maria Sabolova	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Brigita Schmogernova,	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	G
Rudolf Schuster, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Jan Sitek	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Jaroslav Slany	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Eva Slavkovska, CSc.	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Dusan Slobodnik, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Jan Slota	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Jan Smerek, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Name	**Party**	**G/R**
Viliam Sopko	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Miloslav Suchar	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Laszlo Szigeti	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	G

Tibor Sagat, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Frantisek Sebej, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Rastislav Septak	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Ivan Simko	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Stefan Slachta, CSc.	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)	
Pavel Stastny, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Pavol Stevcek, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Dusan Svantner	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Juraj Svec, Dr.Sc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Peter Tatar, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Vojtech Tkac, CSc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Milan Topoli	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Katarina Tothova, Dr.Sc.	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	
Jozef Tuchyna	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Viliam Vaskovic, CSc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	G
Roman Vavrik	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Jaroslav Volf	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Pavol Vrzdak	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Peter Weiss, CSc.	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)	
Peter Zajac, Dr.Sc.	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Anna Zaborska	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)	
Stefan Zelnik	Slovak National Party (SNS)	
Jozef Zlocha	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)	

New Members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic
as of November 6, 1998

*(members who entered parliament as replacements for those members who were
appointed to the cabinet or resigned, listed in alphabetical order)*

Name	**Party**
Lubomir Andrassy	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)
Vladimir Bajan	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Rudolf Bauer	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Milan Benkovsky	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)
Erszebet Dolnik	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)
Lubomir Dzurak	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)
Peter Duracka	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Dusan Fedorocko	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Tomas Galbavy	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Milan Gala	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Laszlo Gyurovsky	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)
Jana Haluskova	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)
Alexej Ivanko	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Dusan Kovacic	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)
Peter Kresanek	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Martin Kujan	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Ivan Lexa	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)
Peter Muransky	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Alojz Rakus	Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)
Viera Ruskova	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)
Klara Sarkozy	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)
Imrich Sladecek	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)
Olga Szabo	Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)
Jan Simko	Party of Civic Understanding (SOP)
Imrich Toth	Party of the Democratic Left (SDL)

Appendix V: Political Party Profiles and Campaign Summaries

Within the political spectrum that emerged in post-communist Eastern Europe, "Right" is defined by strong support for transition to a full market economy; support for privatization of the maximum number of state-owned commercial enterprises, usually along the lines of mass or coupon privatization; decentralization of power to the lowest possible level; and expansion and protection of personal freedoms and independence for individuals.

Slovak parties either defining themselves as "rightist" or commonly having that label applied to them include the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), which is close to traditional Christian democratic parties in Western Europe; and the Democratic Party (DS), which follows more civic conservative lines, rejecting any spiritual influence on politics and focusing more on rapid development of a free-market economy, and criticizing what they view as unreasonably high taxes and widespread intrusion of the state in the affairs of private businessmen. For the most part, the three parties serving the Hungarian ethnic community in Slovakia fall on the right side of the spectrum.

On the extreme right is the Slovak National Party (SNS), one of the HZDS' two government coalition partners from 1994 to 1998. As with most of its policies, its views on economics are based on the central issue that defines the SNS – an uncompromising defense of Slovak national interests, as it sees them.

"Left" is defined by a willingness to continue state possession and control over commercial enterprises; a tendency to emphasize an activist role of the state in easing the transition to a free market by means of direct subsidy and social support; a greater inclination to evaluate positively the achievements of the Communist period in Slovakia; and an above-average desire for "unity and cohesion" above pluralism of opinions.

The majority of the ground on the left is covered by the Party of the Democratic Left (SD_), which inherited the bulk of the support of the former communist apparatus in Slovakia. Like many other former communist parties, the SD_ has undertaken to transform itself into a traditional Western European social democratic party, and has been accepted as such by its European partners. The Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS) and Green Party in Slovakia (SZS) ran with the SD_ in the "Common Choice" coalition in 1994. They broke with the SD_ in 1997 to join the new Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). A recent addition the Slovakia's left is the Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), which was created in April 1998.

The extreme left is covered by the Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS), which emerged from obscurity in March of 1994 to become a king-maker in the 1994

parliamentary elections. The ZRS is a traditional, labor-oriented and centralist left-wing movement. The unreformed Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS) also lies at the far-left of the political spectrum.

While "Center" falls logically somewhere between the standard left and right, the center is in some ways unscouted territory in Slovakia precisely because the definitions of left and right themselves are somewhat blurred. The major self-proclaimed heir to the centrist leadership is the Democratic Union (DU), which is led by former Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan and other prominent political personalities. The DU has actively engaged the West European parties making up the Liberal International, and especially the German Free Democratic Party, to build up its image as a party of non-clerical, pro-free-market businessmen and professionals.

Of the remaining major parties and movements, Vladimír Me_iar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) defies classification in the traditional left-right terms of the political spectrum. Although the HZDS can be described as a corporatist party with a nationalist focus, the party, in fact, was defined more by the personality of Vladimír Me_iar rather than an adherence to any specific political philosophy.

On July 22, 1998, 18 parties submitted registration materials required to run candidates in the September elections (one small party was subsequently disqualified by the Central Election Commission). These parties can be divided in three groups: 1) the three parties that formed the government after the 1994 elections (the HZDS, SNS, and ZRS); 2) the four parties that formed the government after the 1998 elections (the SOP, SOP, SMK, and SDK); and 3) the ten other parties that failed to surpass the five percent threshold in the 1998 elections.

Movement for a Democratic Slovakia or *Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (HZDS)*

Chairman: Vladimír Me_iar (former Premier)
Homepage: www.hzds.sk
Central Office :   Tomášikova 32/A
                   821 02 Bratislava
                   07/295-521

The Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) emerged from the splinters of the large umbrella movements that formed in Slovakia just after the 1989 "Velvet Revolution" and staked its future on a play for Slovak nationalist sympathies and on the populist political skills of its chairman, Vladimír Me_iar. It won the June 1992 elections handily and formed a government in Slovakia that ultimately negotiated the peaceful separation of the Czech and Slovak Republics on January 1, 1993. During its first year, however, powerful

political figures inside the HZDS successively fell into personal conflict with Me_iar and were forced to leave both the government and the party. Almost all of them moved on to take leading roles in other political parties and movements. The intense loyalty of a segment of the political elite to the HZDS and Me_iar, coupled with the unbounded antipathy for him expressed by his opponents, together form the defining characteristics of contemporary political life in Slovakia.

By February 1994, defections from the HZDS had so weakened the government that Me_iar elected to sign a coalition agreement with the Slovak National Party (SNS) to hold the government together. The growing mistrust and antipathy for Me_iar, the exodus of HZDS figures from the government, and the creation of new parties and movements led to formation of a voting bloc against Me_iar in the Parliament, and a motion of no confidence in his government was passed on March 11, 1994.

By almost all measures, the HZDS ran the most innovative and well-planned campaign of any party or movement that ran in 1994.   They introduced to Slovakia the idea of distributing free campaign video and cassette tapes featuring the campaign theme song ("*Vivat Slovakia*"). This catchy tune song appealed to sentimental emotions about a newly-independent Slovakia and reinforced Me_iar's connection to the founding of the post-communist Slovak state.

For a society strickened by uncertainty about both their past and future, and for older people and the working class, Me_iar and the HZDS offered the hope of quick and forceful answers to questions they grappled with on a daily basis, as well as a sense that even in the midst of confusion and uncertainty, Slovakia had much for which to be proud. It was a clear understanding of these emotions that drove the Me_iar/HZDS "*Vivat Slovakia*" campaign, and which connected so well with the population.

The 1998 Parliamentary Election Campaign

In the past, Me_iar has argued that he was unable to fulfill his promises because his opponents conspired against him to force early elections. For the first time in Slovakia's post-communist history, the 1998 elections were held at the end of Parliament's full four-year term, meaning that both Me_iar and his opponents made the government's record a major focus of the campaign. Critics argued that the only goal of the HZDS was obtaining and maintaining power, while its supporters held that the party had single-handedly built a prosperous, independent Slovakia despite tremendous domestic and international opposition. While even his critics conceded that he was the most skilled politician in the country, many of the other figures in the HZDS were less compelling. By May 1998, the HZDS had returned to the top of the public opinion polls after an extended period of trailing the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK).

Because businesses had been privatized to cronies and associates of the HZDS, the industrial lobby provided an unmatchable war chest for the party. In addition, the HZDS abused state resources for political purposes, although Slovakia's weak campaign financial disclosure laws made such accusations nearly impossible to prove. However, Slovak papers reported that state employees were pressured to join the party. Press stories also described army helicopters being used at a HZDS rally in eastern Slovakia and the state security service was implicated in attempts to discredit the SDK and independent journalists. Because the government made it easy for HZDS loyalists to buy or license media outlets around the country, the HZDS enjoyed unparalleled access to the nationwide coverage provided by state-owned Slovak Television (STV), with little distinction drawn between news reporting and advocacy. In fact, the only party convention broadcast by STV in 1998 was the HZDS convention; and a presentation of the government's record of achievement given in Parliament was broadcast by STV, without providing equal time for an opposition response.

In August 1998, the HZDS began a massive billboard and print advertising campaign, focused on the government's achievements and national pride. Advertising pointed to the Gab_ikovo dam, improvements in Slovak product quality, and expansion of the highway network. The party was embarrassed when an opposition newspaper revealed that one HZDS billboard bearing the caption "the country of your heart," in fact featured a photograph of Switzerland. Another patriotic theme featured a photograph of a Slovak flag atop Mt. Everest (newspapers revealed that the HZDS had helped pay the climbers' expenses, in exchange for the right to use the image). In contrast with the 1994 campaign, none of the early advertising featured Vladimír Me_iar. The advertisements all featured the slogan "We defend the interests of a democratic Slovakia," the initials of which are "HZDS" in Slovak.

In contrast with the 1994 campaign, Me_iar was scarcely seen in the HZDS's 1998 television advertisements. Most of the HZDS commercials opened with a Slovak mountain landscape, with a heart shaped sunbeam illuminating the hills. In one commercial, we saw the basic HZDS message: "Slovakia is the country of your heart, listen to your heartbeat." The HZDS logo appeared only at the end of the ad. Other television commercials included the Mt. Everest photographs, improvements in Slovak quality and exports, expansion of the highway network, and a youth-targeted ad that featured a young athlete who impresses his girlfriend playing basketball. Several of the HZDS commercials featured brief cartoons at the end, attacking the SDK and SOP in a humorous fashion. Other ads featured an attractive young woman who dances around the party logo.

Slovak National Party or *Slovenská narodna strana (SNS)*

Chairman: Ján Slota (Mayor of _ilina)
Homepage: www.isnet.sk/sns/
Central Office: Šafárikovo nám. 3
                     814 99 Bratislava
                     07/323-869, 324-260

The Slovak National Party (SNS) proudly anchors the right side of the Slovak spectrum, with an unapologetic appeal to nationalist and conservative values. It proclaims itself as the only party that will safeguard the interests of the Slovak nation against its enemies and has successfully worked to broaden its appeal to new groups of voters. The SNS calls itself the oldest party in Slovakia and traces its roots to nationalist cultural organizations in the 19th century. The party eagerly embraces the Nazi-allied Slovak state of the Tiso Regime (1939-1945), saying that it has been inaccurately characterized by biased enemies of Slovakia.

Before 1993, the SNS platform consisted mostly of support for the creation of an independent Slovakia. Then under different leadership, the SNS entered a coalition government with Me_iar's HZDS in February 1994, which ended in the vote of no confidence in March 1994. Like many of the other parties and movements in Slovakia, the SNS also underwent a split between more and less radical factions. The main body of the party, which retained the SNS name, is now run by Ján Slota, the nationalist, populist mayor of the city of _ilina (he is called "Zilinovsky" by his detractors to parody the name of the Russian nationalist Vladimír Zhirinovsky). The SNS's more moderate faction formed the National Democratic Party/New Alternative for the 1994 elections, and later merged with the Democratic Union.

The SNS can be characterized as statist in terms of economic views, and strives to protect job loss in large factories with government intervention. The party's major public issue is the relationship between ethnic Slovaks and the large Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and the party generally profits in times of tension between these two groups. In a similar vein, the Slovak National Party has continued to push for tough legislation regulating states of emergency. While Parliament never approved the bill, draft versions of the law would give state authorities sweeping powers to ban demonstrations, restrict the freedom of speech, and allow police to search homes and detain individuals without following the normal legal procedures.

Despite its relatively small size, the SNS has played a pivotal role over the last four years. By joining with the HZDS in 1994 to form the government, the party exerted a powerful influence over the direction of society. The SNS benefited from the rewards of privatization, although it asserts that the HZDS reaped the lion's share of state businesses. It pushed for hard-line policies against the Hungarian minority, including adoption of the state language law, argued against NATO membership, and pushed for a series of measures such as a law on "the protection of the republic" that was widely viewed as anti-democratic.

In 1998, the SNS was an aggressive advocate for reinstituting the death penalty as a solution to Slovakia's explosion in crime, and launched a petition drive on the issue. The party also presented itself as a defender of traditional, Christian values in a year when the identity of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) was submerged in the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK).

The 1998 Election Campaign

Despite the SNS's profitable alliance with the HZDS, the SNS also distanced itself from Me_iar. In 1997, it nearly brought down the government after balking at a HZDS plan to privatize the largest banks and insurance company. It has sided with the opposition on some issues, most notably on issues affecting local government. Its record on the 1998 election law revisions was more controversial, however, when it reversed direction and supported HZDS provisions, despite promises that it wouldn't. But rather than joining the HZDS in an electoral coalition, the SNS grasped its need to appear more independent and less radical to widen its base of support. As the campaign season began, the SNS and HZDS feuded publicly over a variety of issues, including the privatization of the state insurance company, the replacement of the Army's top general by a HZDS loyalist, and the discovery of listening devices in Chairman Ján Slota's office. The SNS signed agreements with two small parties, the Slovak Green Alternative and the Christian Social Union, to include their candidates on its lists for the 1998 elections.

In the 1998 campaign, the SNS combined fiery, anti-Hungarian rhetoric with a new emphasis on promoting traditional values and a tough stance on crime. The SNS stepped up its advocacy of reestablishing the death penalty, despite the fact that its adoption would be at odds with Slovakia's commitments to European institutions such as the Council of Europe. But in a time of rapidly increasing crime and vivid television coverage of mob wars, the SNS's death penalty stance had undeniable popular appeal.

The party's early advertising emphasized its patriotism and unrelenting defense of Slovak interests. Billboards went up in the summer showing the party's eagle logo superimposed over a photograph of the Tatra mountains, bearing the captions "Our Homeland – Our Nest" and "The Eagle Always Takes Care of its Nest."

The SNS opened its first TV ad with its logo (an eagle atop a Slovak shield). The eagle was then animated and flies over a Slovak landscape of mountains as folk music plays in the background. The scene cuts to various party leaders at a recent commemoration for Andrej Hlinka, an early Slovak nationalist, talking about how the party can be counted on to stand up for Slovak interests.

A longer advertisement discussed the party's Christian values. Images of churches

and religious icons were seen while religious music was played in the background. Quotes from the Bible and Slovak patriots were read. The former chairman of the Christian Social Union, Viliam Oberhauser, then discussed how the party stands for Christian values, including opposition to crime and abortion. Another advertisement included a series of man-in-the-street interviews about patriotism.

Association of Workers of Slovakia or *Zdru_enie robotníkov Slovenska (ZRS)*

Chairman: Ján _upták

The Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS) emerged in March 1994 as an ill-defined leftist movement of unemployed factory workers rallied around populist stonemason Ján _upták, a former Member of Parliament for the Party of the Democratic Left (SD_). As the parliamentary elections approached, it was clear that the ZRS had no effective party organization. It gained its support almost exclusively from the blue-collar workers who otherwise would have supported the SD_, but were dissatisfied with the SD_'s reform-oriented leadership and its vague campaign conducted in 1994 as part of the Common Choice coalition (see SD_ in next section). The ZRS's reputation in popular culture was built on a few speeches by Chairman Ján _upták, in which he sounded the refrain of continued state support for large enterprises and increased benefits and security for workers.

The 1998 Parliamentary Election Campaign

While still part of the ruling coalition, the ZRS had largely faded from the Slovak political scene by 1998. The party was hit by waves of defections by its Member of Parliament, disgusted by the gap between the party's stated goal of protecting workers' interests and the reality of its slavish devotion to the Me_iar government's agenda and privatization policies. Several of the most prominent leaders of the ZRS announced they would run on other parties' candidate lists, including Vice Premier Jozef Kálmán (for the HZDS) and MP Miroslav Ko_nár (for the new Our Slovakia party). With the collapse of its base, the ZRS failed to surpass the five percent threshold needed to enter Parliament.

The ZRS TV advertisements featured a traditional Slovak folk ensemble singing about how the ZRS is the party that stands up for workers' interests. Various speakers were seen throughout, including party chair _uptak in a garden, speaking in his inimitable style about all the wonderful things the ZRS did for the ordinary people. Also seen were a series of interviews that included a handicapped man and a bedridden old woman talking about how the ZRS responded when they needed help. The intended message was that the ZRS is on the side of the average citizen.

Party of Civic Understanding or *Strana obcianského porozumenia (SOP)*

Chairman: Rudolf Schuster (Mayor of Košice)
Homepage: www.sop.sk
Central office: Ru_ová dolina 6
                            824 70 Bratislava
                            07/540-1161, 540-1260

Despite the fact that the Party of Civic Understanding was formed in February 1998, it became the country's sixth strongest political force by thetime of the September elections. Its appeal was based less on its center-left orientation and more on its charismatic leader, Rudolf Schuster, and his pledge to bring tolerance and tranquility to the tumultuous Slovak political scene.

As the Mayor of Košice (Slovakia's second largest city), Rudolf Schuster is one of the most resilient and popular politicians in the country. During the communist era, Schuster served as mayor of Košice and as Czechoslovakia's ambassador to Canada. He was thrown out of office in the 1990 local elections, but won a impressive comeback in 1994. Since then, he's been a tireless advocate for his city and has achieved impressive results in renovating the historic core and improving the quality of life in Košice's neighborhoods. Schuster brings enthusiasm, media savvy, and an optimistic perspective to politics. The SDK's failure to reach a deal with Schuster in late 1997 prompted Schuster to plunge into the national political scene and start a new party. His ambitions to be Slovakia's next president are well known.

Several well known personalities joined Shuster, including Igor Presperin, the Mayor of Banská Bystrica (the de facto capital of central Slovakia); Marian Mesiarik, a charismatic trade union leader; Peter Dvorský, Slovakia's most prominent opera singer; and Pavol Ham_ik, the former foreign minister who resigned in protest over the Me_iar government's unwillingness to make good on its commitments to western integration.

The 1998 Parliamentary Election Campaign

At least in the early phases of the unofficial campaign, the SOP benefited rather than suffered from the lack of specificity in its program. Voters seemed less interested in the party's platform than in its desire to begin healing the wounds that had divided Slovak society during the Me_iar years. Early calls by Schuster and Ham_ik for cooperation with supporters of the HZDS (although they flatly rejected the notion of working with Me_iar himself), were supplanted by a tough, anti-government campaign.

The SOP moved quickly to establish itself around the country, but in many areas, had only skeleton structures. Most of its campaign centered on the personality and personal popularity of Schuster as an accomplished, successful leader. The SOP included many new faces in its candidate

list, which also reinforced its image as "something different," but placed it at a disadvantage vis-à-vis its older, established rivals.

Many were surprised by the hard-hitting, negative content of the SOP's first round of advertisements and billboards. In mid-August, the party began erecting billboards on themes such as foreign policy, housing, and crime. The designs included a newspaper photograph of a negative image, appropriate headline, statistics about the government's record, and the slogan "How did you vote last time?" The only reference to the party was that the SOP's smiley-face logo formed the point in the question mark. Similar advertisements were run in newspapers, using a two page format. On the first page, a narrow column ran with the "How did you vote last time?" message. On the following page, the SOP ads featured a large photograph of a party leader along with a specific message on various issues.

The SOP also took advantage of the HZDS's mishap using a stock photograph of a Swiss rather than Slovak landscape with the slogan "The country of your heart." In late August, a series of SOP billboards with an unmistakably Slovak picture of Slovakia's Tatra mountains appeared, with the caption: "The real country of your heart."

The SOP's first TV ad featured a series of faces, reflecting a wide cross-section of the population. They were flashed on the screen in front of various backdrops (city streets, apartment blocks, farms, etc.). In the background, the party song ("We have a place in Europe with the SOP") was heard. At the very end, chairman Schuster appeared to repeat the message. A second advertisement featured the same song, but with images of party leaders at rallies and meeting with citizens.

Party of the Hungarian Coalition *or Strana Mad'arskej Koalície (SMK)*

Chairman: Béla Bugár (Vice Chairman of Parliament)
Central office: Zábotova 2, 811 04 Bratislava
                     07/395-264, 395-164, 397-684

One of the few constants in Slovak politics is the steady, overwhelming support of ethnic Hungarians for Hungarian parties. With roughly ten percent of the population of Slovakia being of Hungarian descent, support for the Hungarian parties in elections reliably hovers around ten percent. Three parties have vied for Hungarian support since independence in 1993 (the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, the Hungarian Civic Party, and Coexistence). In the 1994 elections, they ran in a coalition. In 1998, they transformed their organizations into a single-party structure in order to satisfy last-minute changes in the election law.

However, the path to unity has been difficult. The three parties have publicly feuded over the leadership, program, and candidate lists. While they settled most of their internal problems, the new

Party of the Hungarian Coalition entered the 1998 campaign with two distinct platforms -- one supported by the Christian Democrats and Coexistence and another supported by the Hungarian Civic Party.

The Hungarian parties have aligned with the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) and its parent -parties on most issues, but their primary focus has always been on issues affecting the Hungarian community. They enthusiastically supported opposition initiatives such as the Joint Action campaign in the 1997 referendum. The SMK also broke with the Slovak opposition on controversial issues such as enactment of a language law. However, in 1997, they signed a cooperation agreement with the SDK. Many argued that, while this agreement fell short of an electoral coalition, it was a prelude to a coalition government. Others believed that the SDK openly signed the agreement to dispel rumors of secret deals that concealed a higher level of collusion with the Hungarian parties.

The 1998 Parliamentary Election Campaign

Many political analysts expected the HZDS would play "the Hungarian card" during the 1998 campaign, meaning that incidents or events were orchestrated to encourage ethnic Slovak voters to support Me_iar's party as a bulwark against Hungarian nationalists. The HZDS and SNS orchestrated such an event by reversing a seventy-year old policy that provided for bilingual report cards for Hungarian students. The Hungarian community predictably reacted with a series of demonstrations and protests. The HZDS and its allies repeatedly linked the SDK to the MK, warning that a vote for the SDK would lead to placing ethnic Hungarians in senior government posts.

The SMK expected that the overwhelming majority of Hungarians would support it in the September 1998 elections. This may have led to some complacency among its leaders, who did not see a pressing need to run a vigorous campaign or the value in motivating the substantial number of ethnic Hungarians who didn't plan to vote. Because most ethnic Hungarians live in villages and smaller towns, the main emphasis of the SMK's campaign was on meeting with voters in a series of rallies and personal appearances with party leaders.

The SMK's first televised ad was a three minute spot with classical music by Hungarian composer Bela Bartok playing in the background. A series of party leaders spoke (all in Hungarian, with Slovak subtitles) in front of various Bratislava backdrops. The leader's comments varied in quality and content, but most spoke about economic, ethnic, and foreign policy. Subsequent advertisements opened with the Bartok music, then featured man-in-the-street interviews on a variety of issues.

Party of the Democratic Left or *Strana demokratickej _avice (SD_)*

Chairman: Jozef Migaš (Chairman of Parliament)

homepage: www.sdl.sk
Central office   Gunduli_ova 12
                     811 05 Bratislava
                     07/533-4515

After a long game of cat-and-mouse in late 1993 and early 1994, it was the shift of the SD_ to a clearly anti-Me_iar position that ultimately sealed the fate of the HZDS government in the March 1994 no-confidence vote. But the decision in March 1994 to enter into coalition and support the Morav_ík government did little to resolve the fundamental internal division that plagued the SD_. Under reformers Weiss and Schmögnerová, the party was attempting to shed its communist past, take on a Western-style, social-democratic mantle, and enter the Socialist International.

There are two wings to the party, but both have managed to successfully keep their differences largely out of the public eye. Chairman Migaš is often characterized as representing the older wing of the party, made up largely of communist activists from the old system. Weiss is thought to represent the younger wing, which is more western and European in its thinking. There were few areas of policy difference between the wings. Rather, they differed mainly on style. The Migaš wing was more moderate in its criticism of the Me_iar government and was believed to favor getting back into power, even if it might mean compromising some SD_ principles. The Weiss wing was been more hostile toward the Me_iar government and more closely aligned with the rest of the Slovak opposition parties.

The SD_ has two undeniable assets: its politicians are among the most capable and popular in Slovakia and its network of local activists inherited from the old system. The SD_'s current chairman, Jozef Migaš, is relatively new to the post and has yet to attract a widespread following among the public. However, its senior leadership includes some of the most articulate and intelligent people in Slovak political life, such as former chairman Peter Weiss, Vice Chair for Economics Brigita Schmögnerová, Milan Ftá_nik, Robert Fico, and Lubomir Fogaš.

Slovaks, unlike Czechs or Poles, are not predisposed to be hostile to leftist politics or their country's communist past. In part, this is due to the fact that the years under socialism were the period when Slovakia moved from an agrarian to an industrialized economy. It's important to note that the Velvet Revolution that brought down the Communists in 1989 was a largely Czech-led movement. Public opinion polls show that Slovaks tend to view themselves on the left side of the political spectrum and have a strong belief that the state should play an extensive role in the economy and in securing a decent standard of living for all.

Party leaders believe they made a serious error in 1994, by submerging their identity into a four-party leftist bloc (Common Choice) and thus rejected blurring the SD_'s independent status by joining any coalitions in the 1998 elections.

The 1998 Parliamentary Election Campaign

The SD_ put forth a specific, positive program for the 1998 elections, focusing on bread-and-butter economic issues. The party made substantial efforts to reach out to organized labor, a potentially huge voting bloc. It also stressed popular themes such as economic solidarity and its commitment to help those who have suffered from the transition to a mixed economy.

The party began running newspaper advertisements in the spring, featuring its well-known and popular leaders on specific issues (crime, the economy, etc.). The SD_ ads included a common design and slogan: "A better life for honest and hard-working people."

Among the major parties, the SD_ was late in erecting billboards. The initial design featured its leadership lined-up in red T-shirts, with the slogan "A better life" spelled out across the shirts. Like the SDK and HZDS, the SD_ also used a "contract" to express the main points of its program.

The SD_'s television advertisements began with various politicians in red T-shirts, each with a letter on the shirt. Together, the shirts spelled out "*Lepšie_i_*" (A better life). As each leader (and letter) appeared, a subtitle links the letter with a message (e.g. the "I" stands for investment in young families jobs, etc.). Then, party leaders discussed various issues. Chairman Jozef Migaš, speaking before a blank background, talked about the difficult meetings he's had with people in various economically-depressed regions of the country. Migaš pledged to create 150,000 new jobs and guarantee a job for all graduates. Other commercials discussed crime and the crisis in the Slovak health care system.

Slovak Democratic Coalition or *Slovenská democratic koalícia (SDK)*

Chairman: Mikuláš Dzurinda (Premier)
homepage: www.sdk.sk
                         www.demstrana.sk (Democratic Party)
                         www.kdh.sk (Christian Democratic Movement)
                         www.demunia.sk (Democratic Union)
Central office: _abotova 2
                         811 04 Bratislava
                         07/354-021

Since Slovakia achieved independence in 1993, its opposition political parties have had a well-earned reputation for feuding among themselves. Much of the coalition-building and cooperation among opposition parties in the early days after independence occurred informally among local party organizations working together on city councils. On September 30, 1996, representatives of the local branches of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Democratic Union (DU), and Democratic Party (DS) branches signed a

formal coalition agreement in Bratislava's Petr_alka ward. The so-called "Blue Coalition" agreement was an alliance for the next round of local elections and the ceremony was observed by the national chairmen of the KDH, DU, and DS. The event was actually a prelude to a broader, national alliance.

In May 1997, the national organizations of the three Blue Coalition parties joined with five other parties to form the "Joint Action for the Referendum" committee and coordinate their campaign efforts for the referendum on NATO membership and direct presidential elections. In addition to the KDH, the DU, and the DS, the Joint Action committee included the three ethnic Hungarian parties (Coexistence, the Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, and the Hungarian Civic Party) and two leftist parties (the Slovak Green Party and the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia). The eight parties agreed to pool their resources, including their allotted television and radio time, and to urge citizens to vote "yes" on NATO membership and direct presidential elections.

The Joint Action commercials all began with a picture of a voter checking the "yes" box on a ballot, superimposed over a Slovak flag billowing to the sounds of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy." A series of political, literary, cultural, and artistic figures urged voters to support NATO membership and direct presidential elections. All the spots featured a common logo in the corner of the screen, while party officials were identified with a small party logo as well. Joint Action commercial time was shared, so a Democratic Union ad might feature a Social Democrat or a Hungarian leader. The Joint Action campaign also included public meetings, discussions, newspaper advertising, and printed materials.

Although the ensuing chaos of the referendum rendered the Joint Action committee's campaign irrelevant, their experience helped further galvanize the opposition parties and led to the formation of a national electoral coalition. In July 1997, the Christian Democratic Movement, the Democratic Union, the Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia, and the Green Party in Slovakia officially announced the formation of a pre-electoral coalition -- the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK). SDK members pledged to run joint candidate lists, specified how candidates would be chosen, and agreed to campaign on a common platform. In August 1997, the SDK met in the northern city of Martin and took another concrete step with the announcement of a 15-point "Martin Declaration," which committed the parties to a pro-Western, reform agenda.

The SDK quickly became the most popular party in the country. Voters seemed receptive to the party's promises of a new alternative and a switch toward democracy and European integration. Mikuláš Dzurinda, Vice Chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and a charismatic populist, became the spokesman for the SDK in September.   (Dzurinda had unsuccessfully challenged Ján _arnogurský for the chairmanship of the KDH at its November 1996 party congress in Banská Bystrica.) As his visibility in the media increased, his popularity with the electorate grew.

However, the SDK suffered from months of bad publicity about how the five parties

and indeed, factions within the parties, could not agree on joint structures. The SDK also suffered from its unwillingness to put forth a common front and the eagerness of its alleged adherents to air every disagreement in the media. Throughout the spring of 1998, the SDK lost valuable opportunities by focusing on democracy issues that ranked low among voters' priorities. The party tried and failed to mobilize voters in opposition to the election law, although a related petition drive did force party activists to begin working together. The SDK also lost support to the newly established Party of Civic Understanding (SOP), which seemed to offer an alternative to Me_iar's HZDS without the political baggage of being based in Bratislava. Finally, the SDK's campaign manager was forced to resign in June 1998 after a scandal erupted over attempts to bribe journalists.

But in February 1998, the SDK named Dzurinda as its chairman. By July 1998, the SDK had finally resolved many of its internal problems. At the party's inaugural congress on July 4, 1998, the five parties transformed their alliance into a single-party structure. The merger was prompted by the Me_iar government's recent amendments to the election law requiring each member of an electoral alliance to obtain at least five percent of the vote. However, Me_iar's move backfired -- rather than splitting the opposition, the new provisions drove the SDK (and the three-party Hungarian Coalition) into a more unified campaign posture.

The SDK also announced a 10-point "Contract with the Citizens of Slovakia" as the centerpiece of its campaign. Much like the 1994 Contract with America, the SDK's contract helped unify the party's campaign by raising it to the national level and allowing different candidates from different factions to emphasize the most relevant elements of the contract to their constituents. Dzurinda stated that the party was not just an election vehicle, but that the SDK would continue to function as a party after the elections.

In addition, Democratic Union Vice Chairman _udovít _ernák was named as the new SDK campaign manager in July 1998. _ernák not only had the skills, but the clout to execute a disciplined campaign. _ernák and Dzurinda also made an optimal team, having worked closely together and made many joint appearances in the past. The challenge for the SDK was to reestablish itself as the alternative to the HZDS and give voters a reason to believe that it was prepared to govern and could offer unified, progressive leadership to the country.

An unexpected twist occurred on August 10, 1998, when Me_iar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) urged the Supreme Court to reject the SDK's registration by the Central Electoral Commission three days earlier. The HZDS argued the SDK was not a political party but a coalition of parties, as its name still suggested. Although all SDK candidates resigned their membership in their respective parties in order to join the party of the SDK, the individual parties did not dissolve (as did the three Hungarian parties when

they formed the Party of the Hungarian Coalition). The Supreme Court rejected the HZDS arguments and ruled that the SDK was a properly registered party.

The 1998 Parliamentary Election Campaign

The SDK's 1998 campaign can be looked at in two phases. In its early stages, the SDK focused its effort on presenting the coalition to the voters and supporters of the five constituent parties as a new political entity. The SDK began using billboards in the spring of 1998, featuring the SDK name, the logo, and the slogan "Together for a better Slovakia." To shore up the party's base, a series of newspaper ads were run with a photograph of the SDK leader Mikuláš Dzurinda with each of the five party chairs. Under the slogan "We understand each other," messages were crafted for each of the five parties' supporters (for example, an environmental message for the Green Party chairwoman).

The second, more dynamic phase of the campaign began after the July 4 party congress and the appointment of _udovít _ernák as campaign manager. During late July and throughout August, Dzurinda and the two youngest candidates on the SDK's candidate list conducted a bicycle tour through each of the country's eight regions. Over eight three-day weekends, the SDK conducted rallies and meetings in villages and cities across the country. Special leaflets were prepared and distributed for each region. While the bicycle tour attracted a fair share of protesters and hecklers, the event earned the excellent media coverage. Many journalists drew an implicit contrast between Dzurinda on a bicycle, meeting with ordinary citizens in villages, and Premier Me_iar's carefully scripted and tightly controlled party rallies.

The SDK also received favorable press coverage from a visit to Bratislava by Slovak NHL star Peter Štastný to Bratislava. Štasný endorsed the SDK in a press conference and posed for a variety of photographs, which were used as newspaper advertisements and posters.

At its party convention, the SDK approved a ten point "Contract with the Citizens of Slovakia," modeled on the Republican Party's 1994 "Contract with America." The document pledged the party to action on the issues of greatest concern to the Slovak electorate – crime, unemployment, the economy, etc. Copies of the contract were used as posters in buses and trolleys during the summer months.

The party's billboard campaign was also based on points taken from the contract. The SDK used a "teaser" approach for its billboards. When first unveiled, the three designs featured photographs of an elderly woman, a young couple, and a baby. All three billboards carried the slogan "A chance for all people." After two weeks, the billboards

were "completed" by adding specific items from the contract (such as a pledge to increase housing construction on the billboard with the young couple), the SDK logo, and a new slogan: "The Real Chance for Change."

The SDK had a three minute spot the first night that campaign ads were broadcast on Slovak Television (August 25). It was divided into three parts. First, they played on their ballot number (eight) by showing clips of Dub_ek (1968), the Velvet Revolution (1989), and a recent SDK campaign event (1998). The narrator talked about how "eight" is a lucky number for Slovakia, followed by the slogan and graphic, "SDK -- A real chance for change." In the second part, a biographical background piece was shown on SDK Chairman, Mikuláš Dzurinda, in which he stressed his "Slovakness" and talked about the SDK as a positive, optimistic, forward-looking force for change. In part three, former President Michal Ková_ endorsed the SDK.

Other SDK commercials included Peter Š_astný endorsing the SDK, Dzurinda discussing the party's commitment to raising wages (a plank of the contract) and party vice-chairman Eduard Kukan walking around his boyhood home and discussing the SDK's vision for the country.

The SDK opened its official campaign with a rally in Zvolen, a city of about 40,000 people located in Central Slovakia. The top 15 candidates on the SDK's list were introduced to the crowd, along with DU Chairman Jozef Morav_ík and KDH Chairman Ján _arnogurský. Each of the candidates spoke briefly and Morav_ík and _arnogurský spoke about their commitment to the SDK (although neither ran for Parliament). Then, SDK Chairman, Mikuláš Dzurinda, came on stage to a warm welcome. The MC of the event interviewed Dzurinda and, although somewhat scripted, it came across well. Dzurinda was positive, energetic, and poked some fun at himself (especially his height). He then introduced his wife, who was making her first campaign appearance. Her nervousness made her a hit with the crowd. Dzurinda then gave a 15-minute speech that focused on issues and the SDK as the best hope for change. Polling information was peppered throughout the speech.

Further understanding the dynamics of the SDK organization in the 1998 election campaign requires additional background on the five parties that came together to form the SDK. The five constituent parts of the SDK are the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the Democratic Union (DU), the Democratic Party (DS), the Slovak Greens Party (SZS), and the Social-Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS).

Christian Democratic Movement *or Kres_ansko-demokratické hnutie (KDH)*

The KDH claimed a long heritage of Christian oriented (i.e. Catholic) political activity

in Slovakia and emerged as one of the major political forces in the country immediately upon the fall of communism in 1989. In fact, the current party chairman, Ján _arnogurský, served as Prime Minister of Slovakia while the country was still part of the Czech and Slovak Federation. In electoral politics, the KDH can always count on a solid 10 percent of the vote in any national election, and usually concerns itself with gathering votes above that total.

The party has a well-developed structure of local offices around the country. Over the last four years, the KDH was divided into two camps. While both factions remain loyal to the party and differ little on policy questions, they part ways over their choice of leadership and the style of the party. The dominant wing in the party remains loyal to long-time chairman _arnogurský. _arnogurský remained popular within the party, but was a highly controversial figure among the public at large.

The KDH was a leading force in the opposition during the Me_iar years. One of the party's vice-chairmen, Ivan Šimko, created what was perhaps the opposition's most successful activity – the 1997 petition campaign on direct presidential elections. The party consistently stressed the democratic shortcomings of the Me_iar government.

Social Democratic Party of Slovakia or *Socialno-Democratická strana Slovenska (SDSS)*

The SDSS was the party of Alexander Dub_ek, the reform communist who led the 1968 Prague Spring reform movement, but the SDSS has been consigned to remain a small party with little national significance since Dub_ek's death in 1992. The party chairman is Jaroslav Volf.

The SDSS ran with the Party of the Democratic Left (SD_) and other center-left parties in the 1994 "Common Choice" coalition. But after 1994, the Social Democrats gradually edged away from the larger SD_ on both policy and personnel issues. Many in the SDSS were troubled by what they saw as a willingness in the SD_ to compromise with the Meciat government. After the SD_ declined to take part in the opposition's 1997 joint campaign on direct presidential elections, the Common Choice coalition dissolved in Parliament.

Alexander Dub_ek remains the emblematic figurehead of Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring, the 1968 attempt to build what he called "socialism with a human face" that was brutally crushed by Soviet tanks. The Slovak communist leader returned to relative obscurity following the clamp down, although his political career was resurrected after the country's 1989 Velvet Revolution, before he died in 1992. He was widely memorialized as Prague marked the 30th anniversary of the Soviet clamp down when Soviet tanks swept

into the country on the night of August 20-21, 1968.

He died on November 7, 1992, barely two months before the country's split, from injuries sustained in a car crash on the Prague-Bratislava highway. There was intense speculation that it was not an accident, which prompted calls for an official investigation. But no firm evidence of foul play has ever been found.

Green Party in Slovakia or *Strana zelených na Slovensku (SZS)*

The Slovak Green Party supports a largely traditional Western European environmentalist agenda, but came out strongly in favor of NATO membership. Like the SDSS, the Greens grew distant from the SD_ after the 1994 elections. The SZS was an enthusiastic participant in the 1997 Joint Action referendum campaign. While a small party, the Greens brought strong contacts with non-governmental organizations to the SDK. Their local structures were weak, but environmental issues had considerable appeal among younger and urban voters.

Democratic Party or *Democratická strana (DS)*

The Democratic Party (DS) stems from the tradition of the largest post-war political party in Slovakia and claims a civil-democratic heritage in the post-communist Civic Democratic Union (ODU), but was unable to garner more than about four to five percent of the vote even under the best of circumstances. Many of the leading figures in the DS, such as chairman Ján Langoš, played a major role in the 1989 Velvet Revolution and were leaders in Public Against Violence, the Slovak counterpart of the Czech Civic Forum. The party had difficulty in broadening its base, and its opponents charged (correctly) that it opposed Slovak independence. Most DS supporters are well-educated, professional, and urban. Many of Slovakia's best-known artists, writers, and intellectuals gravitate toward the DS's conservative, free-market policies. Among the five SDK parties, the DS arguably took the hardest anti-Me_iar line.

Democratic Union of Slovakia or *Democratická Únia Slovenska (DU)*

Led by former Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Kukan, the DU includes many prominent leaders, including former Prime Minister Jozef Morav_ík, SDK campaign manager _udovít _ernák, former Deputy PM Roman Ková_, Public Against Violence leader Ján Budaj, and former foreign minister and noted actor Milan K_a_ko. These high-profile personalities reinforced the DU's image as a group of national figures who split at various times with the HZDS.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1994, the DU tried to build an image as a

centrist political party, but faced significant problems in doing so. Chief among these were a public perception that the personal history of key DU leaders was the same as that of Me_iar, the need to reconcile differences in political philosophy inside the party leadership, and the need to construct a party organization from scratch. The DU entered the elections with candidates of the National Democratic Party/New Alternative on its candidate lists. The NDS/NA was itself a splinter group from the Slovak National Party formed around _ernák, who broke with the more nationalist elements that began to dominate the SNS and side with Me_iar. After the 1994 elections, the NDS/NA formally merged with the DU.

Under the leadership of Jozef Morav_ík and, later, Eduard Kukan, the DU moved to cement its links with other European liberal parties and the Slovak opposition. The DU also spent most of the last four years building its network of local operations. It remained strongest in cities and towns, where its moderate, centrist approach was appreciated by young and middle-aged voters. The DU had the most dynamic youth organization among Slovak parties.

Other Parties:

Movement of the Third Way or *Hnutie tretie cesty*

The first TV ad produced for the 1998 elections by the Movement for the Third Way featured a middle aged man in a poorly lit room, screaming obscenities at the camera, most of which were bleeped out. While it was hard to figure out what exactly he's talking about, comments against crime and the mafia were heard. The end of the ad featured the party logo, most of which was blacked out.

Communist Party of Slovakia or *Kommunisticka strana Slovenska (KSS*)

Unlike the Czech Communist Party, the KSS has never been a popular party with the Slovak electorate. KSS advertisements were targeted at unemployment, in particular. One began with the hammer-and-sickle party logo over a red background. The speaker, a middle aged man, talked about how things were better in the old days, and that no one wanted for work or faced the crime Slovakia now faced. As photos of closed factories were shown, the KSS presented itself as focused on reopening factories and restoring jobs and a sense of security.

A second KSS advertisement featured party chairman Vladimír _a_o discussing economic issues. He acknowledged that mistakes were made by the party before 1989, but argued that the present situation was far worse.

Our Slovakia or *Naše Slovensko (NSK)*

A new party formed in April 1998, it quickly plastered the country with billboard advertisements in anticipation of the September elections. Their ability to fund such a billboard campaign introducing their party to the public indicated a level of wealth unusual for a new party. The NSK chairman, Ladislav Hampl, heads a prominent insurance company and elements of the business community provided substantial financial backing for the party. One of Our Slovakia's billboards featured a photograph of Hampl and his family, with the slogan "Everybody has a reason to do something good for his country." A second, simpler design included the party logo with the slogan "Our family…our Europe…Our Slovakia."

Their platform and campaign rhetoric was similar to other opposition parties. While their main focus was European Union integration, they also called for moderation and understanding among Slovaks. Although rumored to be a "potemkin party" created by the HZDS to secure more votes on the Central Election Commission, the NS consistently sided with the opposition parties on the CEC. Our Slovakia gained a prominent face when Miroslav Ko_nár, a member of Parliament who resigned from the Association of Slovak Workers (ZRS), joined the new party.

Our Slovakia's TV ads emphasized Europe and youth. Party chair Hampl and others talked about the program in moderate terms, emphasizing newness, youth, and Slovakia as a part of Europe. The slogan used on the billboards "Our family... our Europe... our Slovakia" was repeated effectively throughout with slick graphics.

"B"- the Revolutionary Workers Party or "*Be_ko*" - *Revolu_ná robotnicka strana*

This small party ran television advertisements innthe 1998 campaign with a decidedly-leftist appeal. Pictures of two party leaders appeared on the right side of the screen, while text scrolled across a red background. The text was read by a narrator and mainly dealt with the need to defend workers' rights against domestic and foreign business interests.

Other parties that ran in the September 1998, about which little or no information was known, included the following:

1) United Workers' Party of Slovakia or *Jednotná strana pracujúcich Slovenska*
2) Hungarian Peoples Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity or *Ma_arské _udové hnutie za zmierenie a prosperitu*
3) National Alternative of Slovakia or *Národná alternatíva Slovenska*
4) Independent Initiative or *Nezávisla iniciatíva*
5) Slovak People's Party or *Slovenská ludova strana*
6) Slovak National Unity or *Slovenská národná jednota*

Appendix VI: IRI Delegation List

Delegation Leader:
AMBASSADOR RICHARD BURT
IEP Advisors, Inc.
Washington, DC

Sarah Ball
Assistant Director
Kentucky State Board of Elections
Lexington, Kentucky

Janusz Bugajski
Director of East European Studies
Center for Strategic and International Studies
Washington, DC

Dimitar Dimitrov
Professor, Department of Political Science Sofia University, and Central Election Commission member
Sofia, Bulgaria

Serder Eraslan
Province Board member of *Anavatan Partisi*
Istanbul, Turkey

Thomas Ferguson
President-Elect, National Association of State Election Directors, and Connecticut Secretary of State/Elections Division
Hartford, Connecticut

Hristo Ivanovski
Deputy Editor-in-Chief, *Dnevnik*
Skopje, Macedonia.

Marek Kotlarski
Foreign Secretary, Election Action Solidarity (AWS) Parliamentary Caucus
Warsaw, Poland

Andrius Kubulius

Vice Chairman of Parliament
Vilnius, Lithuania

Cezar Lukacs
Deputy Assistant/Mayor of Timisoara
Timisoara, Romania

Tamás Major
International Secretary of FIDESZ-MPP
Budapest, Hungary

Gabriela Radu
Member of Parliament
(National Peasant Party- Christian Democrat)
Bucharest, Romania

Robert Ryan
Senior Vice President for Communications
Empire State Development
New York, NY

Nenad Klapcic
Secretary, Istrian Democratic Party
Zagreb, Croatia

Artur Volek
Director of the Windsor Group
Warsaw, Poland

IRI Staff

John Anelli, Regional Program Director for Central and Eastern Europe
Lindsay Lloyd, Resident Program Officer (Slovakia)
Eric Jowett, Program Officer (Slovakia)
E.R. Gregory, Director of Program Support

Scott Carpenter, Resident Program Officer (Turkey)
Eric Heighberger, Resident Program Officer (Albania)
Kasia Krause, Resident Program Assistant (Poland)
Juraj Mahut, Resident Program Assistant (Slovakia)
Julie Mashburn, Deputy Regional Program Director, Central and Eastern Europe
Kent Patton, Resident Program Officer (Macedonia)
Beata Siakowska, Project Accountant
Ron St. John, Resident Program Officer (Romania)
David Williams, IRI survey research consultant
Ellen Yount, Resident Program Officer (Croatia)