

PROTOCOL
of the 3rd Session of the Hungarian-Croatian Minority Joint Committee

The third session of the Hungarian-Croatian Minority Joint Committee was held on November 13-14, 1997, in Zagreb. Csaba Tabajdi, Political State Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office led the Hungarian delegation, and Josip Paro, Ambassador, Deputy Foreign Minister, led the Croatian delegation.

FIRST PART

The Parties exchanged opinions about current minority-protection issues of the Hungarian minority living in the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian minority living in the Republic of Hungary.

1. The Parties agreed that the contents of the "Agreement regarding the protection of rights of the Croatian minority living in Hungary and Hungarian minority living in Croatia" signed between Hungary and Croatia continue to satisfy the needs regarding the improvement of the situation of the minorities living in both countries and the protection of their communities.

The Parties also agreed that until the situation of the Croatian minority in Hungary is stable, the situation of the Hungarian minority in Croatia is still disadvantageously influenced by the consequences of war in the Croatian Danube Region, and for this reason their survival requires a further high degree of consideration and attention.

2. The Parties expressed their interest in the successful completion of the peaceful reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region on January 15, 1998.

They attribute high significance to all those undertaken obligations that the Croatian government made in the interest of the peaceful reintegration process. They emphasize the important role that must be filled in the realization of a peaceful reintegration by the "Reconciliation Committee", which considers as its task the urging of equality before the law for minorities living in the Danube Region. The Hungarian Party welcomes that one representative of the Hungarian minority received a place on the Reconciliation Committee and one received a place on the Vukovar-Sirmium County Sub-Committee.

The Hungarian Party welcomes the efforts of the Croatian Party in the interest of ensuring the return of expelled Hungarians as well as in the interest of ensuring the financial means necessary for reconstruction, and recommends that the Croatian Party continue to establish the legal and security conditions for return. The Parties continue to consider decisive the reestablishment of the pre-1991 ethnic status in the Hungarian settlements in the Danube Region. The Croatian Party endeavors to handle the problems of the returning refugees as well the subsistence problems of the population that remained, with special attention to ensuring employment opportunities.

SECOND PART

The Joint Committee evaluated the implementation until now of the minority protection Agreement signed by the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Croatia, as well as the fulfillment of recommendations accepted in the 2nd session of the Joint Committee, and established the following:

I. General issues

1. The Parties - according to Article 10 of the Agreement - advocated in international fora that refugees and displaced persons be able to return to their homes in Croatia and reestablish the pre-1991 ethnic status.

2. The Parties continue to ensure for the Croatian and Hungarian minorities living on their territories the possibility for the preservation of national identity and the freedom of speech. The institutional guarantees for this on the part of both Parties are satisfactory.

3. The Hungarian minority - on the basis of the mandate guaranteed by law for national minorities - is represented by an elected representative in the Croatian Parliament.

The Croatian minority does not have a representative in the Hungarian Parliament. The Government of the Republic of Hungary initiated a change in legislation, according to which - starting from the 1998 elections - the institutional parliamentary representation of the minorities in Hungary, among them the Croatian minority, will be ensured.

4. The Republic of Hungary, beside its financial support for the national and 57 local Croatian minority self-governments, continually supports the Association of Croats in Hungary and other Croatian civil society organizations.

In 1997 the Republic of Hungary gave the use of a new headquarters in Budapest to the National Croatian Minority Self-Government, in the value of 60 million forints (600 thousand DEM).

The Republic of Croatia continually supports the organizations of the Hungarian minority in Croatia through program financing: the Democratic Union of Hungarians of Croatia, the Association of Hungarians in Croatia, the Association of Hungarian Scientists and Artists in Croatia, the HUNCRO publisher, and also the Hungarian Teachers' Association of Croatia.

5. In the area of religious practice - in the absence of a sufficient number of clerics or trained religion instructors knowing the minority language - the fulfillment of the mother-language religious needs of the national minorities living in the two countries still has not succeeded in being fully satisfied.

6. The Udvar-Knezovo highway border crossing and the Magyarboly-Beli Manastir railway border crossing have been opened again.

The Parties support the practice of authorizing on special occasions - temporarily - crossing of the border by ferry (e.g., saint's day, village day, etc.).

7. Due to the war circumstances, the complexity of the reintegration of the Croatian Danube Region, as well as financing difficulties of development plans of the Republic of Croatia and Republic of Hungary, the economic support of the regions inhabited by national minorities and the elaboration of economic programs targeting the preservation of minorities' integrity did not receive enough emphasis.

The Hungarian Party offered in-kind assistance several times to the Hungarian minority living in Baranya County to start agricultural production and restart life (seed corn, chemical fertilizer, pesticide, etc.), in the value of approximately 60 million forints.

8. The Hungarian Party gave one-time material support to the home for the elderly in Horvatzsidanyi and the community center in Katymar.

II. In the area of education

1. The Parties are satisfied with the fulfillment of the Educational, Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Work Plan valid for 1996-1997.

2. The higher education institutions in Hungary, accordingly with the demand, continue to constantly accept Hungarian scholarship students from Croatia. The Hungarian Party continues to satisfy the needs concerning continuing professional education of most of the Hungarian students from Croatia. Both the Croatians in Hungary and the Hungarians in Croatia are satisfied with the scholarship allocations, but they demand new regulations for admissions examinations. The Croatians in Hungary ask for a greater degree of care on the part of the Croatian host universities. The Croatian Party especially emphasizes the problems with the admission exams in the Republic of Croatia arising from the lack of translators.

3. The Hungarian Party fulfilled all the requests relating to the continuing education of Hungarian educators in Croatia.

4. In the financing of schools in Hungary that provide homes for Croatian-language instruction - as a consequence of the lack of local-government sources - stoppages are appearing that give reason for worry. The modification of the Public Education Law that comes into effect on January 1, 2007, puts financing on new foundations. The Hungarian Party offered extraordinary targeted support to 11 Croatian educational institutes by reorganizing the budget allocations for minority purposes.

5. The construction of the bilingual educational and cultural center in Osijek began. The projected deadlines were not met, among other reasons, due to the unclear title of ownership of the building site (a gas line crosses the planned future location of the center in Osijek). The solution of the problem is in process. Completion of the construction is due in September 1998.

The different forms of Hungarian mother-tongue instruction and cultural preservation remain continuous in primary schools and high schools, and the bilingual classes established in the Ivan Gundulic Elementary School in Zagreb are still operating. The competent educational organs are studying the possibility of ensuring complex bilingual education for the Hungarian minority within the planned bilingual educational and cultural center in Zagreb, and where the need may appear.

6. Mother-tongue education was organized and introduced according to the Croatian curriculum in Vorosmart from January 1997, then in the other Hungarian settlement in Croatian Baranya from September 1997. Bilingual education continues in the Mladost Elementary School in Osijek. Hungarian students - and all those who are interested - benefit from mother-tongue cultivation in Legrad.

The Hungarian community in Croatia remarks that the elementary school in the Lasko district has not recovered its independent status.

7. The Parties welcome that the Rijeka Association of the Democratic Community of Hungarians in Croatia renovated and modified at its own expense the premises rented from the city - in the value of approximately 30,000 DEM - in which the organization of cultural events and the operation of language instruction and a bilingual kindergarten are possible.

8. Bilingual education in the Croatian and Hungarian languages was again organized in the high-school in Pelmonostor, and four classes were established with 42 Hungarian students.

9. Cooperation continues between the schools in Zala, Vas, Murakoz and Varazdin Counties. The two counties ensure scholarships for the further education of Croatian students in Hungary. The other counties in Hungary where the Croatian minority lives established relationships with Croatian schools.

10. On the part of the Hungarian Party textbook support is continuous for groups promoting the mother tongue in Croatian schools. The Croatian Party provides occasional textbook support to Croatian schools in Hungary. The obligations assumed in the Protocol of the preceding year were partly fulfilled with the sending of 1996 and 1997 textbooks.

11. Regarding the fulfillment of the last paragraph of Article 2 of the Agreement ("Both Parties shall, in the schools of the majority nation, encourage learning of the language, culture and history of the respective minority and its mother nation") an advancement took place in Hungary with the acceptance of the National Basic Curriculum, which in the future will also regulate the teaching of Croatian cultural studies.

12. The Croatian Party agrees that a Hungarian language and literature department in the J.J. Strossmayer University in Osijek shall be established when the conditions for this are created.

The Parties determined that the Hungarian Studies Department at the University of Zagreb operates well. Hungarian guest teachers and language instructors are employed to replace the missing local teachers.

The Croatian Party completely fulfilled its responsibilities, but a few impediments arose due to objective circumstances and the lack of teachers.

13. The Croatian Party emphasizes that the scientific collaboration is smooth. The Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia in the agreement concluded with the Minority Office of the Republic of Croatia undertook to provide expert opinion on the minority scientific projects, and in this way a certain number of applicants for professional training can travel to Hungary through these projects.

The establishment of a scientific cooperation joint committee is in progress, the task of which is the selection of a specific number of scientific research projects.

14. With the 1997 signing of the agreement of mutual recognition of diplomas, a big step forward took place in the area of nostrification of diplomas.

15. Both Parties expressed their satisfaction regarding the work of the Croatian language and literature instructors and the Hungarian language and literature instructors. The Croatian Ministry of Science and Technology pays for the work of four language instructors working in Hungary. The Ministry of Culture and Public Education of the Republic of Hungary covers the work of four Hungarian language instructors and guest teachers from Croatia - 3 in Zagreb and 1 in Osijek.

16. The Croatian Party fulfilled the responsibilities it assumed regarding the sending of textbooks used in higher education (it sent several hundred books yearly) and video and sound recordings, and it cooperates with Croatian Television.

17. The Hungarian Party helps the work of the Croatian Scientific Institute in Pecs, which operates as an independent scientific center.

In 1997 the Croatian Party ensured the operation of the Hungarian Scientific and Artistic Society in Croatia, besides financing through funding competitions.

III. In the area of culture and information

1. The Education and Public Education Cooperation Agreement between Zala, Vas, Murakoz and Varazdin Counties was established in 1996 as well.

The Croatian Party calls attention that the counties shall inform the competent ministries in time regarding collaboration agreements and provide data about the implementation of the agreements.

2. The Kanizsai Dorottya Museum in Mohacs would like to contribute with premises to the establishment of the Croatian national basic library. The restocking of the library holding has not started yet.

3. The Parties continued the publication of literary works in the minorities' languages, and support for the operation of the cultural associations and the minority press.

4. Steps were not taken in the direction of expanding the existing German-Burgenland Croatian dictionary into a Hungarian-German-Burgenland Croatian dictionary. The material of the German-Burgenland illustrated dictionary was finished.

5. The small Croatian-Hungarian dictionary has been published, and the material of the small Hungarian-Croatian dictionary is in printer-ready condition.

The Contracting Parties establish that steps were not taken in the direction of publishing a Croatian-Hungarian and Croatian-Hungarian comprehensive dictionary of scientific character.

6. The Hungarian Party supports the operation of the Croatian Theater in Pecs as an independent cultural institution. It can be determined that the Croatian Theater in Pecs is in need of further support.

7. The Contracting Parties, considering that information by radio and television bears great importance for both minorities, recommend that representatives of the mentioned institutions be present among the ranks of the Joint Committee.

The Parties consider it important that both the Croats in Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Croatia, according to the current technical possibilities, can receive the mother-tongue television and radio programs without obstacle.

The Croats in Hungary object and express their dissatisfaction that the MTV2 program broadcasts via satellite and for this reason a number of people cannot receive it.

8. The Parties establish that the independent Hungarian language information system was not realized, and is not completely suitable for the needs of the Hungarian minority or the possibilities of the Republic of Croatia. At the same time they establish that due to the imperfection of the peaceful integration process of the Danube Region, the Hungarian programs of the pre-war period were not restored. The Croatian TV program for the Croatian minority - Prizma - despite its level - by itself do not satisfy the needs of the Hungarian minority and cannot replace the independent program in Hungarian language.

THIRD PART

The Joint Committee makes the following recommendations to the two governments with the purpose of continuing the development of further interstate cooperation in the field of guaranteeing minority rights, as well with the purpose of eliminating the problems obstructing the harmonious development of the national minorities:

I. General issues

1. The Parties shall consistently realize the measures toward ensuring the right to national minority identity of the Hungarians living in Croatia and Croatian minority living in Hungary, according to the laws in force in both countries and the real needs of the minority.

The Croatian Party recommends that the Hungarian Party make further efforts toward the preservation of the Croatian institutions in the settlements, in the interest of preserving the national identity of the Croatian in Hungary.

2. The Parties are interested that, following the restoration of the Croatian legal order in the territory of the Croatian Danube Region, refugees shall as soon as possible return to their places of residence and the pre-1991 ethnic status shall be restored.

3. The Croatian Party rebuilds and renovates the houses and other residential buildings of the Croatian citizens of Hungarian nationality, as well those basic elements of the infrastructure which are necessary for the activities of the Hungarian minority.

The Croatian Party recommends that the Hungarian Party examine how it can contribute to the renewal of the settlements of the Hungarian minority that suffered the most severe damage, Korogy and Szentlaszlo. The Republic of Hungary shall inform in the fastest way possible the Hungarian Party about these possibilities. The competent persons in the Hungarian Government shall examine how the Hungarian contingent of SFOR can provide specific help to the restoration work in Szentlaszlo.

4. The Republic of Croatia shall do everything in the interest of speeding up the resettlement in their homes of the Hungarian minority in the Croatian Danube Region. In case of reorganizing the regional self-government units the interest of the Hungarian minority shall be taken into consideration in the mentioned region.

The Croatian Party shall examine, after the completion of peaceful reintegration, whether the present administrative classification suits the interests of the Hungarians living in the Danube Region.

5. The Parties shall start negotiations on such bilateral agreements that have an impact on the life of minorities and the border population. They recommend to their governments to initiate the conclusion of a local border traffic agreement.

6. The Parties shall examine how medical insurance for the scholarship recipients studying in the two countries can be solved.

7. The Parties shall work out a Hungarian-Croatian regional cooperation plan for complex economic development containing concrete recommendations with the involvement of the neighboring border counties. Meetings of Hungarian and Croatian business people on the model of the October 1997 Mohacs meeting shall become practice, especially in the border counties.

The Croatian Party recommends that the Republic of Hungary join in the economic rebuilding of the Croatian Danube Region through the Phare program, and that joint Croatian-Hungarian projects be undertaken with the program's credits (e.g., the protection of the natural treasures of the Kopacsi meadow).

8. The Joint Committee recommends to both governments that they initiate the creation of a joint Hungarian-Croatian bank with the goals of interstate economic cooperation and driving the rebuilding of the Croatian Danube Region.

9. The Joint Committee again calls upon the bodies of the Catholic Church to take every necessary step to ensure the mother-language religious life of the minorities. The presidents of the Hungarian and Croatian Joint Committee delegations are writing a joint letter to the Hungarian and Croatian Catholic leaders, and in that they state that personal meetings are necessary.

10. The Republic of Hungary - in accordance with its internal jurisdiction - shall endeavor to solve the question of the parliamentary representation of the Croatian minority so that the Croatian minority can prepare for the coming year's elections.

11. The Hungarian Party - in accordance with the existing legislation - shall continue to provide support to the Association of Croats in Hungary and the other minority civil organizations, in addition to the Hungarian Croats' National Self-Government.

The Croatian Party - in accordance with the existing legislation - shall continue to provide support to the Hungarian minority organizations of national scope and the other Hungarian minority civil organizations.

12. The Hungarian Party shall see that the issuing of bilingual identification guaranteed by law - similar to the extracts from the official register - happens in practice through a simple notification of need.

Both Parties shall make efforts that the minorities living in their countries can receive extracts from the official register and other similar documents in their mother tongues or in a bilingual version, and further that place-name signs and the names of public institutions be bilingual.

The Parties shall support the official use of the Hungarian and Croatian minorities' languages in the local self-governments and districts, where there are legal conditions for this.

13. In the matter of opening new border crossings, the Parties recommend that the two states conclude an agreement about the border crossings between the two countries. This agreement would regulate the number and class of the border crossings, the order of the opening of the new border crossings and the financing method for the ferry border-crossing to be newly opened.

14. The Hungarian Party recommends that the Croatian Party effectively contribute so that the Vorosmart, Csúza, Lasko and Újbezdan community centers can become the center of the cultural life of the Hungarian minority in Baranya. The Croatian Party during the rebuilding process, according to the possibilities, shall satisfy this need.

15. The Croatian minority in Hungary recommends the expansion and renovation of the home for the elderly in Katymar, so that Croatian inhabitants of Katymar and neighboring villages can be placed there.

II. In the area of education

1. The Educational, Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Work Plan concluded in 1995 expires during this year. The Committee recommends that a new work plan be signed for the coming period.

2. The parties, in the Educational, Cultural and Scientific Cooperation Work Plan for the period between 1998 and 2000, shall examine the possibility that the structure of the higher education scholarships be changed in accordance with the minorities' needs for experts. Raising the amount of the scholarship depends on the decisions of the new three-year work plan.

3. The Republic of Croatia is making efforts to build up the Hungarian minority's entire network of educational institutions (kindergartens and schools) as soon as possible. It shall produce measures so that the building of the educational-cultural center and dormitory in Osijek is built by September 1998. For this purpose, it shall urge that the construction and organization work, as well as the direction of financing, take place at the government level.

The Republic of Croatia supports that in the future the forms of the existing institutions of Hungarian school education in Zagreb, and where there is a need, gradually take the shape of school-center. The Hungarian Party provides multifaceted professional-pedagogical and organization help for the construction and activities of both.

The Hungarian Party asks that the Croatian Party ensure the payment of the teachers carrying out mother-tongue instruction for the Hungarians living in Istria (Pula) and in Maritime-Plateau County (Rijeka), if the number of students is sufficient.

4. Both Parties continue to support the exchange of guest teachers in the interest of improving the work of Hungarian studies and Croatian studies departments operating in their countries. The Parties will continue to ensure the specialized textbooks and video and audio materials that are indispensable for the work of the Hungarian- and Croatian-language departments.

The Hungarian Party asks that the Croatian Ministry of Science and Technology ensure the salary of one teacher in the Hungarian Studies Department at the University of Zagreb.

5. The Hungarian Party calls to the attention of the government of the Republic of Croatia that until 1991 three independent minority central Hungarian schools existed: in Lasko, Vorosmart and Korogy. This situation must be restored. For this reason, they recommend that the primary school in Lasko again become a central school, and not a territorial school as it is now.

The Parties agreed that the educational organizational forms from before the 1991 war will be organized again when the conditions for this are created.

6. The Republic of Hungary does everything for the long-term stable financing of the difficult-to-maintain independent Croatian schools. It shall examine the possibility of how to restore the entire network of Croatian nationality instruction - independent of student numbers - with central targeted and group financing, within a national framework, and professional national direction.

The Croatian minority schools in Hungary recommend that their activities and maintenance be directly financed from the central budget.

7. The Hungarian Party shall expedite the possibility that Croatian-language education expand with intermediate professional education, in accordance with the needs of the Croatian minority self-government.

The Parties shall urge that the competent ministries of the two governments examine the necessity of working out a joint, 3- to 5-year educational development program.

8. The Hungarian Party, with the continuous operation and financing of the professional teaching services, promotes raising the level of Croatian nationality education.

There is a need for the expansion of the training of experts.

The Republic of Croatia shall fill the vacant position of the Hungarian education inspector, on the basis of Article 17 of the "Law on education in national-community or minority languages" now being discussed in Parliament.

9. The Hungarian Party in the future shall also make it possible for representatives of the Hungarian Croats' National Self-Government to take part in debates on issues related to national minorities.

10. The Republic of Croatia was concerned about the purchase of the former high school dormitory (Budapest V., Munckacsy Mihaly Street 15) - for the purpose of meeting the needs of the Croatian minority. It asks for the legal help of the Hungarian Party in this matter.

The Hungarian Party, in the case of a request by the self-government, shall support the carrying out of the expansion of the Croatian kindergarten in Pecs. Simultaneously it ask for the support of the competent Pecs authorities in settling the problem of the of the city's Croatian primary school and gymnasium dormitory.

11. Both Parties shall make it possible that shipments of newspapers, journals and books, as well as sound and image media, arriving for the Croatian and Hungarian schools shall be exempted from customs fees.

12. The Croatian minority in Hungarian continues to recommend to the Croatian Party that it exempt Croatian students coming from Hungary from the payment of fees for student visas (approx. 90 DM).

The Croatian Party will bring the above recommendation before its government, but presently it cannot carry it out because Article 6 of the law on administrative fees (Narodne Novine 8/96) gives and itemized list of the exemption possibilities.

[A page is missing from the Hungarian original]

4. The Parties continue to support the work of the means of information operating in the minority languages.

5. The Hungarian Party shall examine the possibility of lasting, secure and continuous-method financing for the Croatian Theater in Pecs. The Republic of Hungary shall examine the offer of the Republic of Croatia for the rebuilding and furnishing of the Croatian Theater in Pecs. For this purpose the Republic of Croatia is ready to guarantee the necessary means for starting up, and therefore recommends that the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia forward its current position on the renovation and furnishing, so that it can start on ensuring the necessary means.

The competent institutions of the Republic of Croatia are prepared to ensure training for the actors of the Croatian theater in Pecs at the college of dramatic arts in Zagreb.

The Croatian National Theater in Osijek shall continue to devote attention to Hungarian authors and the inclusion in its programs of productions by theater companies from Hungary. The Contracting Parties shall support the plan for the establishment of an independent Hungarian theater company in Osijek. The Croatian Theater in Pecs shall continue to support the production of works by Croatian authors. The Croatian Party expresses its readiness to continue to support guest performances in Pecs by Croatian theater companies.

[There is no point 6 in the Hungarian original]

7. The Parties recommend the start of a joint Croatian-Hungarian minority program for the purpose of strengthening publishing activities and promoting literary meetings to satisfy the needs of the two countries' minorities. They recommend that a committee be established to work out the programs.

8. Both Contracting Parties shall make further efforts for the publication of 3 literary works each for both concerned minorities, which did not happen in the past period.

9. There is a need for exchanges and study trips for dance and music teachers, and further the more robust stimulation of guest performances of theatrical productions in the nationality territories.

10. The Republic of Hungary shall take steps in the interest of improving the reception possibilities of the Radio in Pecs. It shall weigh the possibility of Gyor Radio broadcasting programs in the Burgenland dialect as well. It shall continue to ensure the operation of the minority district TV and radio editorial offices.

The audibility of the programs of the Pecs radio's Croatian editorial office continues to be restricted, and no measures have happened to improve this. The Hungarian Party shall examine the possibility that in any such larger place where Croatians live in significant numbers (Baja, Mohacs, Nagykanizsa, Szombathely, Budapest) Croatian editorial offices establish the broadcasting of Croatian-language programs.

The Croatian Party recommends that the Republic of Hungary establish and finance local radio relay stations for the Croatian minority, so that in every such territory where Croatians live there will be the possibility for reception.

11. Both Parties, in proportion with the possibilities, shall expand the time of the television programs broadcast in national minority languages. The Hungarian Party recommends that Croatian Radio and Television examine the possibility of broadcasting a 30-minute Hungarian-language program during the Saturday afternoon hours.

Both Parties shall study the possibility of strengthening the transmission of their own minority television programs such that they also can be enjoyed in the border counties of the neighboring country.

The Republic of Croatia shall examine the possibility of adjusting its satellite television program to the needs of the Croatian minority in Hungary.

12. Both Parties urge the strengthening of cooperation between the mass media editorial offices.

13. The representatives of the Hungarian Croats' National Self-Government cooperate with the TV program directors, but they are not satisfied with the results of their negotiations. The broadcasting time of "Hrvatska Kronika" on the MTV 2 program was moved from 8:25 to 9:15, and the rebroadcast moved from 14:25 on Friday on the MTV 1 program to the next day at 9:15. This situation is not adequate, and that is why the Croatian Party recommends a more satisfactory time for the MTV 1 minority program.

Besides this, the Croats in Hungary stated that there is a need to examine the local cable-television question and expenses in the areas in which the Croatian minority forms a majority.

The Parties agreed to hold their next regular session in 1998 in Hungary.

Zagreb, November " ", 1997

The Protocol was signed by:

President of the Hungarian Section
of the Joint Committee

Csaba Tabajdi

President of the Croatian Section
of the Joint Committee

Josip Paro