



Reconciliation

War is the ultimate failure of political, diplomatic and social life. Despite having resulted in the independence of the former Yugoslav states, the 1991-1995 conflict in the Balkans - a war difficult to define - was no exception. Croatia, as well as Bosnia, suffered a great deal of devastation; the outcome was almost 150,000 victims and thousands of missing. Millions of citizens fled their homes, becoming refugees or displaced persons, and hundreds of thousands of houses and apartments were destroyed.

Ten years since the war, many of these problems still remain in spite of efforts made by the international community and the political will by the Croatian authorities.

The solution of all refugee-related problems is probably the most important in the Mission's mandate - to inform the refugees, wherever they are, that they are welcome to return and live again in Croatia; to facilitate their return by providing them with complete and proper documentation and, if necessary, with means of transport; to build or rebuild their pre-war homes and to return them to their original owners; to provide housing care to former occupancy-tenancy rights (OTR) holders; and to provide refugees who have returned with work or pensions.

To achieve reconciliation among all those who experienced war is probably a greater imperative than all these measures, since achieving understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation is unquestionably more important than all material aspects of the return of refugees. It is pointless to have those people back in their country, in Croatia, settled in their own apartments or houses developing a business or engaging themselves in an economic activity, if they are unable to live in peace, in a safe environment free from threats and safe from attack. Such attacks can range from graffiti and verbal insults to physical aggression or even murder.

Ethnically-motivated incidents are one of those aspects of Croatian life that is still very much in contradiction to the state of normality that exists in the country for quite some time now. The infrastructure of Croatia is reconstructed. Its main cities are more attractive than ever. The national parks are breathtaking; ten million tourists come to the country every year. At the same time, however, about one incident per week is registered in Croatia. The two most recent such incidents occurred in the Dubrovnik and Zadar areas. A car belonging to a Serbian official attending an OSCE conference was set alight in Dubrovnik while in Biljane Donje, a village in the Zadar hinterland, four houses belonging to Serb returnees were attacked. Stones were thrown at them and the perpetrators started a fire close enough to destroy one of the homes. The President of the Republic, the Government and the police reacted instantly and effectively.

The solution
of all
refugee-
related issues
is probably
the most
important in
the Mission's
mandate.



Svetozar Skoric, a Serb returnee, shows one of the rocks used in the attack on his recently reconstructed house in Biljane Donje in the Zadar hinterland, 25 July, 2006.

Such incidents have to stop. Politicians, judges and police officers have to act jointly to do so as such incidents affect the image, prestige and credibility of the country. It is also one of the primary obligations of Croatia as a future full member of the European Union - to end the frequent displays of bitterness from the past. Reconciliation, as important as it is, is also a very complex matter since a large percentage of the Croatian population felt on their own skin the suffering and tragedy of war. Members of their families were killed in a most brutal manner. However, it is a mistake to believe that by harassing Serb returnees the memories of those lost to the war are honoured in some way. The history of this region is full of victims of all cultures. That is why it is time now, in the 21st century, with Croatia's good perspective for peace and prosperity, to start living in harmony and understanding. It is quite obvious that reconciliation will not happen overnight with the simple act of adopting a decree or declaration. It is a long-lasting process which needs time and determination to succeed. One important step on the road to reconciliation is the acknowledgement of individual responsibility for crimes committed during the war. Croatia has to abide by international legal standards. The ICTY in The Hague was established to formally judge those senior officials seen as responsible for the most serious war crimes. However, the major responsibility for finding justice for war crimes will fall upon Croatia, as well as Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia, particularly with the future closure of the ICTY. Our sorrows and frustrations have to be channeled through our support of these courts and to all institutions - national and international - that work in that direction.

Ambassador Jorge Fuentes, Head of Mission

5 September - Morning Briefing with Tonino Picula, Head of the Croatian Parliamentary Delegation to the OSCE.

6 September - Press Conference on 'Children together' education project.

8-9 September - HOM attends International Conference: 'Regional Co-operation Challenges 2007/08 from Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe to the Regional Co-operation Council'.

11 September - Roundtable on the financing of political parties, organised by the OSCE Mission, State Administration Office, Transparency International Croatia and GONG.

14 September - Opening of Field Office Zadar premises.

14 September - HOM attends information session with State Secretary Damir Spančić on the return of refugees in Zadar.

18 September - 3x4 Principal's meeting on the implementation of the Sarajevo Ministerial Declaration on Refugee Return.

26 September - International Community Principals - OSCE, EC and UNHCR - meet with the Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development Minister Božidar Kalmeta.

29 September - Conference "Good Governance in Local Self-Government", organized by the Croatian Legal Centre, financed by the Mission.

6 October - Plenary meeting of the Working Group on War Crimes at the Ministry of Justice.

Downsizing, leaving and starting again

Over the past months the Mission has been undergoing a continual process of "downsizing" as many international and national staff have left, many of them not to be replaced. In the course of the past nine months we have seen some 20 or so people leave, and by the beginning of 2007 we will have a total number of about 150 people located in the Mission's Headquarters and eight field offices.

The changes in staffing reflect progress made in Croatia in areas covered by the mandate and the adjustments in size and structure of the Mission to take those changes into account. By the end of this year we will close or significantly reduce four units - Media, Political, Police and a part of the Civil Society and Project Management Unit. Increasingly, our work will focus on activities in just four units and programs: Head of Mission, Rule of Law, Return & Integration (R&I) and Administration.

But these changes are mere abstractions. How does the change look in human terms? The most evident change comes when friends and colleagues leave the Mission. A position is vacated, and often no replacement takes over. A friend, a colleague is gone, and a certain void appears in our office and in our lives. But what happens to those friends who have left?

Axel Jaenicke, Jean-Pierre Golubić, Stefano Gnocchi and Andy BurrIDGE, all "fixtures" in the Mission were required to leave the Mission owing to the OSCE's rule that with very rare exceptions no person should remain in a single mission longer than seven years. Today, each has found a new "OSCE home" to continue to apply the knowledge they have gained and the talents they have developed here in Croatia. Axel is working with the Serbian Parliament in our sister Mission in Belgrade; Jean-Pierre has moved to Moldova where he can make great use of his fluent Russian and work on minority rights; Stefano and Andy have both taken up new senior duties in the Mission in Macedonia (where, by the way, they joined our old friend, Japan's only International Mission Member, Takiashi Koizume, who did so much good R&I work in Croatia for many years). The seven year rule also caught up with Tim Stanning, who left Zagreb after model tenure as Chief of Administration and Field Support. Today, Tim is back in his adopted Scotland, working full time with his wife administering a chain of small holiday homes and rental properties.

The Mission in Belgrade is also

the new home for Dinka Živalj who is now the Mission Spokesperson there and Stephanie Grepo, who leaves Gospić the end of September to lead the Youth and Education Unit in Serbia.

Kosovo has become the "home away from home" for three of our former colleagues - Katarina Grbeša, who has become a National Professional Democratization Officer; Sharov Azizov, from Karlovac and his wife Gulnoz, who worked as an intern at HQ, who will be working on rule of law and democratization issues.

Two other interns, Ignacio Nuño Molina, who created a journalists training program in Gospić, and Nicholas Nachtigall-Marten, who worked in Vukovar, have moved to important positions with the Spanish Ministry of Commerce in Dusseldorf, Germany, and in the OSCE Mission in Macedonia.

Our French contingent has been severely depleted this year. Head of the Political Unit Eric Galmot will return to France after two profitable years with the Mission. Also in Paris, Berangere Neyroud will shortly take up a position in the French Foreign Ministry. Arnaud Appriou has taken a position with the EU in Brussels after leaving Karlovac, while Valerie Covic left Zadar to work with an NGO in Belgrade.

Jose-Luis Masegosa, from the Political Section, continues his involvement with the OSCE, as he is actively involved in Madrid preparing the Spanish Chairmanship of the OSCE, which begins January 1, 2007.

Finally, some of our staff has moved far from the realm of the OSCE, and even Europe, such as Maja Saje, who is continuing to enjoy her work as special assistant to the Croatian Ambassador in Tokyo, Japan. Another "long distance" departee is Hrvojka Dokoza, who leaves this month to return to "her other home" in Australia. Not so far from home, from the Media Unit, Slavka Jureta, has moved into the private sector in Zagreb.

As our friends and colleagues leave us, they leave behind a gap in our offices and in our lives. But they have also left something more important: their hard work and dedication in working with us and with Croatia toward the common goal of fulfilling the mandate and making this a more wonderful country to live in. As we close ranks to make up for their departure our commitment should be to offer the same dedication and effort they gave, so the goals for Croatia and the Mission can be met effectively and expeditiously. Their experience also shows that the skills and experiences all of us have gained in the Mission will stand us in excellent stead when each of us moves on to new, interesting and more challenging futures.

Robert W. Becker, Deputy Head of Mission



Farewell party of Political Unit Head Eric Galmot and Hrvojka Dokoza, National Public Information Officer, 21 September 2006.

Political Unit



MHQ Political Unit (L-R): Ankica Kuna, Political Affairs Assistant, Eric Galmot, Head of Unit, Olga Roberts, Political Officer, 20 September 2006.

The Political Unit currently has six members. Eric Galmot (France) heads the Unit in Zagreb, with the support of Olga Roberts (UK) and the indispensable and long serving Unit Assistant, Ankica Kuna. With the guidance of the eight Heads of Field Office (HFOs), operations in the field are kept afloat by three regional assistants based in Field Offices Vukovar (Ruzica Vidakovic), Sisak (Milijana Borojevic) and Split (Marija Ibrsimovic). In many senses the Political Unit is a cross-sector unit which must maintain a good grasp of the Mission's work as a whole in order to compile the Fortnightly Reports, the bi-annual Status Reports and any other spot or background reports for the OSCE Permanent Council and 56 delegations in Vienna. In terms of its own portfolio, the Political Unit follows the Croatian political scene closely – both at the national and local level – analyzing post-war developments and democratization issues related to the Mission's mandate. Over the past year, these have included observation of the

presidential and local elections, analysis of political reactions to the arrest of Gotovina and the death of Milosevic, and a constant attention to the quality of relations between the Croat majority and the Serb minority. Although the international monitoring of elections in Croatia ceased in 2003, the Political Unit analysed the conduct and results of the last presidential and local elections in Croatia. In the second round of the January 2005 Presidential elections, Field Offices were asked at short notice to observe out-of-country-voting in Herzegovina (BiH). A close eye was also kept on levels of minority representation mandated in the May 2005 local elections. The Unit also provides support – along with experts from ODIHR and the Council of Europe/ Venice Commission – to the Croatian Government in the area of electoral reform. To date, the Mission in co-operation with the Government has organised two roundtables in Parliament, both attended by Prime Minister Ivo Sanader. The first, held in December 2005, resulted in legislation establishing a permanent State Election Commission, while the second held on 11 September this year should see measures to improve a draft law regulating the financing of political parties. A third roundtable scheduled for November will discuss the organizing and updating of voter registers and the sensitive issue of out-of-country voting. Along with the Rule of Law Unit, the Political Unit monitors implementation of the 2002 Constitutional Law on the

Rights of National Minorities. The Unit is involved in numerous workshops, seminars and roundtables, supporting minority structures at all levels, from local minority councils up to the Government Office for National Minorities (GoNM) and the National Council for National Minorities. In the area of minority education, the Political Unit is currently supporting a plan prepared by the Ministry of Education which aims to progressively phase out the physical separation of pupils along ethnic lines in Eastern Slavonia. In terms of the future transformation of the Unit, political personnel in the field will cease to exist per se, as of 1 January 2007. However, this does not mean that political work in the field will cease. Continuing areas of activity and engagement, predominantly reporting and minority issues, will continue to be coordinated from the HQ through HFOs using the field staff available.

Olga Roberts, Political Officer

“Children together”

At a press conference in Vukovar on 6 September, the Mission together with the Ministry of Education launched a €25,000 OSCE-funded project entitled ‘Children Together’, consisting of an art and literature contest among children in 30 ethnically-mixed primary schools in the Danube Region. Running from September to November, the project aims at fostering closer co-operation and joint activities between majority and minority children, reinforcing the message that mixed education is preferable to separate education.

Roundtable on financing of political parties

On 11 September, a roundtable on the financing of political parties was organized in Parliament by the Mission and the Central Office for State Administration, with the assistance of Transparency International Croatia and GONG. The roundtable was opened by the Prime Minister, Parliament Speaker Vladimir Seks and the HoM and gathered around 80 participants. There was a general consensus among participants that the Government draft provided a sound basis for developing legislation for regulating political parties. The debate among the stakeholders showed the need to develop it further, underscoring the need to have legislation governing electoral campaigns, either as part of this draft or as separate legislation. The Central Office for Administration thereupon undertook to rework the draft, based on the additions, modifications and corrections suggested during the course of the debate.



L-R: HOM, PM Ivo Sanader, Parliament Speaker Vladimir Seks, State Administration Office Head Antun Palaric, Foreign Minister Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović and Justice Minister Ana Lovrin at the Roundtable on Financing of Political Parties, Parliament, Zagreb, 11 September 2006.

Photo gallery



The Croatian Government's obligations towards ensuring rule of law were discussed at a Plenary Session at the Justice Ministry, 15 May 2006.



Ombudsman Jurica Malčić spoke of his Institution's work on human rights at MHQ, 31 August 2006.



Head of the Delegation of the Croatian Parliament to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Tonino Picula spoke of the democratisation of Croatia at MHQ, 5 September 2006.



Chief State Attorney Mladen Bajić and his associates discussed war crimes prosecution at MHQ, 12 September 2006.



President Mesic and Deputy Head of Mission Robert W. Becker with Serb returnees in Biljane Donje, July 2006.



Head of Mission, Ambassador Fuentes on Orthodox holiday at Krka Monastery, 9 August 2006.