

CRR (4)

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

SLOVAKIA'S "KULTURKAMPF"

by Chandler Rosenberger

Dear Peter,

Slovakia is building a new state. Slovakia has many enemies, both abroad and within. They are determined to deny it its independence. In these difficult times, some of the familiar institutions of democracy, such as a free press, must be put on hold. Anyone who criticizes the man who led Slovakia to independence, Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar, is criticizing Slovakia itself.

Or so his government would have us believe.

Mečiar emerged from his electoral victory with a large chip on his shoulder -- against the media in general and state television in particular. At his first press conference after the 1992 elections he announced that he would seek the dismantling of federal television and radio, which he accused of broadcasting "disinformation." Mečiar cited as an example a pre-election broadcast by President Vaclav Havel, which, Mečiar said, was a personal attack on him "below the standards of human dignity."

In his address, then-president Havel had named no political parties. He asked voters "not to support those who have dictatorial inclinations . . . and who wish to bring our affairs back under central control." Having taken such a description as a personal insult, Mečiar has gone on to live up to it.

BROADCASTING A NARROW LINE

The end of Federal Television

The directors of federal television of the former Czechoslovakia were eager that co-operation between the two republics' broadcasters continue even after the division of the country into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Before the split, federal TV (known as "F1") was, like all federal institutions, a delicate balance between the republics' own bodies. Republic

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stations contributed 80 percent of F1's material. Czechoslovak television contributed commentary and news and was monitored by the Federal Assembly.

After the Czech and Slovak governments had decided to divide the state, they also agreed to turn federal television and radio into commercial companies which could sign joint-ventures with the republics' stations. The directors of Slovak TV wanted a share in F1 but the Slovak government refused. F1 was demolished.

Slovak state broadcasting: reward the sycophants

At first Mečiar did not complain about Slovak television or radio. Indeed, many their former employees have found positions in Mečiar's government. Before becoming Deputy Minister of Culture, Ivan Mjartan was an editor at Slovak Radio's "Radiožurnal," a daily current affairs program. When, during the election campaign, Mečiar was accused of having collaborated with the Communist secret police, Mjartan personally edited a program that discredited the witnesses. Mjartan was later fired when a BBC study of Slovak media found "Radiožurnal" biased in favor of Mečiar. But Mečiar's victory has paid off handsomely for him. He has since moved on to become Slovakia's ambassador in Prague.

Once in power, Mečiar became increasingly testy about Slovak news. In August 1992, he told a crowd of supporters that "the state of Slovak television is not normal" and that representatives of opposition parties, "who had lost their credibility already," appeared too often. "If this is how they (the governors of Slovak TV) understand objectivity, they will be dismissed," Mečiar said.

Before the elections, the council governing Slovak television was democratic in the extreme. It had representatives from all the major political parties regardless of whether they were in parliament. But after Mečiar's warning, his government moved quickly. In September, the Slovak parliament passed a law authorizing it to appoint a new council that it considered to be "objective." The law also transferred many of the council's powers, such as the power to appoint the director of TV, directly to the parliament. A day later, the director of Slovak TV, M. Kleis, was dismissed.

Mjartan defended the dismissal, saying that Kleis had been a leftover from the opposition. The chairmanship of the Slovak Council cited as evidence of the director's bias that, once, a Slovak news program featuring Mečiar had been preceded by a programme that had ended with a small boy urinating.

In October, the parliament dismissed Slovak TV director Jan Fule for refusing to allow Mečiar ten minutes of airtime a week. Fule had argued that the time should be divided equally among politicians at the discretion of the editors. Mečiar said Fule had "abused his position as a journalist" and that he "took the guarantee of democracy for himself and isn't aware of the fact that he is not the owner of the patent for democracy."

TV council chairman Vladimir Miskovsky resigned in December 1992, three months after taking up his post. The council was "paralysed" by the parliament, he complained; HZDS had not fulfilled its promise to withdraw its supporters from the council. A Slovak law professor, Jan Prusak, complained that there was no way to guarantee that a parliamentary majority, whatever its promises, would preserve the council's independence.

Preserving the state's monopoly

In July, Mjartan commemorated his appointment to the Ministry of Culture by annulling an agreement to privatize Slovakia's third television station, known as TA3. The station would be offered for sale again, Mjartan said, but did not specify a date.

In May 1992, the post-revolutionary Slovak government gave an international consortium the right to operate TA3. Of 42 competing bids, only a joint-venture between the Berlin-based Central European Development Corp. (CEDC) and two Slovak companies was able to guarantee investment of 35 million Deutschmarks per annum required by the government.

In announcing the annulment, Mjartan said that the new Slovak government had found "legal flaws" in the CEDC licence. He did not explain what they were.

Peter Hunčik, a Slovak entrepreneur who put together the deal, disputed Mjartan's claim. Federal Czechoslovak law required that sales of all media extending across the federation be approved by a federal committee. But it

left the country's two republics free to distribute licences to radio and television stations that operated only within one republic.

TA3 is the remains of a television station established by the Soviets to broadcast propaganda into Bratislava and Western Slovakia. It therefore fell under the jurisdiction of the Slovak Minister of Culture, Hunčík said.

If anyone acted illegally, it was Mjartan. Slovak law stated that no licence may be revoked by the Ministry of Culture. Only an independent committee, convened by the parliament specifically to review licences, may revoke them. It may only take back a licence if there are serious questions of legality. The Slovak government, unable to find an investor with the necessary capital, has since approached Hunčík again. But nothing concrete has yet been arranged.

The delay in establishing TA3 has left "Radio Free Europe" in its old role of providing news that has not been censored by the government. Many of the government's opponents have gravitated there. But Slovakia's Minister of Culture Dušan Slobodnik recently warned the new American Embassy in Bratislava that his government would "monitor" RFE's broadcasts and complain about any hostile reporting.

PRESSURE ON THE PRESS

Nothing the Slovak government has done to broadcasters could begin to compare with its actions against newspapers and magazines.

Danubiaprint: seizing the means of production

Danubiaprint, the publishing house that prints all the national newspapers in Slovakia, was sold by the 1990-2 government to a private businessman just weeks before the elections that brought Mečiar to power. New Slovak Minister of Privatization Lubomir Dolgos annulled the contract the following July, arguing that a state monopoly was less dangerous than a private monopoly.

Danubiaprint's purchaser, Milos Novak, has dismissed all claims that he would have played political games as owner. Instead, he has accused the government of attempting to take over independent media.

In its penultimate session, the previous Slovak government approved the sale of *Danubiaprint* to Novak, the proprietor of a small magazine printing

business. Novak offered 394 million crowns (\$13.1 million) for six of the former state monopoly's seven outlets. The only competing bid, a management buy-out, offered 320 crowns (\$10.6 million) for the entire monopoly.

Under the rules governing the privatization of state industry, a "direct sale" such as that of *Danubiaprint* requires the comment of the Slovak Anti-Monopoly Office. The comments have no actual legal force.

Although Novak's bid actually divided the monopoly, Dolgos, then head of the Slovak government's Anti-Monopoly Office, favored the management buy-out which preserved the monopoly. Dolgos became a formal member of Mečiar's movement after having been removed from his office for his suspicious connections to the state monopolies.

The government Mečiar eventually defeated did indeed hurry to sell the newspaper printing house, according to former Slovak parliamentarian Peter Tatar, but did not seek out a businessman favorable to them. "The deal was one hundred percent legal," Tatar said. An examination of the documents of the deal supports Tatar's claim. The government, Tatar said, sought merely to free the printing house from the upcoming Mečiar administration, fearing that Mečiar would misuse his power over the building.

"I think what is happening here is a nightmare," Novak said. "I am a businessman, not a politician." Mečiar cancelled his bid, Novak said, because "he wants to control the mass-media."

Government intimidation of the press (and vice versa)

The ministers of the new Slovak government have a penchant for exacting revenge on individual journalists and newspapers. When the regional daily *Smer* accused Mečiar and Milan Kňažko, now Slovakia's Foreign Minister, of using secret police channels shortly after the revolution, both sued. When they lost in the local court, Mečiar appealed and asked the trial be moved to Bratislava. The case is still pending.

Mečiar has had better luck savaging the Eastern Slovak daily, *Slovensky Vychod*. The newspaper has a reputation for being virulently anti-Mečiar. "God help *Slovensky Vychod*," a member of Mečiar's party said, "for there is no greater proof of democracy in Slovakia so long as it

continues to exist."

When asked at an election rally if he would close the newspaper for having so often criticized him, Mečiar said he wouldn't, but that he would make sure that it paid for the mistakes it had made. A few days after the election *Slovensky Vychod* was evicted from its offices. The editorial staff of a new newspaper, *Luč* moved in and in their first issue carried a long interview with Mečiar. According to Jan Holčík, a former Minister of Industry, the Slovak government gave *Luč* ("Ray") start-up capital of 40 million crowns.

Mečiar used his interview with *Luč* to explain his views of journalism ethics. "A citizen has the right to obtain truthful information and the state has to guarantee it," he said. "There are only two possibilities; either you, the journalists, do it of your own free will, that you protect the citizens from lies and manipulations, or the other possibility is that the state has to do it. I'm asking you, what's better? I'm telling you, 'Please write the truth.' Of course, I have the other possibility, the possibility to prepare a proposal by means of the state organs which would divide the dailies and media into the 'vulgar press and the 'serious press.' We can then differentiate your incomes according to the tax code."

The government also seems happy to use the old Communist law about "spreading alarming reports." A recent issue of the quasi-official state magazine *Europa Vincet*, which is published in English, French and German, called on Slovaks living abroad to submit newspaper clippings in which citizens of Slovakia criticized the government. "The authors of these cynical lies often are citizens of the CSFR," the editorial board, of which two government ministers are members, writes. "Through the constitution of a sovereign and independent Slovak Republic conditions have ensued for the propagators of this anti-Slovak political racism to be brought to justice and legal liability in terms of Czecho-Slovak laws now in vigor."

The first victim of these "conditions" was Milan Žitny. As editor of the now-defunct *Echa* Žitny was the first to investigate Mečiar's past. (I bought his work when I was Slovak editor of the equally-defunct *East European Reporter*.) Žitny is familiar with, not to say obsessed with, the former secret police. During a televised debate in November Žitny claimed that there were still former members of the old state security networks in "high government positions" in Slovakia despite a law banning them (The

Slovak government has since overturned the former federal law.) The government filed for indictment the following day. Chief civil servant Ivan Lexa said that Žitny had committed two crimes -- "attacking a government organ" and "spreading alarming reports."

The government has not pursued the case further, perhaps out of fear that it cannot win. On the same day as the government issued its indictment, federal television reported that it had proof that Žitny was right in at least five cases. Unlike Žitny, F1 named names.

Along with the stick comes the carrot

Journalists more willing to adhere to Mečiar's code of ethics can expect more than just tax breaks. A journalist who earns membership in the "Association of Journalists for a True Picture of Slovakia" gets invitations to exclusive press conferences. Mečiar has given the association 0.5 million crowns from his office's reserves. Hvezdoň Kocuč, a government representative just back from Washington, D.C., said that such journalists should go abroad to improve Slovakia's name.

One journalist who has obviously learned Mečiar's lessons is J. Smolec. "Dear colleagues," he wrote in *Koridor*, "Slovakia, our homeland, is now passing through times of historic decisions. We, the journalists of this generation, have to decide whether we are going together with the nation and will strengthen its will, its spirit, its right to its own existence, to give it the strength which will help it to overcome the lies, misinformation which our enemies spread around, not only in the world, but also in this country."

Changing the staff of "Change"

But there's little point sending Slovakia's obedient journalists abroad if the government behaves so badly when Slovakia hosts foreign reporters at home. The Slovak government came under the scrutiny of legions of journalists attending the independence celebrations on December 31, 1992. But the government saw no need to wait for the international press to clear out of Bratislava before it continuing to step on newspapers at home. The Slovak government's decision to fire the editor of *Smena* ("Change" or "Shift") the country's third-largest daily, therefore got the attention it deserved.

Smena has had trouble with Mečiar from the day after his election. The newspaper's first post-election headline asked "Will we become a

one-party state again?" Within weeks Mečiar had announced a government investigation of the newspaper's finances.

Despite an attempt to privatize *Smena*, the paper still belongs to a government, through a foundation responsible for administering the property of the former socialist youth organization. Socpress, the publishers of the French daily *Le Figaro*, tried to buy a minority share in the paper but were put off after meeting Mečiar's Slovak Minister of Culture, Mr. Slobodnik.

The government therefore had no problems changing the paper's staff. First, it removed friends of the staff from the foundation that owns it and replaced them with friends of the government. Then, two days after independence, the new board voted to remove the newspaper's editor, Karol Ježik. The new board argued that the government's investigation showed that Ježik's editorial policy had lost the paper money.

Actually, Ježik's *Smena* made a profit of over 7 million crowns in 1992. The paper's profits declined in the third quarter while it launched a Sunday magazine, but that was an investment, Ježik said, not a loss. The government objects to the paper's politics, not its finances, Ježik said. "We know what the game is," he added.

Because the government had made its intentions clear since June, *Smena* was prepared. Eighty percent of the staff have left the paper in protest. Ježik has hired them for his new daily, *Sme Na . . .* ("We are for," as in "We are for Monday," "We are for Tuesday.")

But the fate of *Smena* shows the legal snares a post-Communist state lays for its opponents. *Smena* tried to privatize itself legally but, due to its opposition politics, fell foul of the government. Other former Communist papers, such as *Praca* ("Work") and *Pravda* ("Truth") simply seized themselves after the revolution. Although their means were probably illegal, the government hasn't yet prosecuted.

Some Western correspondents had hung around the Hotel Danube fretting about how to fulfil editors' demands for a taste of the new Slovak state. The *Smena* case came as if from room service. They gobbled it up. Julius Gembicky, chairman of the Slovak Association of Journalists, worried that move "would not send a good signal abroad, since the implication is that

there is no freedom of the press in Slovakia." Mečiar, however, saw fault not in his government's action but in criticism of it. "The *Smena* case is being stirred up by people unwilling to accept the last elections results and were against the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic," he said in his weekly television broadcast. "They used the case to advertise the new newspaper they want to publish. They did this at the expense of disgracing the honor of Slovakia's name abroad."

Going after the small fish: cultural magazines

In principle, returning property seized by the Communist regime may be a good idea. In Slovak cultural life, however, it has been transformed into another technique by which to silence independent voices.

Slovenske Pohľady, founded in 1881, is the oldest cultural magazine in Slovakia. From 1922 to 1952 it was published by *Matica Slovenska*, a Slovak cultural organization. It was then seized by a Communist front, the Association of Slovak Writers, in whose hands it remains today.

After the "Velvet Revolution," the dissidents rose to run the writers' association and quickly staffed *Slovenske Pohľady* with their friends. Since most were ardent proponents of the Czech and Slovak federation, the magazine took on a "pro-federalist" tone. Not so *Matica Slovenska*. The foundation had been ardently nationalist since it was established under Hungarian rule to protect Slovak culture.

Matica Slovenska has laid claim to the right to publish *Slovenske Pohľady* again, arguing that it had been the magazine's last non-Communist publisher. The foundation also complains that *Slovenske Pohľady*'s current editors are "anti-Slovak." Milan Ferko, a Slovak writer, calls them "enemies of the state." *Matica Slovenska*'s director Jozef Markuš has said he would like to make the magazine a "representative national literary and cultural journal."

Slovenske Pohľady has so far fought the restitution claim, earning more wrath from Ferko and Markuš. However justified *Matica Slovenska*'s claim to the magazine may be, one could hardly say that the transfer would fulfil the aims of restitution, one of which was to rebuild "civil society" beyond the state's jurisdiction. Like the writer's association, *Matica Slovenska* is state-funded. Unlike the association, it is wildly pro-Mečiar and heavily compromised; the Communist government had used it to keep

track of Slovak nationalists abroad. The language of its leaders hints that those who were once considered "enemies of the Communist state" are now considered "enemies of the Slovak nation." Friends of the second tend also to have been friends of the first.

A paper more to the government's taste

Koridor, a Slovak daily, "tends to be the voice of Slovak streets and squares," J. Felis, an editor of the paper, recently wrote. "The voice of *Koridor* is sophisticated and true. We refuse cheap popularity and the way of the popular press. We want to achieve popularity by means of intellectual and deeply humanistic tone of our paper."

Such comments are rather insulting to Slovaks, given the tone of *Koridor*. A typical article described federal television as "an information parasite" whose commentary programs "are a festival of demagoguery and misinformation." The Czechoslovak television daily news is "an hour of lies and threats." The paper attacked federal television editor Zuzanna Bubilkova. "She made a career by throwing filth of Slovakia," the paper wrote. Worse, it said, she is Czech.

But the paper must represent the ideals of the government, given that it has supported it since its foundation. Milan Kňažko, Slovakia's Foreign Minister, was one of the five founding shareholders of the company that publishes *Koridor*, according to the government's own records. There is some confusion as to whether he still owns shares. Mečiar has claimed that Kňažko had given up his shares in *Koridor* during the election campaign. *Koridor* editor-in-chief Jerguš Ferko has said Kňažko gave up the shares after the election. A Czech daily proved that Kňažko was a member of the company as late as September 1992.

Even if Kňažko no longer owns his shares, evidence suggests that his government owns more than he ever did. According to the Czechoslovak Press Agency, its Slovak offspring, the Press Agency of the Slovak Republic planned to become the major shareholder in *Koridor*. The Slovak agency had been given a loan from the Slovak government under the condition that a part of its finances would be transferred to *Koridor*. The paper would then become a "government daily."

Editor-in-chief Ferko at first admitted that the deal had been negotiated. Later, the Slovak Press Agency denied any such arrangement. Ferko later said that no deal had been made -- the two parties had only discussed co-operation. Whoever is paying for it, *Koridor* still appears each morning.

Fighting the fight he can win

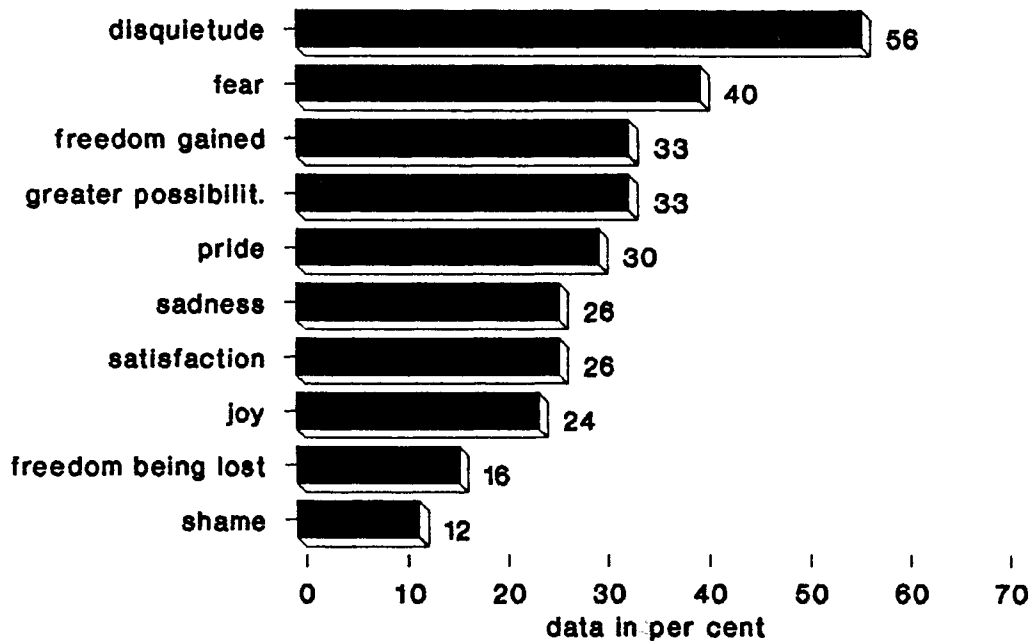
Strangely, Mečiar's "Kulturkampf" seems at first glance entirely unnecessary. It is as if he has become frustrated by Slovakia's bad reputation abroad and has taken it out on journalists at home. Public opinion remains on his side, according to an opinion poll conducted by the Institute for Central European Studies. Before the 1992 elections, less than a fifth of Slovaks supported the division of the federation; more than half support it now. The failure of negotiations between the Czech and Slovak victors seems to have convinced many Slovaks that independence became inevitable, if not attractive; 30 percent of them say they support the government now "because there is no alternative."

Mečiar was also apparently successful in convincing Slovaks that his request for "international recognition within a confederation" was reasonable; more than half those interviewed said it was the solution they favored, despite persistent warnings that the Czechs would not accept it.

But Mečiar hardly has the unqualified support of the republic he leads. Most Slovaks do blame the Czechs, the old federal structure or an inevitable souring of relations for the split, but 26 percent blame "politicians on both sides." More than half the Slovaks questioned said they felt uneasy with the division; forty percent said they feared the future. About half of the Slovak population thinks the economy will get worse, with the currency sinking and unemployment increasing. More than half think relations with neighboring countries will deteriorate. Even the supporters of Mečiar's own party are split in half over whether the future brings good or ill.

So far Mečiar's personal popularity has not diminished much, but an unstable Slovak crown might change that. Currency devaluations usually don't affect politicians' standings because so few people in any country travel or buy a lot of foreign goods. But if the Slovak crown suddenly drops in value, Slovaks will find themselves unable to afford to visit places they once considered home. Moravian wine, Bata shoes and Budwar beer, all produced in the Czech Lands, will all cost more. And if Slovaks lose all

The Division of Czecho-Slovakia:
Feelings of Citizens of the SR



Source: ICES Comenius University
September 1992

faith in their currency, business at home will suffer. There's a brief buying binge on now, but that's because Slovaks are eager to convert what savings they have into durable goods. (They seem to worry less about the depreciation of a refrigerator than of their currency.) Once that's over, the internal Slovak market might seize up as the currency black markets go back into full swing.

Even if silencing dissent spares Slovakia a crisis of confidence in the short term, it erodes confidence among those people the country needs in the longer run -- Western investors. Businessmen aren't especially concerned about a country's respect for press freedoms, but they do shiver when a government seizes property. Cancelling the deal for an independent television station ruined Mečiar's name in Berlin; keeping *Smena* in state hands drove out some well-connected Parisians. Word has gotten around.

In such an unstable environment, rumors are even more self-fulfilling than ever. Word that the banks are empty quickly empties the banks. To avert catastrophe, Mečiar needs either sound economic policy or a muzzle on the press. He has chosen the second.

His decision has its own familiar logic. The more enemies Slovakia has abroad and within, the easier it is to justify a heavy state hand. To criticize the government is to criticize Slovakia, just as complaining about the Communists was once tantamount to attacking the "working class." Slovakia is vulnerable while building the institutions of a state just as the East Bloc was always in danger while "building socialism." It's not 1984 anymore. Now it's 1994. While the lies have remained the same, the names have been changed to protect the guilty.

(I would like to thank Dr. Marian Timoracky of the Institute for Central European Studies for his extremely helpful report on the Slovak media. Many of the direct quotations from the Slovak media are to be found there.)

"1994"

(An Epilogue)

LONDON, 1994 -- The clerk had trouble finding his old office building. Most of the street names had changed. Some had been given back the names they had before the rise of Big Brother. More often, they were re-named again, this time to commemorate a hero of English history or letters he'd never heard of. Worse, the street signs were now printed in a Gothic script he'd never learned properly. Must bone up, he thought.

And, of course, he wasn't looking for The Ministry of Truth this time. He was looking for the Ministry of Truths Historical.

At first he tried to find his way by roaming the old neighborhood, looking for the portcullis of Henry VIII which the newly-independent English government had adopted as an official symbol. But now every shop, even the new private ones, bore the symbol too. It wasn't until he saw the ministry's rain-streaked shoulders above the gutters in Gower Street that he could navigate.

He was soon back with the balls of his feet balanced on the steel threshold of his old chief's office. A secretary was playing a video game on one of the ministry's new computers.

He coughed. "Winston Smith," he said. He noticed a sharpness in his voice that once might have sent his mind scurrying down the possible repercussions. But he breathed easily, knowing he had something of a reputation as a "dissident." Even if that failed, at least he'd spit out a good

English name.

The secretary swivelled to face him. "Of course, of course." Her hands scattered the yellowed forms on the desk. "The Minister is expecting you."

Winston barely recognized the office or its occupant. The walls had been freshly, if sloppily, whitewashed. The old simulated-wood desks had been replaced with black Swedish tables. Big Brother's portrait, which had always hung awkwardly high on the far wall, was gone. Now, smack in the middle, hung the portcullis, its plastic shield glimmering under the bright neon lights.

The Minister was engrossed in marking the day's newspapers with a red pen. Winston's thin, nervous colleague had put on some weight since their days together, but it had been ten years. At least he's got a new suit, Winston thought. As the Minister walked out to greet him, Winston noticed that his colleague still wore white socks.

"God be with you, Winston, and with our King." The Minister beamed as he shook Winston's hand.

"God be with you, sir," Winston said. After a brief pause he added, "and with our King."

The Minister smiled again and shook his head in disbelief. "Who would have thought, Winston, that our work in the opposition would have brought us to this!"

Winston said nothing. The Minister offered him a seat in front of the desk and went on.

"The revolution happened just in time, Winston. I was near my wits' end. I'm afraid many of you in dissident circles never appreciated how much pressure those of us working from within were under. The Americans kept close watch on us."

"I remember once writing an encyclopedia entry that highlighted the German ancestry of our royal family. It was struck out immediately, of course, and I spent a few long hours being interrogated by some New York cosmopolitan. 'England as a European nation?' he sneered. Then he got nasty. 'Why do you want to break up Oceania?' he asked. 'Who are you

working for?' " The Minister smirked. "Of course I didn't tell them I was working with your circles."

The Minister fell silent for a moment and set his hand on Winston's shoulder. "Um, thank you," Winston said.

The Minister returned to his seat, then looked at the newspapers. He frowned. "If only our journalists had your knowledge, Winston, or your understanding of how history has treated England. They reduce everything to black and white. Yes, we suffered in Oceania, but does that mean we must break all ties with our fellow victims? The break-up of the United States offers us great access to Western markets. Surely we should welcome the restoration of the Confederacy. Instead, all these calumnies!"

The Minister picked up a copy of The Guardian and smacked the front page with the back of his hand. "I make one trip to Atlanta, one cultural visit, and I become an agent of a new 'Confederate CIA.' "

The Minister paused, folded the paper and lay it gently back on his desk. "We cannot afford these kinds of lies in a time of war," he said.

Winston blinked but the Minister merely smiled. "I know that phrase might be a bit, well, familiar," he said in a soothing voice. "But it will be your job to help others to avoid simple historical comparisons. I hope you will not fall prey to them yourself."

The Minister leaned back and looked to the far corner again. "The wars of the past were in the name of artificial constructions. Oceania -- what was Oceania? What historical roots did Oceania have? But our war today is a war for England, the mother we were never allowed to know. Our mother has been much abused. Big Brother sold her to the financiers of New York, who shackled her to our traditional enemies, all for his beloved 'United Kingdom.' David Hume a Scot! W.B. Yeats an Irishman! The lies we have endured!

"If England is to be free of Oceania, if we are finally to enter Europe, then the world must see how we have suffered and what we are fighting for in Cumbria. That's your job."

The Minister pulled a bulky white packet from his desk drawer.

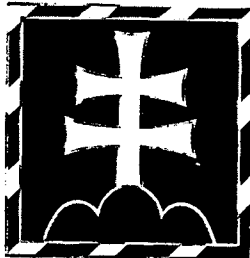
"Several of our television journalists are well-known Unionists. It shows in their work. We have offered them a packet of historical guidelines for their cultural programs. Unfortunately, they are all too often ignored. I've therefore insisted that the reporters submit their scripts to you for fact-checking."

The Minister's face grew serious again. "Now, Winston, we all know the pressure that you were under when you made your, well, unfortunate choice. But we recognize the value of your opposition work and would hate to have your good name ruined. What do the public know of those rat cages! If word got out, you would never be given a fair chance to clear your name."

The Minister handed Winston the packet. "These guidelines will help you present a true picture of England. Follow them and you need never fear a false picture of you."

The Minister rose and shook Winston's hand, which was already shaking. He smiled. "God be with you and with our King."

"God be with you and with our King," Winston said. He glanced at the blank space high on the wall. He hated Big Brother.



The symbol of the newly-independent Republic of Slovakia.

Chandler Rosenberg
Chandler Rosenberger
Bratislava, Slovakia
Jan. 27, 1994