

# SLOVAK REPUBLIC PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 25/26 SEPTEMBER 1998

**By Dr Trevor Waters**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

From Slovakia good news for democracy! The make or break September general elections secured the crushing defeat of strongman Vladimir Mečiar's populist, nationalist government, yielded victory for an alliance of four opposition parties led by the Slovak Democratic Coalition, and ushered in a new coalition government.

Following the September 1994 elections Mečiar returned (in December) as prime minister in a government coalition that included - in addition to his own highly populist Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) - the extreme right-wing and radically nationalist Slovak National Party (SNS) and the extreme left-wing and anti-reform Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS). Together the coalition parties held 83 seats in the 150-strong National Council; on the eve of the September 1998 elections, with 81 seats Mečiar's government continued to enjoy an absolute majority.

### **1994 Election Results**

Party	Movement for A Democratic Slovakia - Farmers Party (HZDS+RS)	Common Choice (SV)	Hungarian Coalition (MK)	Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	Democratic Union (DU)	Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS)	Slovak National Party (SNS)
% of total votes cast	34.96	10.41	10.18	10.08	8.57	7.34	5.4
Seats in Parliament	61	18	17	17	15	13	9

In view of Mečiar's confrontational style, and given the authoritarian, paternalistic and nationalistic nature of the coalition parties, some observers characterised the government's exercise of power as a "tyranny of the majority". Moreover, events during Mečiar's stewardship gave rise to some major concerns over the democratic process in Slovakia. The absence of a Civil Service Law enabled Mečiar's government to replace national and local government officials with its own supporters, which led to the politicisation of state administrative structures at a very low level. Time and again the West expressed its concern about Slovakia's political system. When Secretary General Solana visited Bratislava in April 1996 he felt constrained to emphasise that NATO is a democratic organisation that "associates with countries that respect democratic values, human rights, and differences between ethnic minorities". The United States expressed serious concern about the conduct of the Slovak government with regard to the May 1997 referendum on NATO membership and direct election of the president: not only was the referendum a step back from the free and democratic elections held after 1989,

the Slovak cabinet had also demonstrated its disrespect for the rule of law. (Mečiar had effectively placed executive power above the law by ordering the printing of ballot papers without the question on direct election of the president. This resulted in legal chaos and a highly confused electorate. Many people were deterred from casting their vote (the turnout was lower than 10%) and the referendum was thus frustrated, foiled and thwarted - a sorry business indeed!). Following the referendum, EU Commissioner Hans van den Broek conveyed the concern of all 15 EU countries at the fact that the principles of democracy and the legal state did not seem to be anchored in Slovakia. In June 1997 the EU noted the absence of proportional representation of the opposition in parliamentary bodies and lack of control over the security service as further instances of shortcomings in democratic procedures.

The Mečiar government has been criticised for pursuing “a constant and brutal campaign against the President in an effort to weaken his position and force him to resign”, as one analyst put it. There are strong grounds for thinking that the Slovak Intelligence Service was involved in the violent, mysterious, yet clearly politically motivated abduction of President Kováč’s son in August 1995. In its Annual Report 1998 - Human Rights and Development in 1997, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights questioned the commitment of the Mečiar government to uphold international human rights standards. Following the failure of the National Council to elect a successor to the President whose term ended on 2 March 1998, Prime Minister Mečiar inherited the mantle of outgoing President Michal Kováč along with many, if not most, of the competencies of the head of state. This assumption of key presidential powers enabled Mečiar’s government, *inter alia*, to grant an amnesty to individuals implicated in the 1995 abduction of the President’s son, as also to those responsible for the unmaking of the May 1997 referendum, and, moreover, to recall more than 25 Slovak ambassadors, while appointing, in many cases, political nominees with no diplomatic experience in their place. “It was the HZDS that sent me there”, said Ol’ga Keltošová, one such “diplomat”, of her appointment as Slovakia’s Ambassador to the UN in New York. Mečiar’s government also shelved plans for the May 1998 scheduled rerun of the 1997 referendum that had been sought by the former President.

In May, despite vigorous protestations by the opposition parties, Mečiar’s government passed legislation amending the election law by simple parliamentary majority. The changes in the law attracted a good deal of critical comment from international organisations, western governments, and Slovak NGOs. New legal provisions governing the formation of political coalitions, seemingly designed as a tactical move to limit the chances of smaller opposition parties, effectively compelled the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) to run as a single party, rather than as a coalition. The new law prohibits the use of private media for “election campaigning” - an open-ended provision which could be interpreted as an overall ban on political coverage of the election by independent media. A further change in the law serves to enhance the powers of the Ministry of the Interior, with respect to the organisation and administration of the election, at the expense of the multi-party, independent election commissions. Finally, the fact that the election law was amended - in the face of vigorous, united opposition protest and considerable, sustained international concern - a mere four months before the parliamentary elections were due to take place did not engender a high degree of public confidence in the electoral process. Indeed, it seems clear that - with a wholly self-seeking end firmly in view - the Mečiar-led ruling coalition passed the law as a means to help it retain its grip on power

## POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE POLITICAL CLIMATE

Slovakia, which became an independent state on 1 January 1993 after the peaceful breakup of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, has been ruled for the first five years of its existence by Vladimir Mečiar and his party, HZDS, except for one brief period (March-December 1994). It is in no small measure through having been able convincingly to cast himself in the role of champion and defender of the Slovak nation and the Slovak state that Mečiar has been able to retain his grip on power. Notions of Slovak statehood and Slovak nationhood remain fragile and brittle. This is perhaps hardly surprising after one thousand years of Magyar cultural repression, seventy years of centralised rule by decree from Prague, the rather dubious legacy of the wartime Slovak State, the equivocal nature of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising, forty years of real existing socialism and Soviet military dominance including the events of 1968, the great hyphen debate of 1990, and the trauma associated with the establishment of the Republic in 1993.

Such has been Mečiar's dominance of Slovak politics that he has, as has often been observed, "polarised" the political landscape to the point where typical and traditional Left-Right ideological divisions have been largely cast aside: and, with telling effect, the more potent forces of Mečiarism and anti-Mečiarism have now taken their place. What mattered most for voter choice was the stance of political parties regarding such issues as the observance of constitutional order and the rule of law, treatment of minorities, relations with the West, and commitment to the democratic ideal.

Political fragmentation is an important feature of the Slovak political climate, as it is indeed also in many other post-communist states. The constant formation, merger and dissolution of political parties (and movements) does not conduce to political stability. Further detail on the fragmented Slovak political landscape may be found below in the brief descriptions of the seventeen individual parties and movements that ran in the September election.

### Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS)

The HZDS was formed in 1991 following a two-way pro-federation versus pro-independence split in the Public Against Violence party (Vereinost' proti násiliu, VPN), the Slovak counterpart to the Czech Civic Forum under the leadership of Vaclav Havel in Prague. From the very beginning the HZDS beat the patriotic drum and sought to enhance the status of Slovak national interests with respect to its relations at the federal level with the Czech Republic. The HZDS rapidly became Slovakia's largest party and (with 37.26% of the vote) secured 74 seats in Parliament in the June 1992 elections. A "people's movement of the centre," as Mečiar described it, the HZDS is not underpinned by any particular ideological foundations. By far the best organised of all of Slovakia's political parties, support - especially among businessmen, older voters, rural voters, and voters in central Slovakia - is strong throughout the country. "We defend the interests of a democratic Slovakia" and "Vote according to your heart" were two of the electioneering slogans used by HZDS.

**The 17 Political Parties and Movements on the Ballot %Parliamentary Election 25/26 September 1998)**

No	Party/Movement	Abbreviation	Leader
1	Movement for a Democratic Slovakia	HZDS	Vladimir Mečiar
2	Hungarian People's Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity	ML'HZP	György Gyimesi
3	National Slovak Alternative	NAS	Ján Garai
4	Hungarian Coalition Party	SMK	Béla Bugár
5	Our Slovakia	NSK	Ladislav Hampl
6	Be~ko-Revolutionary Workers Party	B-RRS	Anna Albertusová
7	Party of Civic Understanding	SOP	Rudolf Schuster
8	Slovak Democratic Coalition	SDK	Mikuháš Dzurinda
9	Slovak National Party	SNS	Ján Slota
10	Independent Initiative of the Slovak Republic	NFI	Anton Bohuslav Gajdošik
11	Slovak People's Party	SL'S	František Kalesný
12	Movement of the Third Way	HTC	Rudolf Vaský
13	Party of the Democratic Left	SDL'	Jozef Migaš
14	Communist Party of Slovakia	KSS	Vladimir Ďaďo
15	United Party of Employees of Slovakia	iSP	Andrej Sinicyn
16	Association of Workers of Slovakia	ZRS	Ján L'upták
17	Slovak National Unity	SNJ	Stanislav Pánis

Hungarian People's Movement for Reconciliation and Prosperity (ML'HZP)

A minor ethnic Hungarian party that was established after Mečiar's promise of financial assistance to act as a counterweight to the mainstream Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK). At least some of the recently founded minor parties on the ballot, in the view of some analysts, may be shadow formations established or supported to pack the Central Election Commission, thereby enhancing the chances of the HZDS and its political allies gaining a majority in that body, as also in district and local electoral commissions. The ML'HZP is not considered as a serious threat to the SMK whose leaders acknowledge, however, that the alternative Hungarian party could reduce, by a small margin, the SMK vote.

National Slovak Alternative (NAS)

A minor party led by Ján Garai.

Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK)

The SMK, led by Béla Bugár, was created following changes in the electoral law and is a fusion of the three already established Hungarian parties, viz The Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH), the Hungarian Civic Party (MOS), and the Co-habitation Party. The SMK vigorously advocates cultural and educational autonomy: the language law and the teaching of Hungarian in schools number among the most important issues. The SMK slogan is "Representation with Dignity."

Our Slovakia (NSK)

A minor party led by Ladislav Hampi.

Béčko-Revolutionary Workers Party (B- RRS)

A minor party led by Anna Albertusová

Party of Civic understanding (SOP)

Rudolf Schuster, the popular, can-do mayor of Košice, founded the SOP in March 1998. The SOP advocates a new political dynamic that brings people together and does away with HZDS/ SDK polarisation. SOP has many supporters among educated young Slovaks; its greatest support is in eastern Slovakia. The SOP slogan is "How did you vote last time?"

Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK)

The SDK was formed more than a year ago in the wake of the May 1997 Referendum that never was. The SDI( merges a rather diverse group of five opposition parties comprising the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), the Democratic Party (DS), the Democratic Union (DU), the Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS), and the Green Party of Slovakia (SZS). The SDK's political programme includes something for everyone - at least for left-wing socialists, liberals, laissez-faire capitalists, religious conservatives and the greenies. In late August 1997, the SDK proclaimed A People's Covenant in Martin (a northern Slovak town that functions for good historical reasons as the spiritual centre of the Slovak nation), pledging a renewal of the rule of law and of parliamentary democracy, if and when they were returned to power. The SDK is firmly committed to Slovakia's integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. Following recent changes in the election laws, the SDK (like the SMK) was obliged to seek registration as a political party. The young middle-aged (especially thirty-somethings) are an important source of support for SDK.

Slovak National Party (SNS)

The extreme right-wing and radically nationalistic SNS was founded after November 1989 to campaign for the creation of an independent Slovakia. Allied with the Catholic Right, the SNS opposes abortion. Opposition to Hungarian settlement in Slovakia is a key element in the party programme. The SNS is the junior partner of Mečiar's ruling coalition. Former Defence Minister Ján Šitek, a civilian, is a member of SNS. Eva Slavkovská, former Minister of Education, was responsible for proscribing the use of the Hungarian language in school reports. Young and not so well educated voters support SNS; support is especially strong in northern and central Slovakia. The eagle is the party emblem; the party slogan "Our homeland - our nest."

Independent Initiative of the Slovak Republic (NEI)

A minor party led by Anton Bohuslav Gajdošik

Slovak People's Party (SL'S)

A minor party, (motto: for God and the people) led by František Kalesný".

Movement of the Third Way (HTC)

A minor party led by Rudolf Vaský.

Party of the Democratic Left (SDL')

The reformed successor to the communist party and the principal left-of centre party

in Slovakia, the SDL' opposes the HZDS but remains outside the SDK coalition. The

SDL' slogan is "Live better!"

Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS)

The KSS is the orthodox communist party that seeks a return to the old regime. The party emblem includes the hammer and sickle and a five-pointed star.

United Party of Employees of Slovakia (JSP)

A minor party led by Andrej Sinicyn.

Association of Workers of Slovakia (ZRS)

An extreme left-wing and anti-reform party which (with 7.34% of the vote in the 1994 elections) gained 13 seats in Parliament and formed part of Mečiar's governing coalition.

Slovak National Unity (SNJ)

A minor party led by economist Stanislav Pánis.

**THE SEPTEMBER 1998 REFERENDUM**

A referendum on prohibiting the privatization of six state-owned energy utilities was conducted on the same days as the parliamentary elections. The referendum concerned the question: "Do you agree that the National Council of the Slovak Republic should pass a constitutional act which will prohibit the privatization of the following strategic enterprises:

Western Slovak energy enterprise, state enterprise, in Bratislava

Central Slovak energy enterprise, state enterprise, in Žilina

Eastern Slovak energy enterprise, state enterprise, in Košice

Slovak Gas enterprise, state enterprise, Bratislava

Slovak Electricity enterprise, Co, Bratislava

Transpetrol, Co, Bratislava

Yes or No"

Applying a presidential power that had been transferred to him, Prime Minister Mečiar announced the referendum, which was based on more than 600,000 petition signatures. He said that the fact that the elections and the referendum were taking place at the same time would enable citizens better to assert their rights as they would be able to speak their mind on the fundamental social question of gas and power industry privatization. Opposition leaders dismissed the referendum as a gimmick: the whole issue was a diversion, since no political force sought to privatize energy utilities anyway; by granting the electorate a say in what was essentially a non-issue, the government in fact hoped to divert attention from its own gross mismanagement of the privatization process, whereby political associates, clients and cronies were enriched by selling off stakes in state-owned enterprises at knock-down prices to the detriment of the state. The only representative of the opposition on the supervisory board of the National Property Fund (FNM) in charge of the administration and privatization of national property, former privatisation minister Ivan Mildoš (currently Deputy Prime Minister for the Economy) resigned his post in protest in early September. According to Mildoš, the FNM did not protect the interests of the state, but the interests of strong groups linked with the ruling coalition led by HZDS. One result of the massive tunnelling" (ie the siphoning off of company assets) is that the Slovak Treasury will only see 28% of the 110 billion crowns (approx US \$3.1 bn) it should have received in post-communist privatizations conducted under Mečiar. Moreover, money derived from tunnelling

was being used to finance the HZDS election campaign.

Some analysts feared the referendum might introduce confusion into the electoral process. The election commissions, polling stations (as also the campaign period, allocation of media time to the campaign, etc.) for the referendum were all separate and independent of the bodies overseeing the parliamentary elections.

According to the Constitution and the Law on Referendum, the results are valid provided that an absolute majority of eligible voters have participated and the issue has been determined by an absolute majority of votes. The referendum on the non-privatization of state-owned energy utilities was declared invalid, as only 44% instead of the minimum 50% of the electorate voted.

### **PRE-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS, THE CAMPAIGN, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS AND THE MEDIA**

Polarization, downright political hostility, distrust, uncertainty, tension and fear - such were the terms used to characterize the political climate in Slovakia both in the weeks prior to the election campaign period (which began on 26 August), and during the campaign itself. In June, the police stormed a meeting of the opposition SDK in the university city of Nitra on grounds of having received information that drugs were being sold. According to an SDK spokesman, however, the raid was an attempt to intimidate voters away from attending such meetings. Even a national disaster, the July floods in Eastern Slovakia (which claimed 49 victims), became a highly emotive issue in the political battle, with accusation upon counter-accusation that politicians were seeking political capital from the "death of children" and the "endless sorrow of flood victims".

In early August, the HZDS petitioned the Supreme Court to cancel the registration of the SDK candidate list as a party and "requalify" the SDK's status as a (five-party) coalition. (Following recent changes in the electoral law, if registered as a party, the SDK needed 5% of votes to enter parliament, while if it were registered as a coalition it would need 25% of all votes in order to secure parliamentary mandates). Happily, this HZDS attempt to exclude the SDK from the election was thwarted by the Supreme Court which confirmed the SDK's electoral registration status as a party, "a victory of truth over the HZDS ill will, malevolence and deviousness," as Mikukáš Dzurinda (the then SDK leader, now Prime Minister) commented; "through its decision, the Supreme Court has prevented the HZDS's attempt to dismantle the constitutional and democratic order in Slovakia."

OK 98 (Občianska Kampana) Civic Campaign, an election activity coordinating body for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) throughout Slovakia, sought to secure people's participation in the elections, their access to party political information, education of electoral commission members, and to ensure that the elections were honest". The intolerance shown by the government towards OK 98 and other NGOs engaged in voter education - they were frequently accused of being bankrolled by foreign paymasters seeking to undermine Slovak sovereignty by means of "provocations" - added to the tension and sense of unease; more specifically, the government's decision to deploy the military to reinforce police patrols during the elections in order to prevent such "provocations" together with the refusal to allow domestic observers to follow the count did nothing to increase transparency or enhance public confidence in the electoral process.

In August, Slovak Armed Forces Chief of Staff Colonel-General Jozef Tuchyňa announced plans to resign as of 30 September in order to run for parliament as a candidate on the SDL' list. While Defence Minister Ján Sitek (SNS) was on holiday in Mexico, parliamentary chairman Ivan Gašparovič (HZDS) - seeking to execute a presidential competence vested in him - appointed a little known colonel, Marian Mikluš, deputy chief of the logistics department at MOD, as the new Chief of Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces, while ignoring entirely Defence Minister Sitek's recommendation for the post. Opposition leaders, as well as General Tuchyňa himself, challenged the appointment as illegal since legislation requires that the Chief of Staff be appointed by the President based on a recommendation made by the Defence Minister. For a while the Slovak Armed Forces had two Chiefs of Staff; some commentators described the move as a clear bid for control of the Armed Forces by HZDS. At the very least, this sorry business was illustrative of political encroachment into the armed forces and of the fragility of the constitutional machinery for ensuring their direction and control. Ján Čarnogurský' (at the time chairman of the opposition Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and now Minister of Justice in the new government) said this of the Tuchyňa affair: "Vladimir Mečiar and Ivan Gašparovič violated the law, brought chaos to the army leadership and badly damaged the operation and reputation of the Slovak Army."

Throughout his period in office, Mečiar and his government colleagues have been all too ready to brand western commentary on political developments in Slovakia as "interference," as deliberate attempts to undermine Slovakia's sovereignty. This "anti-western campaign," as some analysts have termed it, was waged ever more vociferously as election time drew nearer. Like other member states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Slovakia bears an obligation, under international treaty, to allow foreign observers to monitor elections. At one point Mečiar raised the spectre that such foreign observers might attempt to interfere in internal government matters, including the police service. In August, Mečiar released a list of 18 specific countries that were to be invited to send observers - countries that were not critical of Slovakia (Czech Republic, Hungary, United States of America and Britain were not invited) - thus skirting convention by not relying on the OSCE office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw to assemble its multinational delegation. It was not until 18 August that the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs finally delivered an official letter of invitation to the OSCE.

The election campaign began officially on 26 August (ie 30 days before election day) and ended on 23 September (48 hours before the first election day) when the so-called "information moratorium" - a ban on election campaigning in the mass media - started. During that period all political parties were guaranteed "equal access to the mass media and other services of local self-government." Campaigning on electronic media was allowed only on the stated-owned Slovak Radio (SRo) and Slovak Television (STV) and was prohibited on private electronic media. Both SRo and STV were required to divide a total of 21 hours of broadcasting time equally among the 17 political parties running in the election. The results of pre-election public opinion polls could be published only until the fourteenth day before the first day of the elections. 12 million Slovak Crowns was the maximum a party was allowed to spend on its campaign.

The results of some public opinion polls undertaken by MVK (the public opinion research agency) and by the Nazory (Views) polling institute are given below.

	MVK July	MVK early August	Nazory 12-23 August
FIZDS	27.4%	25.7%	21.8%
SDK	23.2%	22.6%	24.1%
SOP	16.4%	14.9%	18.9%
SDL'	11.5%	12.0%	14.7%
SMK	8.5%	7.4%	9.1%
SNS	7.6%	7.10/o	8.1%

Polls consistently revealed that the remaining eleven parties running in the parliamentary elections had only a very slight chance of passing the 5% parliamentary threshold.

The OSCE Election Observer Mission Preliminary Statement issued on 27 September notes that while the media, on the whole, provided pluralistic information, they were not truly balanced. "Although voters were able to receive information from a range of sources supporting various political parties, State Television failed to fulfil its obligation of giving a balanced picture of the campaign. As the only source of televised information that reaches the entire country, State Television broadcasts - which carry a special responsibility for being balanced - largely favoured the incumbent government. At the same time, campaign coverage on the main private television station [Markiza] was biased in favour of opposition parties. Article 23 of the election law raised serious concerns regarding freedom of speech because of restrictions on campaigning beyond the time allocated to party promotion on State Television and Radio. The interpretation and consistent application of this law created constant difficulties. It is also regrettable that OSCE ... was subjected to unfair criticism by State Television."

What was certainly an attention-grabbing, and perhaps characteristically Mečiarian feature, of the HZDS campaign was the use of foreign celebrities in public appearances by the Prime Minister who was evidently exploiting the reflected glory of high-priced stars to promote his own ruling party. International top model, Claudia Schiffer, and the racing-driver son of popular French film star, Jean-Paul Belmondo - followed by Gérard Depardieu, Claude Brasseur, and Claudia Cardinale - helped Mečiar with the opening of new stretches of the motorway. "I had dinner with Cardinale, and because of the beautiful atmosphere it lasted until 2:30 in the morning," boasted Mečiar. HZDS vice chairman Ivan Gašparovič felt constrained to warn the Prime Minister: "Don't tell everyone how late you stayed up with Cardinale, or you'll be summoned before the US congress!"

## **THE ELECTION RESULTS AND THE FUTURE**

According to the OSCE Election Observer Mission Preliminary Statement, "The election days were generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. No serious incidents were reported during the elections... The election administration worked in an efficient manner, and the polling station commissions managed during the election days to apparently conduct a technically correct election. Slovak

citizens participated in large numbers in the democratic process on the election days. Although an atmosphere of political polarisation led to a lack of confidence on the overall process by many Slovak citizens, the election as such was carried out in an apparently correct and acceptable manner.

As can be seen from the Table of Election Results, the four opposition parties (SDK, SDL', SMK, SOP) together hold 93 seats in the 150-seat National Council, which is more than enough to achieve the minimum 90 votes required for a constitutional majority. A government has been formed (see below) as a result of negotiation among the four parties which won the elections: SDK with 9 ministerial seats, SDL' with 6, SMK with 3, and SOP with 2. For the very first time the Slovak government includes representatives of the ethnic Hungarian parties, which should soothe relations with Hungary. Indeed, Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi has already spoken of "a new chapter in Hungarian-Slovak relations." After the Mečiar years of diplomatic isolation, it is the improvement of relations with neighbours, with the West, indeed with the rest of the world which lies at the top of the incoming government's agenda -the new Premier said his priority would be to convince the European Union that Slovakia should join the first wave of applicants. In addition, Mikukáš Dzurinda's government must bring the economy back under control, make privatisation transparent, adopt a bill on the use of national minorities' mother tongue, and heal the deep political divisions in Slovak society.

The challenge of the demeciarization of Slovakia will not be met within a year and a day. Moreover, that challenge is an especially daunting one for a government which uneasily combines left, centre, right, and ethnic choices, and is led by a relatively inexperienced Prime Minister. All hopes for the future are predicated on the government staying in power for long enough to make a difference. Says Mikukáš Dzurinda: "I believe people understand we have to prescribe some medicine in the first six months." A shaky economic legacy, hidden unemployment and other problems will clearly erode the new government's popularity and widen divisions among the four party coalition. But it is to be hoped that the spectre of the former Prime Minister returning to office will hold the government together. As the new education minister Milan Ftáčnik put it: "The coaliton will last until it is clear that Mečiarism will not return."



**The New Slovak Government**

Mikukáš Dzurinda	Prime Minister	SDK
L'ubomir Fogaš	Deputy Prime Minister For The Legislature	SDL'
Ivan Mikloš	Deputy Prime Minister For The Economy	SDK
Pal Csáky	Deputy Prime Minister For Human Rights and Regional Development	SMK
Pavol Hamžik	Deputy Prime Minister For European Integration	SOP
Ladislav Pittner	Minister of Interior	SDK
Pavol Kanis	Minister of Defence	SDL'
Eduard Kukan	Minister of Foreign Affairs	SDK
Brigita Schmönerová	Minister of Finance	SDL'
L'udovit Černák	Minister of Economy	SDK
Gabriel Palacka	Minister of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications	SDK
Pavel Koncoš	Minister of Agriculture	SDL'
Máiria Machová	Minister of Privatization	SOP
István Harna	Minister of Construction and Public Works	SMK
Ján Čarnogurský	Minister of Justice	SDK
Peter Magvaši	Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	SDL'
Tibor Šagát	Minister of Health	SDK
Milan Kňazko	Minister of Culture	SDK
Milan Ftáčnik	Minister of Education	SDL'
László Miklós	Minister of Environment	SMK