

### Central European Update

#### Poland

On 25 August *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an August opinion poll conducted by the Center for Public Opinion Research (TNS OBOP) showing that nearly 74 percent of Poles fear that their country will become a target of terrorist attacks. According to 71 percent of those polled, the fire brigade, the police, and the ambulance services are unprepared to deal with such emergencies. On the day the report was published, the Polish embassy in Baghdad came under fire and was hit by two mortar shells. According to the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, nobody was hurt during the attack.

#### Hungary

On 24 August, the Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) nominated Sports Minister **Ferenc Gyurcsany** as the new Prime Minister, following the resignation of **Peter Medgyessy** over a dispute

within the governing coalition. Medgyessy officially resigned soon after the nomination process was complete. Due to the restructuring of the government, parliamentary speaker **Katalin Szili** is expected to run for the position of MSZP chairman.

#### Slovakia

Slovak Defense Minister **Juraj Liska** surprised the country's troops in Iraq when he paid them an unexpected visit earlier this week. Liska affirmed Slovakia's commitment to keeping troops in Iraq until their mission is completed and noted that the initial mandate to defuse mines and dispose of ammunition has expanded due to deteriorating security conditions.

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The Ministry of Economy signed this week a memorandum of understanding with the Austrian

company Legend Australasia, allowing it to open up a new plant in Slovakia. The firm, which produces computer parts for Hewlett-Packard, Fuji, and Xerox, will make the new plant its headquarters for the European market. Although a precise location has not yet been agreed upon, construction is set to begin in late 2005. The project is expected to create about 200 jobs upon completion.

#### Czech Republic

Following a lengthy parliamentary debate on 24 August, Prime Minister **Stanislav Gross** barely survived a constitutionally mandated confidence vote. He won 101 to 99, reflecting his narrow majority in the lower house. Gross, who was named premier shortly after **Vladimir Spidla**'s resignation in June, faces mounting criticism from the opposition Civic Democ-

rats. This criticism is expected to escalate closer to the general elections scheduled for 2006.

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On 20 August, **Pavel Pribyl** announced he was resigning as head of the Office of the Government. Opposition to Pribyl's recent appointment by Prime Minister **Stanislav Gross** had been mounting due to evidence that members of a police unit he led had beaten up demonstrators in anti-Communist protests in 1989.



Featured photo: Malbork, Poland

### Baltic States Update

#### Estonia

The unveiling of a monument to servicemen of the 20th Estonian SS division in the city of Lihula on 20 August has provoked an angry response from Russia. In a statement issued by the Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow called the memorial "a disgraceful act, which insults the memory of victims of fascism throughout the world." Estonia's lionization of the 20<sup>th</sup> division revolves around the fact that it fought the Soviets invaders between 1941 and 1944. The memorial has intensified tensions between Russia and its former subordinate republic.

#### Lithuania

Meeting with the new Latvian Ambassador to Lithuania **Armands Gutmanis** on 18 August, Lithuanian President **Valdas Adamkus** reasserted the need for the Baltic states to work together to ensure their continued success as members of a united and democratic Europe. Adamkus expressed his desire to cooperate closely in promoting Baltic inter-

ests in EU institutions and to build an economically dynamic and competitive region. Gutmanis assumed his new ambassadorial post after serving as advisor to the Latvian Foreign Minister.

#### Latvia

On a visit to Riga this week, U.S. Senator **John McCain** stated his objective of promoting democracy throughout Central and Eastern Europe. During a press conference on regional issues, he sharply criticized Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka for his authoritarianism and expressed his skepticism about the legitimacy of the planned October parlia-



mentary elections. During the same press conference, Latvian Foreign Minister **Artis Pabriks** assured the U.S. senators that Latvia would try to raise the issue of Belarus in the European Union and thus give an optimistic signal to the people of Belarus. The U.S. Senate delegation also included **Susan Collins** (R-ME), **John Sununu** (R-NH), and **Lindsey Graham** (R-SC). Senator **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (D-NY) joined the group on 21 August in neighboring Estonia.

#### Baltic States

On 23 August, the three Baltic republics marked the 15th anniversary of their legendary unified resistance to Soviet rule expressed by a 600-km human chain. On 23 August 1989, two million people held hands between Vilnius, Riga, and Tallinn, before the three satellites officially regained their independence in 1991. The event was one of the most significant symbolic gestures at a time when the Soviet Union was in sharp decline. The commemoration has particular significance this year, as the Baltic states have recently entered both the EU and NATO.

## Southeast European Update

**Slovenia**

Slovenia's parliamentary speaker **Feri Horvat** set 31 August as the date for an extraordinary session evaluating the government's performance during the past four years. The opposition is not expected to demand a vote of no-confidence, but the assessment is seen as crucial in view of the upcoming parliamentary elections. The debate was scheduled to take place at the end of August, before the election campaign formally begins on 3 September.

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On 21 August, **Josko Joras**, a Slovenian citizen living in a disputed border strip under Croatian jurisdiction, blocked the road leading to the Secovlje border crossing between Slovenia and Croatia. The incident brought Slovenian-Croatian border disputes back to the forefront. On 24

August, Croatian President **Stjepan Mesic** declared that the border between the two states is the border between the two former Yugoslav republics, as approved by the EU Badinter Commission. However, Slovenian Foreign Minister **Ivo Vajgl** argues that decisions on border delineations should be accomplished through bilateral diplomatic channels. The EU Badinter Commission left several areas unresolved near the Mura and Dragonja rivers. However, even more contentious is the pending final resolution of the coastal dispute in Piran Bay. Croatia's plan to establish an exclusive economic zone in the Adriatic was not welcome in Ljubljana, since it would leave Slovenia without direct access to international waters, although it would retain transit rights. If the two countries fail to resolve the border issue in direct

talks, they may appeal to an international mediating authority.

**Croatia**

On 23 August, Croatian Defense Minister **Berislav Roncevic** met with his Portuguese counterpart **Paulo Sacadura Cabral Portas**, who was on a four-day visit to Zagreb. Portas pledged that his country would fully support Croatia's accession into NATO and the EU. The two ministers also discussed strengthening cooperation in the defense sector, especially with respect to the organization of Croatia's navy and coastal guard.

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The authorities in Zagreb granted access to Croatia's Central Archive to **Goran Mihaljevic**, the Bosnian Croat Liaison Officer with the Hague-based war crimes tribunal (ICTY). The ICTY Prosecutor's Office requested that Mihaljevic search for documentation from the 1990s war, related to the trial of six wartime Bosnian Croat leaders. The deadline for the submission of documents is 30 September.

**Bulgaria**

On 26 August, Defense Minister **Nikolay Svinarov** officially denied press reports about Bulgaria's intention to decrease the

number of its troops in Iraq. He declared that official policy in this matter can only be announced by the Defense Ministry and assured the media that there are no intentions or proposals for troop withdrawals. At the same press conference Svinarov revealed that the plan for the privatization of Terem, the biggest military-industrial complex, has been approved and stressed the importance of involving reliable Western companies in the modernization of the Bulgarian army.

**Romania**

On 24 August, over 500 demonstrators rallied outside of the Ukrainian Embassy in Bucharest to protest the scheduled inauguration of the Bystroe Canal in the Danube delta. In response, Ukrainian authorities decided to postpone the celebrations until tensions with Romania subside. The canal, whose construction began in Ukraine in May 2004, has stirred controversy between Bucharest and Kyiv. Romanian officials have persistently urged Ukraine through diplomatic channels to cease the construction until a comprehensive study of the canal's environmental impact was conducted.



## Olympic Games

Country				Total As of 08/27/2004	Country				Total As of 08/27/2004
 ROM	8	5	5	18	 CZE	1	3	4	8
 UKR	8	4	7	19	 LTU	1	2	0	3
 HUN	6	7	3	16	 LAT	0	3	0	3
 POL	3	2	4	9	 CRO	0	2	2	4
 BLR	2	3	7	12	 SLO	0	1	3	4
 SVK	2	2	2	6	 EST	0	1	2	3
 BUL	2	1	8	11	 SCG	0	1	0	1

Source: www.athens2004.com

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